Platforms of Learning:

The Ongoing Professional Learning of

Experienced Principals in Aotearoa New Zealand

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Abstract

Little is known about the professional learning of experienced school principals in New Zealand. How do they maintain sufficient learning to meet a diverse and fluid variety of leadership expectations after at least five years as principal? This research examines the professional learning habits and preferences of fifty two experienced school principals from a variety of schools covering subgroups of Years 1 – 13 within the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions. A self-selected self-administered survey elicited responses on their use of over twenty three potential sources of learning. This approach was used to provide a fresh look at an under-researched topic. Research findings demonstrate that respondents used all learning sources to varying degrees according to factors such as personal preference, availability, cost, perceived quality, time and distance. A single best practice model remains elusive; those surveyed adopted eclectic approaches to their professional learning. The impact of information technologies and the role of professional principals' associations in monitoring, promoting and supporting principals' access to high quality professional learning are also discussed. Consideration of links between survey data and existing theory has resulted in the development of a framework of learning platforms for experienced principals. In addition, a number of dualities are highlighted. Together the proposed learning platforms and dualities provide a conceptual mechanism for the planning of deliberate professional learning and directions for further research.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

Acronym	Meaning
ACEL	Australian Council for Educational Leaders
ADT	Australasian Digital Thesis database
AP/DP	Assistant Principal/Deputy Principal
APP	Aspiring Principals Programme
ASCD	Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
AtoL	Assessment to Learn
BES	Best Evidence Synthesis
BOT	Board of Trustees
CAQDAS	Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
COP	Community of Practice
CYF	Children, Youth and Family (New Zealand)
EHSAS	Extending High Standards Across Schools
EPD	Experienced Principals' Development programme
ERO	Education Review Office – NZ's school audit agency
FTP	First Time Principals – training programme
IBSC	International Boys' Schools Coalition
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plan – used for students with special learning needs
ISSPP	International Successful School Principalship Project
IWB	Interactive White Board
JP	Justice of the Peace – community appointed voluntary magistrate
KLP	Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework – govt. policy framework
LDP	Leadership Development Profile
LSI	Learning Style Inventory
LSM	Limited Statutory Manager
MoE	New Zealand Ministry of Education
NAPP	National Aspiring Principals' Programme
NCEA	National Certificate for Educational Achievement – national qualifications at senior secondary level in NZ
NCSL	National College for School Leadership (England)
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship (England)
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZCER	New Zealand Council for Educational Research
NZCPPA	New Zealand Catholic Primary Principals' Association
NZEI	New Zealand Educational Institute – primary teachers' union
NZFTPP	New Zealand First Time Principals' mentoring Programme (also FTP)
NZPF	New Zealand Principals Federation – main principals' body, particularly at primary and intermediate level
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
NZSTA	New Zealand School Trustees Association (Also known as STA)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
OPQ	Occupational Personality Questionnaire – psychometric test
OSH	Occupational Safety and Health

PD	Professional Development
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PDLC	Professional Development Learning Community
PDPC	Principals' Development Planning Centre
PISA	OECD's Programme for International Student Achievement
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLOT	Professional Learning Online Tool
PLP	Professional Learning Plan
PPTA	Post Primary Teachers Association – secondary teachers' union
PTA	Parent Teacher Association – voluntary school support group
RTLB	Resource Teaching Learning and Behaviour
SMS	Student Management System – computerised database
SPANZ	Secondary Principals' Association of New Zealand
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists - software
SSS	School Support Services
SUE	Staffing Usage and Expenditure report
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats
TKI	Te Kete Ipurangi – (MoE sponsored educational website)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

"Fortune favours the prepared mind" – (Pasteur, 7 December 1854)

1.1 Personal connections with the topic.

I was observing six New Zealand principals being introduced to a group exercise which involved identifying and presenting the group's ten most important qualities of educational leadership.

Total strangers until a few hours previously, all principals had completed at least five years of principalship and could thus be called experienced principals. One principal led a secondary school of over two thousand students situated in a multicultural suburb of South Auckland; another was a teacher principal of a two teacher rural school in the Manawatu. There was the principal operating in the medium of kura kaupapa Maori, another within the Catholic education system and an intermediate principal who spoke with a soft burr, from Southland. The final principal led a school solely for children with special needs, which were "lent" by arrangement from neighbouring schools for specific periods of time under individual education plans.

The journeys by which these people became principals were markedly different and the ways in which they exercised educational leadership varied according to their situation. Yet they were identified by the name of *principal* in each setting. How did they manage their professional learning in order to maintain and further develop their capability to lead effectively in such diverse environments? This question challenged me to speculate what the commonalities of their learning were and what the distinct differences might be.

My own background involved teaching in secondary schools, working as an adviser during the transition to "Tomorrow's Schools", and moving through the career stages of deputy principal and principal before consultancy work with school leaders. When I attempted to analyse the professional learning opportunities that fed my leadership learning needs at various stages of pending, early and later principalship, it was difficult to identify them in any systematic manner.

They appeared many and varied but not progressive, sequential and deliberate, and not always related directly to my professional learning needs. Discussing this with colleagues shed little further light. They commented that "You grab any leadership learning you can, where you can, whenever you can," and "It is not just up to the principal but the distributed leadership within the school that counts." There appeared no consensus over what might be regarded as good practice in terms of identifying, selecting, attaining and assimilating professional learning that usefully fitted the required situation.

The assumption seemed to be that once principals had been selected for the job, and possibly attended preparatory courses for "First Time Principals", remaining issues around knowing what to learn and how to access this learning would resolve automatically; you would intuitively adapt to the changing demands of the situation, or leave.

Thesis Aims. The overall goal of the thesis is to investigate the nature of professional learning of experienced principals. It explores their professional learning in terms of where it is sourced, the type of information available, and the value principals place on various avenues of support and learning. It looks at emerging trends, and principals' ideas on distinctions between their current realities and ideal means of learning.

This includes exploring demographic patterns, such as the relationship between the availability of types of professional learning and the location and description of the school. For instance, is it just as easy for principals of rural schools to access information as it is for their city counterparts? What are optimal learning settings?

As well as identifying current learning practice, I asked experienced principals to speculate on how they would go about learning more about specific aspects of their job. Were they aware of any changes in their styles of learning since commencing their principalship? Where were the gaps in their professional knowledge? In a more supportive world, how would they envisage going about their professional learning?

A clearer picture of what constitutes current practice in acquiring professional knowledge and understanding would enable a comparison to be made with what

accumulated research has advocated as good practice, and in turn assist principals in making more deliberate and informed choices.

Stoll, Fink and Earl state:

> Leadership for learning isn't a destination with fixed coordinates on a compass, but a journey with plenty of detours and even some dead ends. Effective educational leaders are continuously open to new learning because the journey keeps changing. Their maps are complex and can be confusing. (2003, p. 103)

So what are these maps, and how do principals fine tune them?

This research is timely. Schools operate in an era which is on the cusp of unprecedented technological change, the "rollercoaster of change", as it is so aptly described by Stoll, Fink and Earl (2003, p. 2). The advent of information technologies over the past two decades has opened up whole new dimensions of how we constitute learning, and for that matter, schools, (Pilkington, 2008).

The New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE) has trialled both a centralised 'development planning' centre at a national level and now regionally based professional development programmes, for experienced principals, with little indication of what will be funded in the future on a more permanent basis to support them. It is in this environment that principals must endeavour to adapt their leadership to best serve their students. This research provides a 2010 snapshot of how Waikato/Bay of Plenty experienced principals sought to learn and adapt in this new environment.

1.2 Positioning within the literature

Most of the literature on principals learning about educational leadership refers to principals either preparing for or undergoing their first few years of leadership, rather than those who are more experienced (Gronn, 2003b; Lashway, 2006; Lumby, 2006; Lumby, Crow, & Pashiardis, 2008; Patuawa, 2007). Other literature focuses on the influence of principals (and others) on student learning, (Eberts & Stone, 1988; Hallinger & Heck, 2004; Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003) rather

than investigating the principals' professional learning environment that enables them to optimise this impact.

There appears to be very little research on the learning of principals located in New Zealand. Much of the accessible material is from the United States of America, Canada, the United Kingdom and Australia. Most of the New Zealand research is contained within theses which adopt a methodology involving small scale qualitative research – usually case studies and/or interviews, and centred in the context of primary school education. For example, Graham (2010) based her study on five semi-structured interviews.

This research adds to existing literature by collecting data from 52 experienced principals of schools covering the full range of year levels and school types in one of the most populated regions in Aotearoa New Zealand.

It is clear that the complexity of school principalship means that principals require constant development throughout their careers (Crow, 2006). This thesis aims to influence the learning experiences of experienced principals by describing current patterns of learning amongst a sample of them, and comparing these with what has been asserted as being desirable, and shedding some light on gaps between theory and practice.

1.3 Organisation of the thesis

The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter One explains my involvement and interest in principalship, and introduces a justification for the research. Chapter Two reviews the literature on the roles of principalship, including the principal as an individual, theories of adult learning, and national and international perspectives on how principals undertake professional learning.

Chapter Three discusses the methodology and method arrived at for this research, data collection and analysis, and issues of quality. Chapter Four presents the research findings, followed by a discussion of these in Chapter Five. This discussion presents various perspectives on how the findings connect and offers a number of recommendations. Chapter Six gives a conclusion which includes suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction.

As there is not a single body of literature which summarises the professional learning of experienced principals, this review of the literature adopts an integrative approach, identifying and discussing broad themes and issues relevant to the subject, with material organised conceptually rather than chronologically or methodologically. Leading a school is not the same as driving a locomotive – same tracks, same timetable and same destination. There is an ever present mystery and complexity about how best to connect student with teacher, curriculum with learning need, pedagogy with learning style, and school capability with new and potentially better directions.

The first section of the literature review explores the complexity of the principal's role in New Zealand schools. To reinforce this multiplicity of roles, the sub headings focus on various aspects of the Principal's role. Throughout the review, each section examines a selection of research and theory on each particular role, and the professional learning implications for principals. The various sub headings should be seen as windows into the same room rather than doors into separate rooms. They highlight overlapping aspects, yet are dealt with separately in order to convey how each role might impact upon the professional learning of principals.

The second part of this chapter steps aside from concepts of roles and considers principals primarily as professional people with needs. This section studies the literature on how principals are supported through professional learning opportunities, mostly focussing on New Zealand but contrasting with Australian research at one point. The final part addresses the silences that arise from gaps in our collective knowledge in this field. For instance, given the rapid change in the information technologies available to schools over the past decade, how are principals adapting their schools and themselves to fully capitalise on new possibilities?

A note about semantics: United Kingdom researchers use the term 'headship' instead of 'principalship'; in this research these titles are used interchangeably. Also, many researchers and theorists use the term 'best practice', implying that it is possible to discern a clear cut way to practise education (Dimmock & Walker, 2000). This discussion instead opts for the phrase 'informed practice', implying that teaching and leading should be based on research evidence of effective practice (Hargreaves, 1999).

Part One: The Complexity of the NZ principal's role

This section explores ideas from the literature on the different roles that principals take on to varying degrees. Different notions of leadership need to be seen in context:

> The ocean of leadership literature - both general and educational – abounds with models and theories of leadership. Some of these rise to the surface and float ... for years before eventually becoming beached and replaced ... Others bob briefly to the surface only to sink again ... Making sense of these many models and theories is not easy. (Simkins, 2005, p. 3)

Leadership development is strongly influenced by globalisation (Bush & Middlewood, 2005) and New Zealand principals cannot ignore the pervasive impact of international trends on the development of ideas and expectations around concepts of leadership. However, Western-based educational leadership and management theories are not universal in application across cultures (Goh, 2009); a degree of cultural mismatch is likely to exist between theory and context. It falls on Kiwi principals to identify how they can best utilise these theories in ways that synchronise with their particular learning culture.

An examination of all educational leadership articles published in four major administration journals from 1985 to 1995, led Leithwood and Duke (1998) to propose six distinct conceptions of leadership:

1. **instructional** (influencing the work of teachers in a way that will improve student achievement),
2. **transformational** (increasing the commitments and capacities of school staff),
3. **moral** (influencing others by appealing to notions of right and wrong),

4. **participative** (involving other members of the school community),
5. **managerial** (operating the school efficiently), and
6. **contingent** (adapting their behaviour to fit the situation).

Aspects of this categorisation are alluded to within this review. An underlying message of leadership theory appears to be that principals are expected to progress in their understanding and ability to implement aspects of each and all of these conceptions. A quick test of how significant each of these conceptions is involves selecting any one of them and trying to imagine how a principal could *not* be seeking to further this aspect, as part of normal school life and development.

Notwithstanding this categorisation, this section considers four significant roles of principalship which directly influence New Zealand principals' professional learning requirements. Based on commonly discussed educational management and leadership ideas, it covers principals as Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), lead learners, sustainers and builders of leadership and situational leaders. This is followed by a brief discussion of a small sample of other theories of leadership to reinforce the concept of complexity of roles and the ever-changing landscape of expectations.

2.1 Principal as CEO

As a consequence of 'Tomorrow's Schools', the 'self-management' regime adopted in 1989 for New Zealand schools, principals have taken on a wider range of responsibilities than those attributed to chief executive officers of businesses:

> The principal is expected to be everything to everyone, and the skills demanded are so wide – human resource manager, building and infrastructure overseer, chief executive officer, instructional leader, cultural guru, community leader, major arbiter with school boards, fund manager and fund raiser, seeker of 'donations', and marketer to foreign fee-paying students. So much of this work is managerial and entrepreneurial, rather than instructional. (Hattie, 2008, p. 8)

Principals have expectations placed on them by a variety of organisations and individuals – the Ministry of Education (MoE), school accountants and auditors,

the Education Review Office (ERO), the national School Trustees Association (NZSTA), the school's Board of Trustees (BoT), teacher unions, unions representing administration, grounds, caretaking and cleaning staff, the Department of Labour for Occupational Safety and Health concerns, current students, local contributing schools, parents' organisations such as Parent Teacher Association or Home School Association, and a host of other agencies and organisations such as the police, Child Youth and Family New Zealand (CYF), school bus operators, iwi, local health authorities and the school neighbours. Principals ignore this disparate range of interest and influence groups at their peril.

Expectations often appear to have outstripped the supply and quality of training and support (Ingvarson, Anderson, Gronn, & Jackson, 2006). Hattie's (2008) observation, that much of principals' work is managerial and entrepreneurial rather than instructional, has implications for their professional learning. As virtually all New Zealand principals follow a career path of promotion beyond teaching to a school leadership position, many of the new skills of principalship have to be acquired 'on the go'. Although teachers bring many transferable skills to principalship, such as organisation, communication, and experience in curriculum and pedagogy, moving from teacher to principal inevitably requires an expansion of skills, knowledge and understanding in a number of areas.

There has been minimal and variable specific training for principalship provided in New Zealand; the Aspiring Principals' programme and First Time Principals' programme constitute the main opportunities, yet not all teachers choose to use them before or soon after taking on principal leadership. A website sponsored by the MoE, (http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/ Leadership-development/First-time-Principals-modules), provides information and access to resources. Evidence from this website suggests that training of prospective and beginning principals centres around the recently developed (2008) Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework (KLP).

There is no mandatory requirement to gain a postgraduate qualification relevant to educational leadership prior to applying for principal positions. While detailed

evaluation of the effectiveness of the Aspiring Principals' and First Time Principals' programmes falls outside the scope of this thesis, this training is usually appreciated by principals. There is recognition that learning is not over after the first five years of principalship, partly because of the complexity of the tasks, but also because of the unpredictability of the CEO role and the ever-changing nature of the job.

In alluding to the paradigm shift to self managing schools in the 1990's, Cathie Wylie, Chief Researcher of the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) notes that:

> Principals took on new administrative roles with minimal training and support. The hours our principals spend on administration remain the highest in international comparisons; and while many principals have relished much about their decision-making, the price has been a growing sense that this has come at the cost of their ability to focus on educational leadership. (Wylie, 2009, p. 12)

Wylie comments that almost half of principals work an average of sixty hours per week. Foskett and Lumby (2003) quote Van der Westhuizen and Legotlo as saying "It is not only in poor countries that principals find their mission statement buried beneath a pile of problems" (p. 186).

Overseas, the continued training of experienced principals is not universally endorsed in its current form. Lashway (2006) explains the situation in the USA:

> Because the rapidly changing nature of school leadership implies the need for ongoing training, more attention is also being paid to the often-ignored issue of professional development for principals. Kenneth Leithwood and colleagues acknowledge that "we know little about which experiences are helpful and why" (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, Wahlstrom, & Improvement, 2004, p. 67). They note, though, that the complexity of the principal's world requires learning opportunities that are authentic and job embedded. (There is little need to present principals with textbook problems when their day is already filled with real problems involving real people). (p. 24)

In 2000, England opened the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). This has become the focal point for educational leadership training in England, and has been regarded by many as an outstanding success. Bush (2006) notes that it has fundamentally changed the landscape of leadership and management development by establishing a suite of impressive programmes, developing a notable electronic platform, and becoming a major sponsor of school leadership research. Its overall conception, scale, and execution have been called "a paradigm shift" (p. 508).

An example of a tertiary institute in New Zealand responding to the needs of experienced principals occurred between 2000 and 2005. One hundred experienced secondary principals participated in a ten day Institute of Educational Leadership (IEL) residential training course run by Unitech New Zealand (Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005).

Between 2005 and 2008, experienced principals could apply to attend a week long national principals' development planning centre (PDPC), sponsored by the MoE. Individual assessment data of principal participants covering eleven aspects of leadership were triangulated between school community, centre activities and a psychometric test (OPQ). This became the basis of the formulation of a personal development plan. The ministry closed the centre in December 2008, citing that it did not align sufficiently with the still developing KLP framework.

The context in which New Zealand principals exercise leadership has been described as 'hybrid' (Grace, 1991) since schools combine social-democratic goals, such as community participation and egalitarianism, with neo-liberal market drivers of efficiency and competition. Hence the demands on New Zealand principals, experienced or beginning, are unique in their range and complex in their nature.

Examples of recent demands on schools at a national level include the need to prepare a pandemic plan in response to the H1N1 influenza outbreak, requirements on primary schools to report student progress against national standards, and pressure within school communities to develop protocols and

procedures to govern the rapidly spreading use and misuse of cell phone technology by students.

There are continued calls for secondary schools in particular to educate their students in terms of driving habits and the negative consequences of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs. Principals as CEOs are accountable to their Boards in managing these challenges as best they can, often with little specific training or support on each emerging issue.

There are business connotations linked to the acronym 'CEO' and the school organisation draws heavily on factory terminology (Beare & Slaughter, 1994). Yet school-as-business is only one aspect of the principal's job.

2.1.1 Manager versus leader

A search of the literature gives the impression that a dichotomy exists between management and leadership, with leadership the more glamorous and management the lesser in status: "In the mid 1980's, as part of leadership exceptionalism, commentators began to canonize leadership and to demonise management" (Gronn, 2003b, p. 269). For principals, it might appear that skills for sound management can and should be picked up during a week-long preparatory course, while aspiring to be an excellent leader is regarded as a longer term mission. Data at the end of this section suggests this is a distortion of the reality.

There has been a large amount of literature developed around leadership and management in schools (Bush, 2003) particularly over the past two decades. Gronn (2003a) describes this as a "vast leadership industry out there of truly staggering proportions in which governments, corporations, academics, schools and school systems have a huge material vested interest, such that the discourse of leadership has become ubiquitous" (p. 269). Much of it has been transferred from sectors outside of education, such as business management (Handy, 1984; Senge, 2000).

Bush counters this supposedly easy transference: “The overriding purpose of schools and colleges is to promote effective teaching and learning. These core issues are unique to education and ‘best practice outside education’ is unlikely to be of any help in addressing these professional issues” (2003, p. 14). Bush and Baldridge (1978) caution against adopting ‘modern management’ techniques from business or other non-educational settings without careful evaluation and adaption. However, Fullan and Ballew (2001) contend that there is much in common between education and business in terms of leadership.

Morrison (2002) describes ‘leadership’ and ‘management’ as controversial concepts within the field (of research), alluding to a lack of agreement in terms of what each label means - conceptual specificity, and also to the hegemony that surrounds such terms. Dimmock (1999) distinguishes the three terms as “higher order tasks to improve staff, student and school performance (leadership), routine maintenance of present operations (management) and lower order duties (administration)” (p. 442), while acknowledging there are other definitions.

Conceptual distinctions between management and leadership have a historical and social context (Grace, 1995). Grace, who based some of his ideas on his experiences in New Zealand just prior to the advent of Tomorrow’s Schools in 1989, describes English head teachers in the 1960s and 1970s:

> The ideology of professionalism proclaimed the powerful conjunction of knowledge and skills, demonstrable meritocratic excellence, expertness and specialised understanding, with dedication and moral commitment to notions of individual and public good. Headteachers as leading professionals were able to exploit to the full this ideology in their relations both with parents and with governing bodies. Professionalism was a powerful form in which autonomy could be claimed and practised. The headteacher advised the governors as the formal school leaders from a position of considerable strength as the manifest school leader and as the acknowledged leading professional in the school (Grace, 1995, p. 14).

By the 1990s, there was a growing recognition of the importance of both efficient management and good leadership in schools (Bush, 2003). Bush continues: “The

leadership dimension embraces concepts of vision, values and transformational leadership. Managing capably is an important requirement but leadership is perceived as being even more significant" (2003, p. ix). Bush presents six possible management models, which he regards as broad categories rather than distinct models, and emphasises the need for principals to understand the characteristics of each of them because they provide a "shock of recognition" (2003, p. 179) by containing essential components of theory.

He quotes Baldridge and colleagues (1978) in a note of caution about attempting to find and use a single management model: "there is a pleasant parsimony about having a single model that summarises a complicated world for us. This is not bad except when we allow our models to blind us to important features of an organization" (p. 178).

Principals therefore need an understanding about the theory behind effective educational management and how it might practically be applied to various aspects. Examples include payroll, teacher performance, health and safety, computer systems for student management and administration, employment law, security systems, job descriptions, and supervision for non-teaching staff. Well-communicated and sound management has a positive effect on the entire school. Books have been written on the ever-changing legalities under which principals and Boards must run schools, even though the law is only one aspect of the job. Operating a school efficiently is a pre-requisite to enabling other indicators of success to emerge.

Cuban, as cited in Bush (2003) gives emphasis to both effective management and sound leadership as components of organizational activity, defining leadership in terms of influencing others' actions to reach desired ends, and management as "maintaining efficiently and effectively current organizational arrangements" (p. 4). Leithwood (1999) describes this perspective as a 'bifocal' approach.

A new discourse of school leadership arose in England and New Zealand in the late 1980s and 1990s (Grace, 1995); one of 'market leadership' and 'market management'. It is regarded by some theorists (Gronn, 2003b; Thrupp, 2005;

Wright, 2001) as a New Right ideological attack upon the weaknesses of state education arising from the previous autonomy, lack of accountability and insulated nature of the education system. These theorists suggest that a dominant imperative has been the institutionalization of market forces in education, with a set of terminologies and a mindset to go with it.

There has emerged a new language with an emphasis on choice, self management of schools, the 'delivery' of the curriculum, the equivalent of league tables (national NCEA results in New Zealand) as a measuring instrument of a school's success, talk of 'outputs', 'value added', and competition between schools. The impact on this marketing mindset has been to reconstitute school leadership as "entrepreneurial vision and energy. Without such vision and energy and the ability to impart it to other teachers, the very survival of the school may be at stake" (Grace, 1995, p. 42).

Viewing and enacting leadership in these terms has implications for the skill sets of principals. Their ability to be 'streetwise', to exploit marketing opportunities for their schools and to pre-empt marketing and zoning manoeuvres from their competitors, has challenged traditional concepts of leaders. In effect, New Zealand and English principals, along with those in other countries operating under a 'education as commodity' regime, have collectively resisted abandoning morally and ethically superior leadership models and sought to find alternative leadership models which can operate in at least an uneasy alliance with their market responsibilities.

Some of these leadership approaches will be discussed later in the chapter. The implication is that 'market leadership' has been added to the considerable repertoire of skills and attributes New Zealand principals must possess.

The competency-based framework used as the basis for the mandatory principal appraisal system in New Zealand has strong business connotations with the performance of the principal being assessed as that of a manager. This has been partially mitigated by recent additions of developmental aspects to existing accountability indicators. Although there was some principal involvement in this

revision, it was not carried out solely by principals. “Most professions would find it odd that governments and employing authorities have played the major role in developing standards for teachers and school leaders” (Ingvarson, et al., 2006). This quote, while addressing a similar context in an Australian state, appears applicable in Aotearoa New Zealand.

The Professional Standards for Primary Principals contains four sections, headed Culture, Pedagogy, Systems and Partnerships and Networks, (NZSTA, 2009). The “Systems” section requires principals to “Develop and use management systems to support and enhance student learning.” One of the professional standards contained within this section is to: “Effectively manage and administer finance, property and health and safety systems.” (2009, p. 14). The only other mention of management functions within the seven standards is: “Effectively manage personnel with a focus on maximising the effectiveness of all staff members.”

The professional standards of manager are therefore placed as a subsection of one of the four sets of professional standards which encompass the broader notion of leadership. In conclusion, experienced principals are required to manage schools to high standards, and are appraised on their ability to do so. Two out of twenty six professional standards address specific management standards for primary (and intermediate) principals. By comparison, three out of twenty eight professional standards for secondary and area principals relate to aspects traditionally understood to be management.

One indication of the importance of principals effectively managing their school is obtained from data on statutory interventions. Limited statutory managers (LSMs) are appointed by the MoE for a fixed term in a school if there are significant concerns over finance, personnel, student achievement or management/governance issues. These aspects can be broadly categorised as management or leadership issues.

An approach under the Official Information Act 1982 requested comparative data of how many interventions were made in 2008 as a result of perceived issues with

administration/management compared with curriculum/pedagogy (C.Harwood, personal communication, July 21, 2010). The results are given in Table 2.1:

Table 2.1 Lead Issues for Statutory Interventions for 2008

Section 78M (LSM) Statutory Interventions in place throughout 2008			
Total	With a lead issue of administration or management	With a lead issue of student achievement	With multiple lead issues
145	130	6	9

The overwhelming majority of interventions were recorded as administration or management. There is no data giving the years of experience of the principals affected by these interventions. The conclusion for experienced principals must be that they are more likely, under the current national accountability regime, to risk a statutory intervention from a perceived management issue than from broader educational leadership matters.

2.1.2 Strategic planner and leader of change

Planning and reporting for the improvement of teaching and learning was mandated by the Education Standards Act 2001 and is now required of all schools. Although planning has now become the focus topic of the first training module for First Time Principals Programme on the KLP website, principals did not previously have access to good quality learning resources on planning. Personal anecdotal evidence gained from working with a wide variety of PDPC principal participants confirmed a range of ability and understanding around what constitutes good planning in practice, such as desirable structure and headings within an effective written plan focussed on consultation and engagement.

The KLP website gives examples of plans from nine imaginary schools, in order to promote and describe in detail the standards expected by the MoE. Plans and reports prepared by the Boards of Trustees, with the principal almost always the most significant instigator and co-ordinator, are submitted for scrutiny and approval to MoE officials on an annual basis. The MoE has extended support by offering calendars linking annual and strategic planning requirements to a variety of other tasks expected of principals and their schools; e.g.

http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Managing-your-school/Guides-for-managing-your-school/Secondary-principals-annual-calendar.

Many may regard this information as helpful advice to busy principals in order to encourage high standards of planning with the minimum of fuss; others may view this development as yet another intrusion of the MoE in micro-managing principals under the guise of helpful support, with a subsequent reduction in autonomy. The advice, while overwhelming in quantity, appears sensible and relevant, such as checking the school on the first wet cold day.

There has been some criticism of strategic planning in schools due to the turbulent times we live in, "making the predictive horizon shorter and shorter" (Prahalad & Hamel, 1989, p. 66). Some theorists contend that the very act of preparing a strategic plan unnecessarily limits those involved from continuing to plan with "strategic intent" (Davies, 1998) by disengaging the mindsets of those involved from newly emerging factors and focusing solely on implementing goals that may be losing relevancy. It is the principal's role to support the mandatory processes around collegial planning as well as implementing the plans within this changing environment.

Cardno (2005) advocates for school-wide professional development linked strongly to school strategic goals and operating holistically in a planned and cohesive manner. She observes the traps of smorgasbord approaches to staff professional development, including misuse of call back days in holidays, and do-it-all in case you miss something vital approaches. The principal's role in this scenario is to influence the school's professional development culture to ensure staff are competently engaged in the plan implementation.

It is assumed that principals are well versed in change theory and have the skills to carry out large scale systemic change to meet the school strategic goals. However, a search of the literature on organisational change suggests that such change is anything but straightforward. From the work of Argyris and Schön (1974) through to that of Fullan (2001) and onwards, it is clear that instigating and sustaining worthwhile change is a complex and deep issue. A meta-analysis of

existing research on change theory (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) produced twenty one leadership responsibilities relating to change leaders carrying out first order (within local standard frames of reference based on previous experience) change.

In order of priority, in terms of frequency and emphasis in the meta-analysis, the first five were: (a) monitoring/evaluating; (b) the building of a learning culture; (c) ideals/beliefs; (d) knowledge in curriculum, assessment and instruction, and (e) involvement in curriculum, assessment and instruction. There is a large skill set involved with these alone, yet there are sixteen further attributes that Marzano warns are important, if not as significant: "The list is daunting. If all these responsibilities are necessary to effectively manage the day-to-day operations of the school, how can a leader possibly accomplish the task?" (2005, p. 70).

When the principal exercises leadership to institute the more desirable and potentially effective *second* order change (using ideas and innovations from *outside* the normal reference framework), there are seven key responsibilities from the original set of twenty one. The first is being knowledgeable of how innovation will affect curriculum, instruction and assessment practices and "providing conceptual guidance in these areas" (Marzano, et al., 2005, p. 70). This is an apt illustration of the complexity of the task and the depth and clarity that principals must bring to change development in their schools.

2.1.3 Trustee

New Zealand principals automatically occupy the position of trustee on the school's Board, along with elected parent representatives (the Board majority), the staff representative and, in the case of schools with students Year 9 or above, the student representative (Kerr, 2010). Consequently the principal has to manage two roles during contact with other trustees – that of CEO/Board employee and that of partner trustee. Not only does the principal have to learn the skills of being the school's most senior educational leader on the Board, but also those of governance. In addition, the principal must learn how to mediate both skills sets according to the situation.

In larger higher decile schools, where there is an increased likelihood of trustees representing the professions (such as lawyers and accountants) and trades (such as building and plumbing), the principal has the advantage of a larger, more immediate pool of relevant knowledge and skills to use in the development of the school. Examples include those with accounting knowledge assisting with school financial policies and procedures, medical practitioners assisting in pandemic planning, and trades people taking responsibility for long term planning and shorter term maintenance planning of buildings and grounds. Local experts, such as kaumatua (Maori leaders) or police officers might be co-opted to provide help in particular areas.

The more rural and isolated the schools, the lower the decile rating, and the higher the proportion of Maori students in the schools, the less likely that the principals will have available such a range of people as trustees (Wylie, 1997). Often the principal has to compensate for any perceived deficiency amongst trustees or staff, which impacts on workload, task allocation, immediate access to support and professional growth. An analysis in 2005 (Hodgen & Wylie, 2005) of over 1500 New Zealand principals found 59% stated that their relationship with the school Board was "happy and relaxed, but I do most of the work" (2005, p. 45).

An earlier survey of over 110 school Boards, commissioned by the School Trustees Association (Wylie, 1997) lists the most challenging aspects of being on the Board as finances/budgeting, legislation/changes to Board requirements, the amount of work and time, as well as paperwork. In summary, the principal as trustee assumes a unique yet varied and diverse skill set depending on the school location.

2.2 Principal as lead learner

Before proceeding with a description of the theory around principals as lead learners, a word of caution is necessary. Leithwood and associates (2004) note the 'forms and fads' nature of descriptions of educational leadership and warn how easy it is to become confused about the evidence of what 'successful' leadership

really is. They offer three conclusions which help frame comments made in following sections:

Firstly many labels used in the literature to signify different forms or styles of leadership mask the generic functions of leadership. They explain:

> Labels such as "instructional," "participative," "democratic," "transformational," "moral," and "strategic" capture different stylistic or methodological approaches to accomplishing the same two essential objectives of helping the organization set broad directions and influencing members to move in those directions. "Instructional leadership," for example, encourages a focus on improving the classroom practices of teachers as the direction for the school. "Transformational leadership," on the other hand, draws attention to a broader array of school and classroom conditions that may need to be changed if learning is to improve... The lesson here is that we need to be sceptical about the "leadership by adjective". (Leithwood, et al., 2004, p. 6)

Secondly principals and teachers are admonished to be "instructional leaders" without much clarity about what this means. It is a fashionable term which hints of keeping teaching and learning to the forefront of any decision making but is sloganistic. Leithwood et.al. recommend the linking of the term instructional leadership with one of the more well-developed models that have emerged, suggesting Hallinger's model (1999) as being the most researched.

Finally, Leithwood and associates (2004) assert that distributed leadership is "in danger of becoming no more than a slogan unless it is given more thorough and thoughtful consideration" (p. 7). There is overlap with many other terms such as 'collaborative' and 'democratic'.

NCSL researcher Geoff Southworth proposes that leaders must model good learning (2005), claiming that making learning central to their work is an essential task of successful school leaders. Apart from modelling as leaders of learning, principals must "consistently communicate the centrality of student learning, articulate the values that support a focus on powerful, equitable learning, and pay public attention to efforts to support learning" (2005, p. 82). This implies

full involvement in the learning journey of the school, which is articulated in the following sections.

2.2.1 Links between leadership and student outcomes

Principals have a small but significant impact on student outcomes which is largely achieved indirectly through others, mainly teachers (Hallinger & Heck, 2004). "Achieving results through others is the essence of leadership and it is the 'avenues of leader influence' that matter most (Hallinger & Heck, 2003, p. 220). One of these avenues is instructional leadership.

2.2.2 Instructional leadership

Instructional leadership is perhaps the most popular theme in educational leadership over the past two decades (Leithwood, et al., 1999; Marzano, et al., 2005), despite not being well defined. As well as being the 'lead learner', an instructional leader must exhibit an absolute commitment to student learning, as a 'leader of learning' (Fink, 2005). An over emphasis on this however would reduce education to a mechanistic and unpalatable endeavour. As Bush comments: **"**Instructional leadership is a very important dimension because it targets the school's central activities, teaching and learning. However, this paradigm underestimates other aspects of school life, such as sport, socialisation, student welfare, and self esteem" (2003, pp. 16-17).

It is unrealistic that a single person in a leadership position can become the expert in all aspects of curriculum and pedagogy. This is particularly noticeable in secondary schools where a specialist teacher at advanced levels may be the sole staff member with the expertise to deliver a particular subject. The concept of instructional leadership is not meant to imply principal as expert teacher over all fields; the influence is by proxy: "the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students" (Leithwood, et al., 1999, p. 8). A Tasmanian study of 131 principals (Mulford, 2007) suggests that principals do not undertake instructional leadership

by themselves and, particularly in secondary schools, do little monitoring of classroom teaching despite this a key aspect to improving student outcomes.

There are various other attempts by theorists to categorise instructional leadership, (Blase, 2004; Southworth, 2002), but the main theme is the involvement and support of other staff, particularly through the initiation and involvement in their professional development and dialogue (Bush, 2007b).

How are principals to develop as instructional leaders? Using research carried out by Fink and Resnick (2001), Fullan (2002b) lists five sets of interrelated strategies. They are: (a) nested learning communities, (b) principal institutes, (c) leadership for instruction (support and study groups), (d) peer learning, and (e) individual coaching. And as Timperley (2005) comments, if instructional leadership is to be distributed across people and situations, then skills in promoting such learning also need to be distributed, which suggests one more task for the principal.

2.3 Principal as sustainer and builder of leadership

2.3.1 Leader versus leadership.

There has been a dynamic interplay between the concepts of 'leader' and 'leadership' over the past two decades, with no definitive view of how to best articulate their presence in schools. Senge (2000) explains the relationship as follows:

> Our traditional view of leaders – as special people who set the direction, make the key decisions, and energize the troops – is deeply rooted in an individualistic and non-systemic worldview. . . . leaders and heroes – are great men (and occasionally women) who rise to the fore in times of crisis. So long as such myths prevail, they reinforce a focus on short term events and charismatic heroes rather than on systemic forces and collective learning. Leadership in learning organisations centres on subtler and ultimately more important work. In a learning organisation, leaders' roles differ dramatically from that of the charismatic decision maker. . . . These roles require new skills: the ability to build shared vision, to bring to the surface and challenge

> prevailing mental models, and to foster more systemic patterns of thinking. In short, leaders in learning organisations are responsible for building organisations where people are continually expanding their capabilities to shape their future – that is, leaders are responsible for learning.(p. 22)

The new skills required are likely to fall upon the principal in the first instance, heroic leader or not. It may be desirable and even essential to distribute leadership throughout the staff and school, but the initiation and fostering of this process of distribution will involve the principal, requiring finely tuned skills in communication, planning and system development.

2.3.2 The building of leadership capacity: Distributed leadership.

Counter to the concept of principal-as-super-leader has been an upsurge of interest in distributed leadership. Gronn (2003a) sees this in terms of the increased complexity and intensity of work in schools and universities. He notes: "Computerised work practices . . . demand previously unimagined levels of technical mastery and cognitive flexibility on the part of employees while simultaneously vastly extending the scope and reach of the organisation's collective 'intelligence'. (p. 286)

Timperley (2005) comments on its emergence:

> Distributed leadership is a relatively new theoretical concept. Individual leaders, their personal characteristics and behaviour, the standards they should meet (Gronn 2003), and the influences they exert on followers (Camburn, Rowan, & Taylor, 2003) have dominated the leadership literature. Yet, leadership has always been distributed within organizations; it is a little surprising that we have taken so long to recognize it and develop the associated conceptual frameworks.(p. 418)

What is distributed leadership? There are many related terms describing aspects of distributed leadership, such as 'dispersed', 'democratic' and 'shared' leadership (Arrowsmith, 2005), making up an "alphabet soup" of terms (MacBeath, 2003). Its connection to leadership capacity as an antidote to superhuman leaders is described by Lashway (2006):

> Another body of work urges more far-reaching and complex forms of "distributed" leadership, taking advantage of the leadership capacity of everyone in the organization . . . . These efforts raise the possibility that thoughtfully structuring the principalship to fit human capabilities may be more productive than trying to recruit candidates with superhuman attributes. (p. 27)

Distributed leadership is a way of analysing and understanding leadership practice (Spillane & Sherer, 2004). Three characteristics were identified via a review of the literature by Woods, Bennett, Harvey, & Wise (2004). It is 'owned' by a group rather than an individual such as a principal, and is the consequence of 'concertive action'. There is a variety of expertise across the group of those exercising distributed leadership, with open boundaries allowing others to participate. A study of English schools that appeared to have successfully engaged in distributed leadership led to five main common qualities being observed: (a) self-confident and self-effacing leadership, (b) clarity of organisational structure and accountabilities, (c) investment in leadership capability, (d) a culture of trust and (e) a specific turning point which galvanised the organisation into action (Arrowsmith, 2005).

A principal and staff wishing to cultivate distributed leadership would require considerable knowledge and understanding of the attitudes, skills, values and strategies that would create and sustain such an environment. They would have to learn how to understand leadership-in-action as a "dynamic organisational entity" (Harris, 2008). Although there is evidence of a potential positive effect on teacher effectiveness and student engagement (Leithwood, et al., 2004) there are also dangers of nominations of teachers by their colleagues to distributed leadership positions being made for reasons other than the leadership expertise required (Timperley, 2005). Also, some claim that distributed leadership is not inherently superior to other forms of leadership (Harris, 2008).

Distributed leadership is strongly linked to capacity building, which has been defined as "the collective competency of the school as an entity to bring about effective change" (Harvey, 2003, p. 22). Consequently the role of the principal is

in not only developing personal leadership styles conducive to this collective competency, but also developing these distributive styles simultaneously in others within the school community (Leithwood et al., 2007). The professional learning is therefore multi dimensional.

2.4 Principal as leader in context – situational leadership

One of the signals that the advent of 'Tomorrow's Schools' sent to NZ principals was the value to be placed on self-management (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992). This particular perspective positioned each school, and those who worked there, independently of other schools, with unspoken implications regarding how professional development was to occur. The market model, which redefined every neighbouring school as a competitor, created a kind of bemused Balkanisation of schools; by structural definition it eroded habits of collegiality that might have been sustained to a greater extent in a non-competing network of schools.

Nevertheless, large scale professional learning contracts did occur, such as during national curriculum reviews, the introduction of NCEA, and via ICT clusters, where groups of schools were funded to implement approved collegial professional development around the interface of new technologies, pedagogy and curriculum.

There is plenty of research acknowledging that each leadership situation is unique (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood & Hallinger, 2002; Leithwood, et al., 1999; Yukl & Yukl, 2002), and consequently a responsibility of the principal is to identify the specific needs and possibilities of the particular school and staff. Leadership is highly contextualised (Ray, Clegg, & Gordon, 2004). Situational theory was originally focused on the 'maturity' of the followers (Blanchard & Hersey, 1997), but is best understood in the notion that leadership style must be tailored to suit the capabilities of each person.

Skills are categorised around each players' willingness and ability to perform a task with four resulting situational leadership styles of telling, participating,

selling and delegating (Marzano, et al., 2005). Principals have to develop the capability of diagnosing which style is most likely to be effective for each person in any given situation and to be able to communicate a variety of styles accordingly (Blanchard, 2007). Genuine leadership begins with the understanding and thoughtful interpretation of processes experienced by individuals: leaders need to focus on their people as a priority (Begley, 2008).

Situational leadership extends to ethical considerations (Stefkovich & Shapiro, 2003). It involves the principal employing multiple ethical lenses to find a path through ethical dilemmas. This may involve using ethics of critique (comprehensively analysing all factors pertaining to a situation), care (focussing on the people and not just the policies) and finally ethics of justice, to reach equitable decisions that maximise benefits for all (Begley, 2008).

2.5 Where's Wally? Locating principals in various other modern concepts of leadership

"Where's Wally" is the name of a series of illustrated children's books created in the late nineteen eighties and nineties. Each heavily detailed page depicts a distinct busy scene in which the central character, Wally, is hidden amongst all the other participants, not because he is trying to hide but more because of the over whelming complexity of the location and activities. This is offered as a metaphor for principals grappling with numerous concepts of leadership.

2.5.1 Transactional and transformational leadership

The terms 'transactional' and 'transformational' leadership originated with James Burns (1978). Transactional leadership has direct links to a managerial ethic of trading something for something else: "I will teach these classes for a certain level of remuneration and under certain work conditions." The principal-as-CEO appoints staff on a contractual basis to match the implications of each collective and individual employment contract against the perceived needs of the school.

Transformational leadership is seen as higher order, focusing on development rather than maintaining the status quo (Marzano, et al., 2005), and acting from a

collegial rather than a political management model, (Bush, 2003). The process by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes is crucial.

Eight dimensions of transformational leadership are offered by Leithwood (1994), including creating a productive school culture. This aspect is considered in section 2.5.3.

2.5.2 Designer leadership.

Rather than the principal and the school governance having most of the control over the school, some theorists contend that despite the rhetoric of self-management, much of the control of the operations and strategic direction of schools lies centrally. This theme was introduced in Section 2.1.1; its pervasiveness and potential impact warrants further consideration. The concept of principals having to respond to these "technocratic emphases" (Hargreaves, 2009) has been called 'bastard leadership' (Wright, 2001) and 'designer leadership' (Gronn, 2003a).

England is the source of some of this criticism, related to its NCSL. Gronn suggests this has become a vehicle by which neo-liberal forces, primarily governments, can directly influence the training of principals and so regulate education from a distance. Thrupp (2005) notes the almost monopolistic control the NCSL has on training prospective principals, to the detriment of previously established leadership and management departments in universities. Its singular influence, while better than the previous piecemeal approach to principal training, is such that Thrupp sees it as an institution vulnerable to direct political interference and, by definition, all those who use its services are also affected.

The quality of its courses has been criticised: "The NCSL has also pursued scale at the expense of depth, demanded too little from its participants, and overemphasized practice at the expense of theory" (Bush, 2006, p. 508). In an earlier article Bush (2004) notes that the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) "provides a worthwhile starting point... but is below the intellectual level regarded as necessary by several other countries" (p. 246),

mostly providing professional qualifications rather than academic ones (Gronn, 2003b).

The advent of fast networked computer technology with specialist software relating to school and student management systems, while making some administrative functions in school simpler, transparent and timely, also contain the propensity for regular if not constant checks by central agencies. These aspects of the New Zealand educational system challenge the autonomy of educational leadership.

For instance, school rolls have been traditionally determined on 1st March annually, and that figure guaranteed funding for the remainder of the year, allowing the school to plan accordingly. Because rolls are now recorded electronically, the Ministry of Education has the capability of monitoring fluctuations in student numbers and recalculating funding on a term by term basis, as well as monitoring absentee rates which could be the consequence of truancy.

This dynamic interplay between school autonomy and central accountability has been commented on internationally:

> An important factor in educational policy is the division of responsibilities among national, regional and local authorities, as well as schools. Placing more decision-making authority at lower levels of the educational system has been a key aim in educational restructuring and systemic reform in many countries since the early 1980s. Yet, simultaneously, there have been frequent examples of strengthening the influence of central authorities in some areas. For example, a freeing of "process" and financial regulations may be accompanied by an increase in the control of output from the centre, and by national curriculum frameworks (OECD, 2004).

Principals must straddle these emerging centralised systems while maintaining sufficient autonomy to genuinely influence the teaching and learning in the school. This is summed up as follows:-

> Under her left foot the ‘white horse’ of educational enlightenment tosses her mane to rejoice at Michael Fullan, reflective practice, teacher-led reform,

> evidence informed professionalism, creativity, networks and the lateral spread of innovation. The rider's right foot perches on the flare-nostrilled 'black horse' of competition and managerialism, hierarchies of status, residual Woodheadism, central direction and blame culture. Adrenaline pumps, the band plays. Can these fiery beasts be made to dance together? (Wilkins, 2003, p. 9)

A footnote on the autonomy on New Zealand schools helps with perspective. A 1995 classification of OECD educational systems according to the proportion of decisions made by the school as compared with outside agencies, placed New Zealand as an extreme country. Meuret and Scheerens (1995) note that over 70% of decisions affecting New Zealand schools involved the school, compared with just 20% of decisions school-based in Switzerland. A lack of comparable research since precludes determining if the percentages have changed significantly over the past fifteen years.

2.5.3 Cultural leadership

Lumby and Foskett (2008) itemise how the notion of culture is used ubiquitously as a key variable which reflects values, philosophy, gender, religion, politics, history and ethnicity (giving references to relevant sources of theory and research for each aspect). They comment on its all-encompassing nature while being difficult to discern and change. Nevertheless, they then propose that "cultural competency, the ability to recognize, analyze and engage purposefully with culture at the macro and micro levels is a foundational skill, which positions educational leadership as critical contributors to shaping society and not just the school" (2008, p. 44). Progressing learning on cultural leadership is essential therefore for the principal as well as the school community.

Summary of Part One

A number of leadership theories have been touched on in this section. It is important to understand the place of such theories. While 'leadership by adjective' (Leithwood, 2007) can offer new insights into aspects of principalship, too much emphasis on one particular approach encourages a belief that the particular theory offers more than insights into a 'slice' of the whole job (Mulford, 2008, p. 38) and so downplays other possibilities.

Principals are likely to be exposed to a range of leadership theories, needed to formulate policy and practice around data and facts drawn from their schools: "Facts cannot simply be left to speak for themselves" (Bush, 2003, p. 195). Theorizing is a form of meaning-making in order to impose conceptual order on reality (Brookfield, 2005); principals need to develop "conceptual pluralism" in order to select the most appropriate approach to a given situation (Bolman & Deal, 1984).

This implies developing a 'conceptual tool-kit' to be deployed while diagnosing specific problems and evaluating the significance and worth of different interpretations arriving from the diagnosis (Bush, 2003).

Part Two: The principal as a human being

2.7 Finding and using leadership support.

In this section the focus shifts from external theories of leadership that the experienced principal might be expected to acquire and enact, to the phenomenon of a person, usually an experienced teacher, becoming a principal in a New Zealand school, and engaging in forms of professional learning to better cope with and embrace the job.

Five perspectives that influence the individual are considered: (a) the New Zealand educational leadership policy framework (KLP), (b) the impact and availability of School Support Services' Leading and Managing Advisers, (c) various concepts relating to stages of leadership, (d) professional learning forums, and (e) coaching and mentoring. These perspectives will assist in developing a sense of the interplay between individual need and available resources.

2.7.1 Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) Framework.

The KLP acts as a portal to access information and to provide a model of what constitutes 'Kiwi Leadership' in Aotearoa New Zealand schools (Ministry of Education, 2010a). It is a focal point for understanding the ongoing development of a more cohesive organisational framework around professional development of educational leadership. There is immediate access to academic articles on subjects such as leading professional learning, bullying, and evidence-based leadership. Information on specific events, such as those for aspiring or first time principals, is readily available.

The range of articles includes a variety of perspectives on aspects of education. There does not appear to be significant filtering to one narrow philosophy or perspective, although this remains an open question. Experienced principals are catered for specifically by a webpage which links to a number of articles, on-line discussions, career pathways and news. There is an explanation of the website, based around its use as a support tool for the Professional Leadership Plan 2009-2010 (PLP), which involves 300 experienced tumuaki (principals) in an 18 month trial programme to focus on change leadership to improve student achievement outcomes. This entails learning in regional clusters, funded by the government.

Internationally, educational leaders have had a limited say in the development of their professional learning systems (Ingvarson, et al., 2006). In Aotearoa New Zealand an External Policy Group, with representatives from the Ministry of Education, professional organisations within the education sector, as well as academics and researchers, is acknowledged as the source of development of the PLP.

This suggests a nation-wide collegial initiative to develop a more unified and cohesive system around the professional learning of educational leaders in New Zealand. It also reinforces the sense that the system of professional learning for experienced principals is currently in a hiatus, while the two year trial is implemented and reviewed.

2.7.2 School Support Services: Leading and Managing Advisors

School Support Services are funded within each region according to the national proportion of teachers in the region. For instance, the University of Waikato has about 18% of teachers across primary, intermediate and secondary sectors for all mediums of learning, so 18% of the funding is allocated. This is a blunt instrument: the University of Waikato region has 22% of the principals in 2010, 32% of all Maori students, 40% of kura (schools run by Maori with a strong emphasis on things Maori) operating, yet only 5% of Pacifika students. Behind each data are specific needs. There are a high proportion of small isolated rural schools, a high proportion of schools with a high Maori roll and principals whom are most likely first time.

As the amount of funding has not kept pace with cost increases over the years , the number of leading and managing advisers in the University of Waikato region has reduced from nearly twelve a decade ago to 7.3 (full time equivalents) in 2010. These advisers are contracted to focus on 'areas of national importance' as determined by the Ministry of Education as a reflection of government priorities.

The four foci in 2009 were first time principals, middle and senior leaders, principals in schools where learning was at risk, and whole school development. Advisers report on areas of practice extracted from the KLP framework. There were no strategies to support experienced principals in any specific manner within this contract. However a separate contract, held elsewhere in the University of Waikato, is responsible for the 18 month trial of professional learning clusters for experienced principals during 2009 and 2010.

Other advisers from School Support Services have traditionally worked in specific curriculum areas to support teachers in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment. The number of primary advisers has been reduced dramatically over 2009 and 2010 and funding removed from curriculum areas other than numeracy, literacy and national standards. The government has placed emphasis on cost cutting of the public service and a focus on reporting against national standards in reading, writing and numeracy at primary level.

2.7.3 Stages of leadership.

There is some research and theorising on stages of leadership, including that of principals. The KLP site includes a small section on careers for principals, with a four columned diagram showing the progression from learning, developing, leading and improving in principalship. The base of the diagram contains a further section with suggestions on 'next steps' for those in principal roles, such as secondment to national agencies, sabbaticals and informal mentoring.

England's NCSL produced in 2001 a structure for its programmes around a progression of leadership stages for educators (Bush, 2006) which places experienced principals near the end: consultant leadership, where experienced principals are encouraged to become involved in mentoring less experienced or aspiring principals.

These comments do not in themselves help to establish a sense of the phases of leadership that principals may travel through before, during and after time as experienced principals. Looking outside educational leadership theory, an interesting example taken from psychometric research identifies seven transformations of leadership, called the Leadership Development Profile (LDP) (Rooke & Torbert, 2009; Torbert & Cook-Greuter, 2004). As has been previously mentioned, popular conceptions of heroic leadership have been associated with an individual who has the vested authority to predict, plan and control outcomes in an uncomplicated world (Martínez, 2009).

There are assumptions of a linear relationship existing between organizational design, strategy, human behaviour, and the desirable outcome of organizational effectiveness . Most people imagine the leader (singular) designing the organisation to match the environment, planning the strategy and hiring the right people to help meet the desired outcomes. This logic appears to underpin the emphasis on strategic planning in Aotearoa New Zealand schools, at least to some extent.

Martinez (2009) points out that the reality of leadership does not match this; the world is often non-linear and complex. This complexity is manifest in the large

number of possible interactions and relationships between immediate staff and leaders, and all those who engage in some manner with the organisation, "frustrating expectations of simple cause-effect relationships" (p. 123). She draws on the work of Plowman and Duchon (2007) to explain the consequence of this major factor:

> Within the conventional perspective on which most research is based, leaders are viewed as either heroes, in the case of organizational effectiveness, or scapegoats when the outcome is failure, without consideration of the nonlinear and emergent properties of the situation. (Martínez, 2009, p. 123)

The LDP identifies seven progressive stages of leadership, identifying factors around an increasingly complex manner of understanding oneself and the world, interpreting experience, and interrelating with others and the environment (Martínez, 2009, p. 131). The stages are progressive in that the leader is developing capabilities of understanding in greater detail, concerning the individual, groups, systems or external agencies. The dominant "action-logic" is the default manner in which the individual interprets and explains the environment, starting with opportunist:

Table 2.2 Seven Progressive Stages of Leadership (Rooke & Torbert, 2009, p. 43)

Action- Logic	Qualities & Capabilities	Strengths
Opportunist	Focus on winning at any price. Manipulative, impulsive.	Good salesperson. Performs well in the short-term.
Diplomat	Avoids conflict. Respects existing norms.	Helps to create harmony in working groups.
Expert	Values expertise and logic. Seeks efficiency.	Productive as individual contributor.
Achiever	Effectively achieves goals through teams.	Action- and goal oriented; effective manager.
Individualist	Integrates personal and organizational values and goals.	Effective in consulting and entrepreneurial ventures.
Strategist	Understands inter dependencies among systems. Leads with combination of "fierce resolve	Effective as transformational leaders.

	and humility".	
Alchemist	Creates opportunities for transformation. Simultaneous focus on short and long term.	Creates learning organizations. Leads society -wide transformations.

Kiwi principals are likely to recognise many terms and themes from this table, despite its origin outside of schools. The challenge regarding this framework would be for principals to develop capabilities to understand and effectively operate within multi layered complexities, to build the leadership capabilities of their teams. This approach has been named by some theorists as "emergent leadership" (Lichtenstein et al., 2006, p. 2).

2.7.4 Professional learning communities.

What is the research on professional learning communities (PLCs) as a source of learning for principals? In order to position PLCs, attention is firstly turned to the context of emotional awareness and wellbeing. Unlike Eastern philosophies and many indigenous perspectives (Beatty, 2008), Western epistemologies tend to separate mind and body, reason and emotion (Damasio & Sutherland, 1995).

Yet leadership is an "inescapably emotionally challenging endeavour" (Beatty, 2005, p. 143), in which leaders must continually establish a 'non-anxious' presence from which to listen deeply to others and appreciate their perspectives, without adopting defensive modes of coping. Researchers are beginning to understand the inevitability of leaders becoming emotionally wounded (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2002) due to the incessant emotional pressure and occasional necessity of the leader managing emotionally charged crises within the school community. There is also awareness that habitual emotional labour can lead to emotional numbness (Hochschild, 1985).

To avoid a negative and sometimes debilitating emotional legacy, principals must find mechanisms to acknowledge and attend to their emotions (Beatty, 2008) in collaborative reflection with trusted others. This involves the finding of a safe space. Possibilities include clinical supervision, coaching and mentoring, on line

discussion groups, or regular attendance at a PLC. Blackmore (1996) explains how principals are less likely to disclose emotionally sensitive issues in the context of local principals' clusters due to the competitive nature of neighbouring schools in a market economy.

PLCs with members scattered across a region, or on-line learning communities in which geography is secondary to the makeup of the membership, serve this safe space requirement. Their mode of operation might include a combination of physical meetings, texts and emails, blogs and other online forums. It might be that principals with a particular commonality feel comfortable with professional learning via this mechanism. This may focus on a specific gender, ethnicity, or type/size of school. Another necessary pre-condition of participation in PLCs is the recognition that the principal participant has not completed all the learning necessary for the job, but is a "work in progress" and has come to terms with "one's unfinishedness" (Beatty, 2008, p. 144).

Fullan (2002a) distinguishes between principals learning within and outside PLCs:

> Learning at work — learning in context — occurs, for example, when principals are members of a district's inter-visitation study team for which they examine real problems — and the solutions they have devised — in their own systems. Learning out of context takes place when principals go to a workshop or conference. Such learning can be valuable for further development, but it is not the kind of applied learning that really makes a difference.
>
> Learning in context has the greatest potential payoff because it is more specific, situational, and social (it develops shared and collective knowledge and commitments). This kind of learning is designed to improve the organization and its social and moral context. Learning in context also establishes conditions conducive to continual development, including opportunities to learn from others on the job, the daily fostering of current and future leaders, the selective retention of good ideas and best practices, and the explicit monitoring of performance. (p. 19)

This description of professional learning communities, particularly when existing within a specific school, is linked to earlier theories of leadership relating, for example, to collaborative and distributed leadership. Emphasis is on how the social architecture of the school organisation can assist in shaping teachers' attitudes towards pedagogy (Leithwood, et al., 2004). Features include the expectation of collaboration, inside and outside the classroom, shared norms and values, a focus on raising student achievement, and professional dialogue (Kruse, Louis, & Bryk, 1994).

The principal's role in this last scenario is twofold: to facilitate the building of the professional community as a colleague collaborator, and to ensure that the direction of the professional discussion includes ideas from outside as well as within the group, to avoid 'closed loop learning' (Argyris & Schon, 1974).

2.7.5 Coaching and mentoring

There is an abundance of research on the value of mentoring and coaching in the fields of business and teacher education (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2008), yet there is little specifically on coaching and mentoring applying to experienced principals, despite its growing international popularity. Barnett and O'Mahony, in an earlier article (2002), listed some benefits of these relationships, including the flexibility inherent in two people focusing on important school issues, the degree of social interaction and personalised support coaching and mentoring offers, a focus on the essence of leadership work, the added impact of engaging hearts and minds simultaneously, the ability to provide personalised feedback regarding leadership skills and attitudes, and the ability for coaching and mentoring to co-exist with other learning strategies.

Due to limitations of space, the terms 'coaching' and 'mentoring' are used interchangeably in this thesis. Examples of coaching and mentoring include the New Zealand First Time Principals' Mentoring Programme (NZFTPP) and the Coaching for Enhancing the Capabilities of Experienced Principals' Programme (CEP), Victoria, Australia. Evaluations of the latter indicate a wide level of satisfaction (O'Mahony & Barnett, 2006). Likewise, Robertson (2005) promotes

peer coaching as a transformative process because "it allows educational leaders to act with agency" (p. 194). She lists eight principles fundamental to her coaching model around effective learning about leadership. These are now briefly listed, as they are central to the research question.

Firstly, peer coaching develops a sense of community around promoting the wellbeing of principals, with peers giving up time to assist. By studying other education systems, policies and practices, principals become aware of international perspectives, which enhances their ability to critically reflect. Generative approaches are used, where the presenting problem leads to a progression of ideas which blend theory and practice around the issues. There are opportunities for each contributor's knowledge to be validated, reinforcing the principle that all can learn from each others' knowledge and experience.

Robertson's peer coaching model encourages both formal and informal leadership opportunities for all involved, and acts as a forum for discussion leading to a shared construction of meaning. Finally successful peer coaching fosters the growth of a counter-culture, where possibilities and alternatives challenge leaders to justify the status quo. This final factor addresses the criticism sometimes directed at coaching and mentoring regarding the propensity of "principal clones principal" (Hay, 1995; Huber, 2008).

2.8 How do principals best learn?

There is little research on the factors which optimise professional learning for principals (Leithwood, et al., 2004), at least in countries with close research links to New Zealand such as Australia, U.S.A., Canada and England. Some researchers attribute a significant amount to on-the-job (in the school) experiences (Hamilton, 1996; Leithwood, Steinbach, & Begley, 1992), while others suggest factors to consider based on practical experience in supporting principals' learning across districts (Peterson, 2002), as is mentioned by Fullan (2002a) above.

Often the factors relate more to people who are aspiring to become or newly appointed principals, yet include aspects that would appear equally useful for experienced principals:

> The National Staff Development Council (Sparks & Hirsch, 2000) recommends that leadership development programs have the following features: they should be long-term rather than episodic; job-embedded rather than detached; carefully planned with a coherent curriculum; and focused on student achievement. Programs should also emphasize reflective practice, provide opportunities for peers to discuss and solve problems of practice and provide a context for coaching and mentoring". (Leithwood, et al., 2004, p. 67)

Peterson (2002) added further criteria: programmes must have a clear mission and purpose linking leadership to school improvement and an emphasis on the use of information technologies. Programmes should be continuous and use a variety of instructional methods. There appears some recognition that there is no homogenous and generalisable model of best practice that can be developed; instead a variety of strategies may allow flexibility and optimisation of learning to suit the needs of different learners until such time as more research illuminates the key factors with greater certainty. While noting these suggestions, Leithwood and associates (2004) acknowledge that there is little relevant research available yet to justify these proposals.

Huber (2008), having surveyed fifteen countries, comments that internationally principalship learning support programmes are becoming increasingly more modularised and organised to meet the needs of principals dependent on the different stages of their career, with an emphasis on continuous professional development and then a reflective phase. He reports that there has been a shift from focusing on a specific static role of principalship to a broader concept concentrating on personal learning according to each participant's needs and more attuned to a complex environment.

He offers four related emerging trends in such ongoing learning – experiential methods, problem based learning, internships and mentoring. Although the

learning methods differ greatly from country to country, there is a focus on 'real' problems, authentic settings, an amalgamation of problem/related research and theory/possible solutions/implementation /reflection and evaluation, with opportunities for each individual to contribute throughout the process. He contrasts medical and legal internships with possible similar learning for principals, with an emphasis on shadowing and mentoring.

2.8.1 Adult learning theory

When reviewing research literature on the professional learning of experienced principals, the process moves from the general to the specific : adult learning theory generically tends to focus on foundation learning for adults mainly with literacy needs, whereas this review centres on the professional learning of qualified and experienced adults, in the specific field of educational leadership.

In order to grasp how difficult it is to provide research based conclusions on this topic, an example of adult learning theory and its possible implementation in this specific field of principalship is examined in the following sub-section.

What is meant by 'learning styles'? It has been described (Litzinger & Osif, 1993) as the different ways children and adults prefer to think and to learn. So that the learning process can be better understood, it can be considered in terms of each of the following:

1. Cognition: how knowledge is acquired
2. Conceptualization: how the newly acquired information is processed. What is the preferred approach – to focus on the linking of this information to previously understood ideas, to formulate it in terms of stories, or to use it as a launching pad to trigger off a plethora of further ideas?
3. Affective: in what social/emotional context is the learning preferably acquired? How is it linked to personal motives for learning, values and decision making styles?

Kolb (1984) drew on the works of earlier theorists such as Dewey, Piaget, and Lewin to formulate a concept of learning as a process, not an outcome, where the

individual drew upon four different learning abilities to varying degrees. These abilities are listed as *concrete experience, abstract conceptualisation, reflective observation,* and *active experimentation*. Kolb describes four preferences in learning styles by pairing up these abilities along two continua: concrete experience with abstract conceptualisation, and reflective observation with active experimentation.

By deconstructing the abilities from the learning preferences, the four aspects in terms of educational leadership can be envisaged as follows:-

1. **Concrete experience**. This ability looks at experiences gained while dealing directly with people, with emphasis on values and feelings, being open to subjective approaches and building a sense of how to handle situations from ongoing direct engagement.
2. **Abstract conceptualization**. At the opposite end of the first dimension is abstract conceptualization, the ability to apply logic, formulate concepts and ideas through sound reasoning.
3. **Reflective observation**. At one end of the second dimension is the ability to observe, reflect, and interpret, in order to establish why and how things happen as they do.
4. **Active experimentation**. Finally, this ability affirms practical pragmatic action to try things out, take risks, and make progress, using what is available as best you can.

The experienced principal uses concrete experience as the basis of working with people; abstract conceptualization is required by principals as trustees and CEOs to extract key ideas to coherently signal and plan for strategic direction. Reflective observation is used by leaders-of-learning principals to evaluate progress made. This is linked to trying new approaches to progress the school – active experimentation.

In summary, the four attributes can be seen as essential to the successful leadership of a school, even if all four may not be dominant in a specific person-as-principal. How can a school thrive if there is an absence of any one of these? And specific to this research, how does the styles-of-learning framework help us

better understand how principals may differ when attempting to engage in professional learning?

Hartman (1995) used Kolb's learning styles to suggest the following examples of learning experiences conducive to each preference group:

1. Concrete experiencers: offer laboratories, field work, observations or 'trigger' films
2. Reflective observers: try logs, journals or brainstorming
3. Abstract conceptualizers: use lectures, papers and analogies
4. Active experimenters: suggest simulations, case studies and homework

Kolb's Learning Style Inventory (LSI) was used to create tests which measure an individual's learning orientation towards the four learning abilities by inducing the participant to make a series of forced choices in test responses, each pitting one learning attribute against the other. Yamazaki (2005) investigated the impact of different cultural typologies on the likelihood of participants orientating towards a particular learning style. Undergraduate students from a number of countries, but unfortunately not New Zealand, were assessed with the LSI to discern cultural patterns, with noteworthy differences between cultures being identified.

Although Yamazaki (2005) concedes that there is a dearth of research in this field and his conclusions are tentative, his research suggests that the bicultural/ multicultural nature of Aotearoa New Zealand would affect the distribution of preferred learning styles of NZ principals. His conclusion is relevant:

> Finally, interplay between people and the world shapes learning styles at five levels: psychological types, educational specialization, professional career, current job, and adaptive competencies ((Kolb, 1984); (Kolb, Boyatzis, & Mainemelis, 2001)). The consequence of this study may be to indicate that the culture of the country around a people may be the sixth level of interplay between the people and the world in a positive way, (Yamazaki, 2005, p. 31).

There are numerous other attempts in literature to classify adult learning in some manner; for example Habermas' three domains of knowledge, Mezirow's three

domains of learning, and Coomb's framework of knowledge. These are discussed by Cranton (1994), who offers three perspectives of adult learning:

The first perspective is Subject-Oriented Learning. Content is acquired, and delivered by an expert trainer. It could include facts, practical or technical skills, or problem solving strategies, and relates to a positivistic perspective. For instance, principals may attend, along with other designated staff members, a course provided by the Ministry of Education to train school representatives on a new computerised student attendance system.

The second perspective is Consumer-Oriented Education. An individual decides to learn, engages an educator to assist and guide with the learning, but retains control throughout the exercise, including the decision making. This relates to a constructivist perspective. An example might be principals undertaking university study, or more informal learning on a specific topic of interest, perhaps relating to an emerging developmental need within their school.

The third and final perspective is Emancipatory Learning. This relates to learning so significant that it jolts individuals from established frames of thinking. Cranton described it as "forces that have been taken for granted or seen as beyond our control" (1994, p. 20), and this can be a difficult and painful process. New Zealand principals may embark on a learning process which challenges long held perceptions on how to raise Maori or Polynesian student achievement rates in their school, as an example. This kind of learning has also been described as transformative, and Mezirow (1991) listed seven phases that people can pass through when they experience transformative learning: experiencing a disorienting dilemma, self-examination, critical assessment of assumptions, recognizing that others have gone through a similar process, exploring options, formulating a plan of action, and reintegration. The creation of 'cognitive dissonance' motivates the need to learn in order to resolve the disequilibrium (Moon, 2004).

2.8.2 Learning specific to NZ principals

From the discussion above regarding Kolb's LSI, it appears that there may be a tendency for New Zealand principals as a group, or possibly sub groups depending on cultural background, educational specialisation and adaptive competencies, to prefer a particular style of learning. However this is an untested assumption. The limited research and theory quoted suggests it would be prudent to provide a range of learning experiences for experienced principals that would be likely to cater for the various learning styles described by Kolb.

A different perspective on professional learning is offered by some New Zealand educational theorists and researchers as follows:

> Recent research on teacher and professional learning has shown that people cannot adapt descriptions of effective practice to their own contexts unless they understand the theoretical principles that explain why they work and under what conditions (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, & Fung, 2007). It is the combination of description, practical example and theoretical explanation that makes for powerful professional learning. (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 4)

This assertion more generally addresses the needs of teachers rather than experienced principals. The range of learning opportunities for New Zealand principals is reflected in the typology of learning sources table found in the next chapter.

2.8.3 Professional learning for Australian school leaders

The justification for including this section is because of Australia's proximity as New Zealand's nearest neighbour and the similar patterns of governance, management and distribution of schools within the school systems of Victoria and New Zealand (Macpherson, 2009). Victoria is specifically chosen because of the recognisable improvement in Victorian student achievement outcomes documented in an OECD case study (Anderson et al., 2007).

There is no agreed national policy on education leader development; education in Australia is a "complex interplay between various levels of government, public and private providers of schools and related services, and stakeholder groups" (Anderson, Kleinhenz, Mulford, & Gurr, 2008, p. 436). As well as universities, there are many principals' professional associations focussing on professional learning. These professional associations have combined with Australian state education systems, independently in each state, to develop professional standards for school leadership as a means to lift the professionalism of the school leadership profession (Ingvarson & Kleinhenz, 2006).

The standards describe the knowledge, skills, values and dispositions of effective school leaders, and are utilised within a framework of professional learning that supports people as they accumulate evidence of meeting the standards. There is a stated intention of fair, valid, consistent and reliable assessment leading to certification, accompanied by recognition and reward of some kind (Anderson, et al., 2008).

While some theorists (Crow, 2006; Duignan, 2004; Ingvarson, 2010; Ingvarson & Anderson, 2007; Lashway, 2006) believe that standards are important as a frame of reference for leaders in contemporary organizations, the link between accessibility to standards, professional learning and consequent action is not well established. In the case of Victoria, a highly integrated professional development programme called *The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders,* was used for principals and "principal class" leaders such as assistant principals (OGSE, 2007).

Leaving aside aspects relating to aspiring and beginning principal training, the programme has provided a combination of practice-based and reflective learning modes. These include opportunities for professional leave, contracted research and development, coaching, mentoring, seminars and postgraduate university courses and programmes (Matthews, Moorman, & Nusche, 2007).

The learning framework ignores sets of standards and instead defines progressive levels of competence or performance in the five domains of leadership taken from

Sergiovanni's widely disseminated model of transformational leadership: technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural (Sergiovanni, 2001). Macpherson (2009) comments that "the OECD evaluation found that the systemic approach to school improvement in Victoria since 2003 had created a culture that is clear, convincing, research-based and integrated with professional learning and leadership development" (p. 60), which suggests this professional learning support system for school leaders is worthy of monitoring by New Zealand principals.

Part Three: Identifying the Silences

2.9 Capitalising on technological change

One of the most significant changes to occur in education over the past decade has been the advent of computer technology to assist learning. The internet allows almost instantaneous access to information from sites throughout the world. Websites such as the Ministry of Education's www.educationalleaders.govt.nz and England's National College www.nationalcollege.org.uk have been constructed as a resource for educational leaders. But is online learning of any kind effective?

A meta-analysis of over one thousand items of research into online learning between 1996 and 2008 concluded that on average, students in online learning conditions perform better than those receiving face-to-face instruction (Means, Toyama, Murphy, Bakia, & Jones, 2009). Most of the studies involved students engaged in higher education, including teacher education and medicine. The conclusion was qualified by an admission that many of the conditions in the research studied differed in terms of curriculum, time spent studying, and pedagogy. There is no reason to suggest that principals might not find online leadership learning effective, although this has yet to be researched specifically for this group.

Another emerging item of communications technology is the personal digital assistant (PDA) which is a progression from cell phone technology and provides a range of other forms of communication and information gathering. Is this to become a further source of principals' professional learning? Some think so:

> A powerful indicator of the new wave of change is the hand-held mobile telephone. It is now an all-purpose device with multiple functions, and it is revolutionising thinking and interaction patterns across the world. It is soon to become a powerful teaching and educational device which will outdo, in its significance, what the computer has been for the previous generation (Beare, 2007, p. 33).

Gathering information and having the ability to communicate instantaneously does not necessarily translate to gaining knowledge and understanding; it is yet to be seen how new technology will affect the learning of principals.

2.10 Gaps in the research.

There is little research directly related to the professional learning of experienced principals, and that on adult learning is fragmented. Merriam (2001) concluded that:

> We have no single answer, no one theory or model of adult learning that explains all that we know about adult learners, the various contexts where learning takes place, and the process of learning itself. What we do have is a mosaic of theories, models, sets of principles, and explanations. (p. 3)

Various theorists have from what appears to be more life experience than specific research, offered factors that might facilitate effective learning amongst adults. Knowles (1980) describes five assumptions underlying adult learning (which he named andragogy). The adult learner was someone who (a) has an independent self-concept and who can direct his or her own learning, (b) has accumulated a reservoir of life experiences that is a rich resource for learning, (c) has learning needs closely related to changing social roles, (d) is problem-centred and

interested in immediate application of knowledge, and (e) is motivated to learn by internal rather than external factors.

Critics suggest that this list applies equally to some younger learners; for instance some young learners are quite independent and some older learners very dependent on structured ongoing support. Principals may approach learning in a different way from other learners simply because they are already deeply orientated towards learning and have experienced success at this. Does this mean they are more likely to take advantage from self directed learning opportunities because they know how they best learn and can tailor the learning experience accordingly? There does not appear to be any research on this.

Research looking specifically at the preparation and development of principals is mostly descriptive rather than rigorous and empirical (Lumby, et al., 2008) although recently there has become more international awareness of the need for the latter (Orr, 2005). Globalization has profoundly affected previous concepts of the sanctity of local knowledge based almost exclusively on Western foundations. Means of travel and electronic communication have opened up new possibilities (Lumby, et al., 2008) making the boundaries of the school "less certain, less homogenous and less secure" (p. 6).

The internationalisation of the New Zealand education system has affected professional knowledge requirements of principals and staff in terms of intercultural competence, the extent of which is unknown. Lumby and associates (2008) point out that this globalisation is generating the emergence of a kind of global orthodoxy regarding principal preparation and development.

The formulation of international perspectives of what constitutes good practice in the professional development of school leaders is more conceivable. The OECD plans to collect data on school leadership dimensions as part of its Program for International Student Achievement (PISA). In the meantime, research knowledge is fragmented and hard to access beyond a small number of English speaking countries.

The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP) is examining the core practices of successful school leadership across eight nations, not including New Zealand. The third phase, begun in 2008, may provide clearer information of how the professional learning of principals interfaces with the three main core practices of setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation (Jacobson & Bezzina, 2008). In the meantime, there is little research evidence yet as to how specific educational leadership program components affect leadership performance on the job or student learning outcomes (Davis, Darling-Hammond, Meyerson, & LaPointe, 2005).

Another arena which is under-researched is that of gender and educational leadership. For instance, Coleman and Fitzgerald (2008) suggest that research be carried out on the links between the gender of participants in leadership development programmes, the delivery content, and the development of such programmes, in order to determine the degree of gender bias that may occur depending on the gender of presenters and organisers. This suggestion is based on a previous finding (Brundrett, Fitzgerald, & Sommefeldt, 2006) that the Hay Group's report into principal development both in England and New Zealand made an underlying assumption that principals act as one homogenous group and "thus their professional learning needs can be homogenised" (p. 99).

Australia has developed programmes to specifically target women leaders and indigenous leaders (Anderson, et al., 2008) although these are in their infancy. In February 2010, the New Zealand Ministry of Education produced a consultation document targeting leaders and teachers in Maori medium education: Tu Rangatira (Ministry of Education, 2010c), a step forward in addressing indigenous leadership support.

Robinson et.al. (2007) advocate the development of two complementary approaches to leadership development – dedicated leadership development programmes with an emphasis on pedagogy, and whole school development, where the focus is more on specific school distributed leadership capabilities rather than the individual principal. They lament the lack of time New Zealand principals currently spend on pedagogical leadership due to other demands,

suggesting more research is required on connections between leadership and student outcomes.

In conclusion, there are many gaps in our collective understanding of how experienced principals might optimise their professional learning.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction.

This chapter covers aspects of the research used for this thesis and explains the thought progressions that led to conclusions around research parameters. What mechanisms enable information regarding a group of current experienced New Zealand principals' professional learning habits to be disclosed? What are the assumptions behind the methods, and the limitations and opportunities under which research will be carried out?

The research intention is to survey a group of experienced principals regarding the nature of their professional learning. The terms 'professional learning' and 'leadership learning' will be used interchangeably to encompass all learning that participants pursue in order to carry out their job. There will be particular reference to the sources of these principals' learning, their perceptions of how each source was best able to be used, and from this, their ideas on the overall picture of their learning – are they happy with the choice and quality, are they aware of any trends regarding their learning, are there any gaps?

What are the issues around accessing professional learning? Are there any other important needs being met in parallel? What are the biggest frustrations in terms of attaining the knowledge and skills required for all facets of educational leadership, or just keeping up with change? Can experienced principals envisage better forums for such learning than are currently available?

The emphasis is on building a picture of experienced principals in practice so that there is a context in which to discuss 'taonga (those items that are special, sacred) in practice', issues, barriers, and successes. This research approach will use a survey to gain quantitative data as a backdrop to the current situation, including sufficient open ended questions to allow themes and interesting perceptions to become apparent: a qualitative aspect. Previous experience as a coach and mentor involved me using surveys as a means of gathering both quantitative and qualitative data from staff for school reviews and this has confirmed for me the opportunities and limitations of this approach.

It is my contention that although questionnaires privilege quantitative data, they can be constructed to capture some of the humanity; i.e. it is possible to elicit emotional aspects as well as thoughts. Not only does this dictate the use of open ended questions, but it also extends to the use of "Other" for multi-choice answer sets, with a subsequent opportunity to qualify answers if "Other" is used. This avoids boxing people into pre-determined and finite sets of possible responses.

My hope is that the research findings will lead to greater understanding of the professional learning of principals, which might assist, for instance, less experienced principals to develop informed practice around such learning, and might encourage those providing learning experiences for principals to tailor them to the parameters that principal participants have advocated as their preference.

3.1 Educational research – paradigms, perspectives and methodologies.

Before the approach taken to research is considered, a description of educational research relevant to this research inquiry will be given. Bassey (2003) defines educational research as "critical and systematic enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action" (p. 111). Morrison (2002) deconstructs a previous definition from Bassey which also emphasises the "systematic" and "critical" aspects: there is a sense of order and structure about the research and the research design is open to scrutiny in terms of its "connectedness of planning and integration of design, process and outcomes" (p. 15).

Whereas some researchers have emphasised the empirical aspects, (Cuff & Payne, 1979; Gorard, 2001; Powney & Watts, 1987), due to their perception of educational research usually centering on observing reality in the classroom, in the case of this thesis the focus is on an interpretive approach, gaining ideas from experienced principals on the phenomena that are their professional learning experiences. This falls into the category of what Bassey (2003) calls discipline research, with an emphasis on understanding, that may or may not lead to actions of change for the better.

There is a focus on ‘what works’ and recognition that the basis of discussion is the hope that what is localised knowledge (Oancea, 2005), namely the professional learning experiences of principals in a particular region of New Zealand, might be transferable in some manner. This would be part justification for the purpose of this research (Hargreaves, 2000), in that the outcomes of this research will contribute to a body of knowledge, it is evidence based research, and involves those who are practitioners. The ‘evidence’ aspect is contestable because it involves taking the word of principal practitioners at face value – the data is based on *their* reporting of *their* perceptions of how they go about their professional learning, rather than direct observation of them in action.

Many research guides (Creswell, 2008; Crotty, 1998; Denscombe, 1998) suggest beginning with the research question, considering what methods might be used to obtain useful data, clarifying the methodology supporting these methods, then exploring the theoretical perspectives behind the methodologies, including epistemologies and ontologies at the most philosophical level. There is an emphasis on the need to ensure alignment between assumptions at each “level” of research approach. Crotty (1998) in particular proposes a linear approach leading from research question to method to methodology to theoretical perspective to epistemology, with any comments on ontology floating in proximity to the epistemological discussion.

In practice, my preparation for research has not been linear. Although there has been a sense at times of moving within Crotty’s prescribed direction and an appreciation that the research question was the starting point, the journey towards better clarification of methodology, theoretical perspective and epistemology feels more like completing an unknown jigsaw from pieces tumbling on a moving carpet. Reading about a variety of possibilities regarding some interpretation of research invariably resulted in me asking “*Which one* of these scenarios best fits my research?” In reality there were often elements within a number of the possibilities which appealed.

More than one piece of jigsaw appeared at times to fit the same gap; once committed to placing a piece, another piece would present itself for that same gap, throwing confusion on the veracity of previous progress towards epistemological or ontological understanding and conclusion. A search for the most suitable

paradigm was underway, with an appreciation that 'paradigm' refers to a framework of thinking that is sufficiently influential to organise reality (McIntyre & Grudens-Schuck, 2009).

Prior personal experience as a principal has influenced the development of the framework of possible sources of learning that will become an integral part of the research. The terminology used within research questions is a consequence of accumulated experience and no doubt fuelled a hegemonic effect despite attempts to minimise this. If a question solicits the best source of information on a particular topic, there is an assumption that principals would consider where to access this 'best' knowledge rather than choosing the most expedient answer given pressures of time.

Glimmerings of awareness of reflexivity, potential or real, influenced me to consider perspectives other than objectivism. However, before commentary on this is expanded, a summary of what is already clear is provided.

3.1.1 A starting point: method and methodology.

A methodology of survey research underpins the development of the self-completion questionnaire used in this research. A survey approach is a methodology not a method (Denscombe, 1998). The method entails enlisting a cluster sample of experienced principals to access a website containing the survey and to complete the questions without supervision or support. Survey questions contain a variety of prescribed sets and open answers, depending on the question. Some answers are numeric, allowing quantitative data processing techniques to be used. However, other answers will elicit memory recall, analytic thoughts, attitudes and insights, suggesting a qualitative data analysis response.

The qualitative aspect means that assumptions regarding survey research need to be addressed (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Whereas survey research privileges quantitative methods and a positivist approach, it was apparent early in the preparation that this particular research is going to be a combination of some sort. The qualitative aspects do not readily fit into a traditional survey methodological approach when attention is turned to the "transformation of data into wisdom" (Watling, 2002).

Framing my research

Burrell and Morgan (1979) propose a number of assumptions behind any sociological research, broadly bracketed into ontological, epistemological and human nature, as mentioned earlier. While it is outside the scope of this thesis to delve deeply into their philosophical arguments, aspects of this must be debated in order to 'position' my research (Briggs & Coleman, 2007). My starting point will be to consider epistemology, the philosophy of knowledge, and then ontology, the philosophy of existence.

An epistemological assumption made prior to designing the research was that all prospective participants and I had constructed similar frames of meaning from relatively uniform childhood and career experiences in New Zealand, particularly relating to learning and the education system. There would be a common understanding regarding main ideas. For instance, survey participants are assumed to know the difference between curriculum and pedagogy, and more so, share *my* understanding of what each word entailed. This extends to current awareness of what NZC or NCEA stand for, being the New Zealand Curriculum and National Certificate for Educational Achievement, respectively.

Is social reality external to individuals - "imposing on their consciousness from without" (Cohen, et al., 2007, p. 7), or is it a product of individual consciousness? My ontological assumption is that social reality is constructed through social interaction, (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and that knowledge relevant to the research is assumed to have evolved in a common manner amongst survey respondents, thesis supervisors and potential readers, rather than being independent of our beliefs, language and shared understanding of intellectual concepts. Continuous interchange of expressivity, through all facets of communication, results in the other's subjectivity to become 'emphatically close'; in other words shared experiences and talking about them assists each persons' interpretations to converge (Berger & Luckmann, 1967). Accumulated knowledge about this reality forms the basis of our knowledge and ability to share understanding of this construct, even though what we regard as real may be an approximation to any form of 'pure' reality.

As has already been mentioned, my ontological assumption is that reality is more a product of the mind, or the *collective* product of minds, than an independent given. This begs the question: "What do we mean by reality?" For the purposes of this research reality is deemed to be the shared experience and understanding around some aspect of life – in this case experienced principals in two regions of New Zealand undergoing professional learning and development.

The second set of assumptions concerns the epistemological – what is my theory of knowledge? In particular, can knowledge be acquired, or must it be experienced? (Burrell & Morgan, 1979). One response to this question is that to *acquire* knowledge implies it is out there waiting to be discovered – the objectivism perspective. This suggests that knowledge has validity independent of any individual experience, and it is only our lack of ability or experience that acts as a barrier to absorbing the same universally true understanding of this knowledge. This perspective ignores influences of language, culture, history, and prior learning experiences on our perceptions.

An alternative epistemological perspective – the anti-positivist approach called constructionism – resonates as being closer to how I imagine learning occurs; knowledge is gained and then communicated. Crotty (1998) describes this as follows: "Truth, or meaning, comes into existence in and out of our engagement with the realities in our world" (p. 8). It is not by way of our *direct* experience with everything new, but rather by the meaning being mediated by the culture in which we live. We are introduced and then inculcated into a world of meaning. My assumptions align with what I understand of the theories of Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978), regarding the manner in which we learn through language, scaffolding our knowledge and understanding through social interaction. Thus we build and extend our frames of reference, Vygotsky's so-called Zones of Proximal Development.

These perceptions of how personal learning occurs are assumed to translate to research situations, in that by gathering a variety of new information, based on participants' thoughts and personal experiences, a scaffold of ideas will be created, making it possible to discern patterns, connections, correlations, and interesting perspectives, all which may provide glimmers of understanding about the topic. It would be presumptuous to pretend the result will resemble robust

theories of how professional learning amongst experienced principals in New Zealand works, because that would entail a breadth and quality of information which is outside the scope of this research.

A Choice or a blend?

The two perspectives considered so far are often presented as a dichotomy – choose either positivism or anti positivism, whereas there are elements of both approaches that appeal. Importantly, Crotty warns that these epistemologies, and a third one yet to be considered called subjectivity, "are not to be seen as watertight compartments" (1998, p. 9) , that is, they are not mutually exclusive. This gives scope for some kind of careful amalgamation. In choosing or evolving a suitable methodology, there is a need to avoid falling victim to "methodological fundamentalists" on one hand (Denzin, Lincoln, & Giardina, 2006) or methodological purists of any kind on the other (Donmoyer, 2006).

Even if we learn through the social construction of our experiences, by socio-linguistic osmosis, isn't there sufficient commonality in the knowledge and understanding of other individuals to enable us to jointly understand at least the essence of what is being discussed? This question appears particularly pertinent if we have inherited our understanding on a common theme from within the same language and culture. MacLure (2003) observed that truths are textual, and "the way we see the world is 'always already' infected by language" (p. 4).

For example, to extend an oft-used metaphor, the concept of 'tree' may mean different things to a nursery worker, a carpenter, an artist or a forestry worker, but a group of forestry workers are likely to share a greater degree of common understanding about trees because of the similar conditions under which they have learned about and worked around trees. The overlap of understanding is greater.

Also, if we subscribe to the value of attaining aspects of knowledge as objectively as possible, does that mean we cannot project a "human" approach to the way in which we use the knowledge to further understanding? Does the detachment have to extend beyond the actual research method to include our motives and how we use our findings?

Interpretivism

German philosophers Wilhelm Dilthey (1979) and Max Weber (1970) contrasted scientific endeavour (*Erklären* - seeking explanations through causality) with interpretivism (*Verstehen* – building understanding in the human sciences) and grappled with the contention that their investigation may require different methods. Notwithstanding this distinction, Weber, unlike many other interpretivists, sought to identify aspects of social sciences in causal terms, although he accepted that the cause-effect relationship commonly subscribed in absolute terms to scientific endeavour would be modified to a *causally adequate* approach (Weber, 1970).

The interpretivist approach is described by Crotty as looking for "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" (1998, p. 67). The focus is on considering the individual and his or her action as the basic unit being investigated (Weber, Mills, & Gerth, 1970). This appears compatible with studying the professional learning of individual principals and supports the notion that associated theoretical perspectives should be explored.

This research can be summarised as survey research by questionnaire, with a theoretical perspective of interpretivism based on ontological understandings of meaning attached to being and derived from shared experiences, with associated epistemological assumptions of constructionism.

3.1.2 A developing methodology: The typology of sources

In order to establish what the learning experiences of experienced principals "looks like", a mechanism or framework is required which will focus survey participants' thoughts on personal decisions about learning and their current habits. After consideration of a number of possibilities, such as comparing principals' perceptions of current practice with theories of good practice (taken from Best Evidence Synthesis material (Timperley, et al., 2007)), a typology of sources of learning was developed, grouped geographically according to the location of the learning with respect to the learner and with reference to who were also involved. By classifying learning sources as Individual, School based, Community, Regional, National or International, a two dimensional table

containing sources within each of these headings provided the required framework, (Figure 3.1).

This allows the questioning of principals on the value of each source, how it fits into their repertoire of choices commonly used for acquiring knowledge or understanding on specific topics, and the limitations and opportunities associated with each source. The typology also provides a novel way for participants to reconsider their learning experiences, and help clarify, through reflection, how learning habits have evolved throughout their principalship.

Two issues arose from using the typology: the first was that the expanded number of questions required to cover each and every typology category limited the inclusion of other questions being included in the survey. Secondly, by focussing on the source as a 'window' into principals' professional learning, what limitations were I unwittingly factoring into the questionnaire structure? The answers to both questions may emerge from the data analysis.

The typology also provides a forum for considering the degree of control and choice principals feel they had over their professional learning. It is open ended – findings that could emerge are unknown, as are trends and any theories that could result in increased understanding on this topic.

This typology has been derived solely from personal experience, with minimal reference to established research or theory, and fuelled by a sense of urgency in finding a fresh new mechanism to channel thoughts without reference to previous approaches. It is hoped that a fresh approach might curb the hegemonic tendency of participants to err towards providing responses that they perceive "ought" to be correct.

Figure 3.1 Typology for sources of professional learning for principals

Individual	School	Community	Region	National	International
I1: Study (e.g. academic study)	**S1**: Management Meetings	**C1**: Local Principals' Cluster	**R1**: Principals' Conferences	**N1**: Principals' Conferences	**W1**: Principals' Conferences
I2: Websites	**S2**: Staff Meetings	**C2**: Professional Learning Clusters (e.g. Experienced Principals' Development Programme EPD)	**R2**: Other regional source ***Name:*** *Note: Use C2 for regionally based PLCs.*	**N2**: Other Educators' Conferences (e.g. ICT, Assessment)	**W2**: Other Educators' Conferences (e.g. ICT, Assessment)
I3: Leadspace/MoE Principals	**S3**: Staff Workshops (including school wide learning contracts)	**C3**: Tapping into parent expertise (including Board trustees and other parents)		**N3**: Attendance at Principals' Development Planning Centre (PDPC)	**W3:** Other International source, e.g. attendance at NCSL workshop *Name:*
I4: School Support Advisory Service, e.g. Leading and Managing Adviser	**S4**: Classroom Visits (including involvement in action research)	**C4**: Involvement in local organisations such as marae, service club		**N4**: Other national source *Name:*	
I5: Coach/ Mentor	**S5**: Informal collegial conversation	**C5**: Other community source *Name:*			
I6: Specific ongoing in-school expert help, e.g. LSM, contracted building project manager	**S6**: Other school source, e.g. specific learning group, or specialist learning department *Name:*				
I7: Field Officer from professional organisation, e.g. MoE, STA, NZEI, PPTA, NZPF, SPANZ					
I8: You initiate contact with another principal colleague (e.g. by phone or email)					
I9: Other – individual. *Name:*					

The typology contains twenty three identified learning sources, with the potential for others to be created at the bottom of each column, so six extra 'cells' are provided. One learning source, the Principals Development Planning Centre, although disbanded in 2009, was included because the centre provided many experienced principals with a unique form of professional learning which is likely

to be still fresh in their memory and so able to be commented on. Conversely, the Experienced Principals' Development programme (EPD) introduced in early 2010 has been included, for sake of completeness, with awareness that it may be too early for those involved to adequately evaluate its effectiveness.

In the case of Professional Learning Clusters (C2), the source straddles two of the columns – both community and regional, which could be handled separately. However, the already large number of source sites coupled with the need to ask meaningful questions of each site, meant that it was expedient to combine the two and assume that each principal will, depending on location, be able to participate in a maximum of one regional or local/community PLC.

3.2 Method

Experienced principals were invited to complete a web based survey, the answers of which were emailed to the researcher as well as stored on the university file server. Data were analysed using a reputable software tool (Huizingh, 2007) Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS). SPSS is noted for its ability to analyse a wider variety of data, both qualitative and quantitative. Rather than dwell on a false dualism between qualitative and quantitative evidence (Gorard, 2001), Hammersley's contention that "the over-riding concern of researchers is the truth of claims, not the political implications or practical consequences" (1993, p. 76), will remain central.

3.3 Use of LimeSurvey as a research tool

A major concern was that a public domain software survey tool might restrict and influence the types of questions that could be asked and thereby limit the means by which respondent data could be analysed. Did this tool reinforce a reductionist mentality, where potentially rich questions might be discarded because of technical difficulties in managing and analysing the responses?

LimeSurvey is an open source web based survey system, offering twenty question types and many other features. Data collected can readily be exported into

spreadsheet or specialist data analysis application software. For security purposes and to conform to research protocols I organised the programme to interface with the University of Waikato server, making it independent from its original source. In particular, this protects the integrity of collected data, and limits others attempting to interfere with the question structure, for instance by changing label sets for questions.

As with other software, it takes time to become familiar with the opportunities and limitations of LimeSurvey. It is essential to gain a full appreciation of the range of question types so as to judge how best to present each question. For instance, is a single response required from a range of choices, or would multiple responses deliver better information? If a question is to be open, what provision is to be made for the added complications in data analysis? How will potential ambiguities be pre-empted for each question? If the response to a question leads to a mutually exclusive array of follow up questions, how is this programmed? If the open ended choice of 'Other' is desirable for a specific question, how might this be included so that the respondent can then comment on what this 'Other' entails?

LimeSurvey operates by the researcher creating groups of questions with a given theme. If a selection of possible answers is to be provided (label sets), it is desirable to use consistent elements in each set. For instance, if the concept of Frequency is being explored, the label set consisted of Never, Rarely, Occasionally, Regularly, Often, and Always. This enables comparisons to be made between answers of "Frequency" type questions throughout the survey.

For each question, there is a Help function available in the form of a comment. If the question entails finding out the number of years that respondents have acted as principals in schools, the Help comment may suggest to round down to the nearest complete year and to include time as principal in previous schools.

The types of questions ranged from those requiring a simple response of 'Yes' or 'No' to open ended questions for which an essay, with word limit of 300 words, could be composed. This flexibility contributes to the challenge of previous notions regarding the extent to which surveys privilege quantitative methodologies. Attempts to restrict answers have become more to do with the

dictates of data analysis than wanting to conform to a quantitative paradigm. A balance between encouraging as open and creative responses as possible and gaining data which will be able to be practically analysed in terms of existing time and computer functions became the focus, rather than any limitation on the research instrument.

Did the use of LimeSurvey influence what was asked – what was possible? The built in flexibility of question type and structure enabled opportunities to ask questions and manage the resulting data in unanticipated ways. For instance, rather than asking the participants to choose a single *best* answer from a set of options, it was possible to ask them to rank the given options in order of preference, and analyse the more complex set of outcomes. The variety of question types challenged me to evaluate exactly what information was being elicited, and to become familiar enough with them to ascertain how these might best be framed in each case.

Eleven sections containing a total of 139 questions made up the final draft. The questionnaires were trialled firstly by an experienced principal, and then by four other educators/researchers once it was established on the LimeSurvey website. Findings from the pilot questionnaire in each instance were used to modify questions and to anticipate potential dilemmas that needed to be pre-empted. Thirty five questions were omitted to reduce time required to complete the survey within the promised range of 60 – 90 minutes.

3.4 Sample selection and size

A cluster sample of experienced principals was used for this research. Twelve sub regions from the Ministry of Education-administered Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) site were selected on the assumption that they might contain sufficient schools with experienced principals leading them, where ‘experienced’ was interpreted as meaning at least five years’ principalship experience in any combination of schools. There were 386 schools located in this geographical cluster. Emails were sent to all school administrators explaining that I was looking for experienced principals for research purposes and inviting responses only if the principal was

experienced, in terms of the above definition. The message stressed that selected principals would be invited to participate and could decline, immediately or at any later stage prior to the conclusion of the research.

Responses from 120 experienced principals provided the sampling frame for the survey. Some attrition was anticipated, including not only those who would decline to participate, but also due to communication/ computer problems and confusion over whether the principal was indeed experienced or not. For instance, some school offices were still using 1997-2003 MS packages and couldn't open and read the material sent until it was re-sent in the older format. One school did not have any internet connection currently available due to changing their system. Principals were away on sick leave or sabbatical, and some just took time (weeks) to respond to these particular electronic communications.

By the time the survey was activated and principals invited to participate, there were one hundred and ten potential respondents. One person attempted to fill out the survey then disclosed within the survey that she had only been a principal for two years, and thus her data became void. Another completed none of the survey questions once entering the site. Fifty two sets of data were able to be used, of which thirty were complete and the remainder contained some gaps.

Was this an acceptable response rate? I had advised principals that the survey would take up between 60 – 90 minutes of their time, and knew this was at the very upper limit of acceptability in terms of what could be regarded as reasonable. Some who declined contacted me to explain it was their busy workload which prevented a survey response. Previous discussions with university researchers had left me with an impression that thirty responses would be sufficient for small scale research of this nature, so gaining 52 responses (a 47% response rate) was pleasing.

Steps taken to remind participants of the survey time frame had to be balanced against the ethical requirement of avoiding coercing prospective participants. I was also mindful that The Office of Population Censuses and Surveys is quoted by Cohen et. al. as recommending three reminders for surveys (2007, p. 346). Consequently, after checking with supervisors, I emailed all experienced principals after two of the three weeks had passed, when only five surveys had

been completed and a further nine started. The reminder note was brief, and included the URL for the website. The response rate jumped immediately. One further email on the Friday preceding the Monday cut off date was used to thank those who had participated and to suggest the weekend was the last chance to be included. I had no way of distinguishing who had or had not participated at this point because of the anonymity of the survey. Again, the number of responses jumped.

The Waikato/Bay of Plenty region was selected because of the geographical proximity to the university and my residence. I believe this sample is broadly representative of New Zealand in that it contains a range of urban and rural schools, small and large schools, schools of a special character and kura. [Kura are schools designed for a high proportion of Maori students on the school roll, where the medium for much of the curriculum delivery is likely to be Te Reo (Maori language) and the culture of the school reflects the culture of the Maori community in which the school is situated.] There is no obvious reason why the responses might be atypical, but under an interpretivist framework there is an expectation that generalising from the data will be avoided anyway. Social reality is "multi-nested" (Olsen & Morgan, 2005) and so cannot be reduced to a single "nesting" of people in one region, and vice versa.

3.5 Data analysis

The first task with accumulated data is data cleaning (McCaig & Dahlberg, 2010). This includes checking that all participants conform to the requirement of being experienced principals; that no duplicate cases exist (from logging on from two separate computers for instance), and that all data is within expected parameters. Other traditional data cleaning functions, such as checking that question response routing is correctly adhered to, had been made redundant by the ability to programme this logic into the data survey tool before it was used.

Because the data contained quantitative and qualitative information, two strategies for analysing data were used. Quantitative data were analysed using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software. As well as deriving basic

statistical measures such as means and standard deviations for the variables relating to each question, more advanced processes could be used to test hypotheses. For instance, it would have been interesting to compare the responses of secondary and area principals compared with those in the primary sector, over their preferences in sources of learning and attitudes towards their professional learning experiences. However, the relatively small number of secondary principal respondents precluded this from proceeding.

Qualitative data could have been analysed using CAQDAS: computer assisted qualitative data analysis software. It was difficult to predict the extent to which this would have been required, as the sample was relatively small and the qualitative responses were in formats that lent themselves to the use of simple word search techniques. Similar to grounded theory (Cohen, et al., 2007), patterns and understandings were expected to emerge from the data, and so it was hard to predict the extent of more sophisticated analysis that may be required until it occurred.

3.6 Issues of quality and authenticity – reliability, validity and triangulation.

Researchers have a responsibility to ensure that confidence is built and maintained in their research by the vigilant addressing of issues of quality throughout the research exercise. Bush (2007a, p. 91) challenges researchers regarding this "notion of scrutiny": can they defend and explain decisions about methodology to their peers, professionals and examiners? Traditionally in scientific research, quality was addressed by focussing on two aspects: reliability and validity (Cohen, et al., 2007).

Reliability is a measure of the likelihood of a repeat experiment producing the same set of results. Validity focuses on whether or not the research actually answers the postured research question (Bell, 2005). The explosion of epistemologies, theoretical perspectives and methodologies outside the traditional realms of positivism has brought into question the relevance, authenticity and suitability of these two aspects of quality, as they had been previously applied.

For example, Crotty (1998) cautions against exploring meanings of qualitative research then talking about 'confirming' or 'validating' their findings by a quantitative study, because this privileges quantitative study by the attribution of objectivity, validity and generalisability to quantitative findings.

One early outcome of the research revolution was the notion that objectivism is itself a construct (Cohen, et al., 2007) which can't escape critique of its long assumed but flawed 'absolute' measures of quality. An assumption that the researcher is independent from influencing the experiment in any way is in itself an avoidance of evaluating a potentially major source of bias or corruption. No form of research is infallible.

Onwuegbuzie (2003) is cited in Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) as listing fifty potential sources of invalidity for the quantitative component of mixed methods research alone, whereas Onwuegbuzie, Jiao and Bostick (2004) propose twenty nine further elements of invalidity applicable to qualitative components of mixed research. Cohen et al. (2007) categorise eighteen different types of validity and agree with Gronlund (1981) that validity should be seen as a matter of degree rather than an absolute.

The discussion so far should have dispelled any notions that measuring the quality of research using reliability and validity is a straightforward exercise. The strategy used in this thesis will be to list some elements of the research that have contributed to its reliability, and then to discuss some of the more significant forms of validity. Finally, other measures of quality will be alluded to.

Validity is a concept which describes in a number of ways whether the research describes or measures what it set out to describe or measure. It originated in quantitative research under the positivist paradigm; for this reason it is often rejected by qualitative researchers as inappropriate as a measure of the quality of their research (Patton, 2002). Some researchers such as Bassey (2002), and Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) advocate the concept of 'trustworthiness' as a replacement. Bassey gives examples of how trustworthiness would be applied as a quality standard in case studies (not surveys), framed as a series of tests, some of which appear relevant for surveys. They include the provision of checking data with their sources, sufficient triangulation of data before leading to analytic

statements, having a critical friend challenge findings thoroughly, ensuring the account of the research is sufficiently detailed to give the reader confidence, and providing an adequate audit trail from data to discussion (Bassey, 2002, p. 154).

As part of a move to distinguish qualitative research from earlier traditional scientific endeavour under the positivist approach, those involved in constructivist and interpretivist paradigms have generated new language and concepts about quality (Patton, 2002, p. 546). For instance, Lincoln and Guba (1986) suggest "'credibility' as an analog to internal validity, 'transferability' as an analog to external validity, 'dependability' as an analog to reliability, and 'confirmability' as an analog to objectivity" (pp. 76-77). These four features are proposed to be the essential components of trustworthiness or rigour, as discussed above. Measures of validity can be usefully grouped as external and internal (Bush, 2007a), where external validity refers to the manner in which the research results can be convincingly generalised to a wider situation, and internal validity explores the degrees of accuracy between research question, data, and findings. It is the meaning given to the data rather than the data themselves which is the focus (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983).

Lincoln and Guba also advocated, along with Maxwell (1992), for 'authenticity' or 'understanding' to be used as measures of the reflexive consciousness of the researcher's perspective, appreciation for the perspectives of others and fairness when depicting constructions in the values that undergird these perspectives (Patton, 2002).

Nevertheless, Cohen et.al. still claim validity in its broadest sense as "the touchstone of all types of educational research" (2007, p. 134); they qualify this assertion with the proviso that validity must be faithful to the research premises, paradigms and methodologies used in the particular research. So validity, used as an over-arching term and not implying a positivist approach, becomes the reference point for a brief discussion of the fit between research question, data collected through research tools, and subsequent findings, mindful of the need to encompass other definitions of quality as are mentioned above.

The next six paragraphs focus on aspects of reliability. Data were collected from self administered questionnaires provided by people in different schools, so the

ability for bias caused by other participants influencing any participants was limited. The piloting of the questionnaire by an experienced principal and then four researchers meant there were two stages of reviewing and revising questions to remove ambiguities and superfluous questions. The Help comments for all questions were employed to pre-empt anticipated problems and add clarity to the question. Participants were able to review answers previously inputted by them, and check their consistency.

Sufficient time was given (three weeks) for participants to reflect on their responses and to edit if they so chose. Because the data is typed in by participants, there is a chance of error in their typing, but not as great as that of recorded voices which then have to be transcribed independently – a two step process compared with one. It remains debatable whether or not the response rate was sufficient to allow any generalisation across the regions sampled, or throughout New Zealand. Any generalisation will be treated with caution as has been previously commented on.

3.6.1 Replicability.

This relates to reliability in terms of the confidence in which the experiment could be repeated. As the survey questionnaire is intact and unchanged, the experiment could readily be re-used with exactly the same parameters including all question sequences and logic.

3.6.2 Predictability.

This refers to the ability of a repeat experiment with a similar sized sample to produce a similar set of data. As all but twenty or so experienced principals in the region were actually invited to participate in this survey, replication of the experiment is impracticable. There are insufficient new potential participants. There is no information to support with confidence the proposition that results would be predictable.

3.6.3 The derivation of laws and universal statements of behaviour.

There was no intention of deriving such laws; at best there might be patterns of behaviour which give some sense of understanding of this topic and suggestions for areas of further research.

3.6.4 Randomization of samples.

Rather than having a large number of potential participants and randomly choosing those to invite, the strategy used was to invite ALL of the first one hundred and twenty experienced principals in the region who responded to the initial call for contact details. There is a bias as a result: data produced from slower-to-respond principals would not necessarily replicate that of those who responded within the first four days. However, there did not seem to be any demographic pattern to those who did or did not respond: some of the first respondents were principals in large urban secondary schools and others in small rural isolated primary schools, for instance.

The discussion now turns to measures of quality aligned to validity, the degree to which the research measures what it purports to be researching.

3.6.5 Observability.

There is no video record of principals in action. If this criterion refers to experiencing a direct link between cause and effect in the research setting, then it is not possible to submit this particular research to this standard. However, a related standard will be covered shortly in the qualitative view of validity. The natural setting is the prime source of data. This research is looking at the setting in which experienced principals make decisions about their professional learning. Because they are *reporting* on their settings, it is one step removed from actually observing them carrying this out.

3.6.6 Context bounded-ness and 'thick' description.

By using open ended survey questions the research assembled more information from the same context than closed questions would. Data are socially situated. The main context of the research is the interactions between experienced principals and their sources of learning, which is socially constructed.

3.6.7 Researcher as part of the researched world.

Issues of subjectivity, socially constructed understandings of this research field, and a history of involvement with this sector have already been discussed. The research entails a doubly hermeneutic exercise of assembling ideas from

participants who in turn are providing their subjective ideas based on their experiences. This is in essence a phenomenological assumption and condition always made in this kind of research, meaning that findings have to be presented with 'methodological humility'.

3.6.8 Data are descriptive.

The discussion on how the survey was carried out, the data collected, the analysis undertaken, and the findings arrived at, emphasises the concern for processes rather than simply outcomes.

3.6.9 Seeing and reporting the situation should be through the eyes of the participants.

This is addressed by the phenomenological approach. Respondent validation is covered by the ability of participants to review their data in the survey, at any stage throughout the three week window of access.

3.6.10 Triangulation.

A third perspective to measures of quality, after discussing aspects of reliability and validity, is to consider triangulation. Denzin, as cited in Cohen et. al. (2007), broke triangulation into two categories: 'within methods' and 'between methods'. By replicating the survey with a second group of participants and comparing results, or splitting the current participants into two randomly chosen but equally numbered sub groups and comparing the two sets of data, a measure of triangulation related to reliability would be obtained.

The more common triangulation, between methods, refers to the use of at least two methods, such as a survey and then follow-up interviews or focus groups, as an opportunity to validate the proposed outcomes from the first research tool. This is the most common approach taken for educational research (Cohen, et al., 2007), but is outside the scope of this particular research due to time and scale.

Triangulation is to capture and report multiple perspectives rather than arrive at a singular truth (Patton, 2002); my ability to identify and explain these perspectives was the main source of triangulation for this research. A more modest form of triangulation exists within the question structure of the survey; the regular

encouragement for participants to elaborate on the quantitative questions through use of following open responses will serve as a form of triangulation.

3.7 Ethical considerations and implications

Ethical approval from the University Of Waikato School Of Education Research Ethics Committee was a prerequisite to this research, and was approved in March 2010. The application covered details already discussed, as well as the following aspects of ethical research:-

3.7.1 Access to participants.

Prior to this research, a letter of invitation and an information sheet were emailed to potential participants, who could choose at this stage whether or not to participate. They were informed that any data they provided would be anonymous. This hopefully ensured that participants did not feel coerced into accepting the invitation through personal contact or because of prior collegial relationships.

3.7.2 Informed consent.

After being sent an information sheet, principals consented by accessing the website and entering data: this was made clear to them. In this manner the requirements that "consent be voluntary and ...informed" (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 16), were satisfied. However, because the medium was email there was a concern that the speed of communication could detract from the receiver's ability to fully consider the implications of his or her response (Parker, Swope, & Baker, 1990).

This was mitigated by the three week window in which prospective participants could choose whether or not to respond, or retract an earlier decision. Also, as Tolich notes (2001), people have become immune to the novelty of email as a medium and have become highly selective as to which messages they choose to respond to. My assumption was that principals operate in a situation of large email traffic and are used to filtering.

3.7.3 Confidentiality and anonymity.

Information collected was to remain secure at all times, by access to the website containing the data being limited to only the researcher and supervisors. While the use of emails has been described as having about the same level of security as a postcard in terms of confidentiality (Tolich, 2001), the survey was administered on a website with access restricted to those sent invitations. Participants were only able to access their individual set of questions and answers.

If they were interrupted during the survey input and logged out, an email to their email account assigned them a password to re-enter their data field and continue their entry. As long as they did not disclose this password to others, their data would remain secure. No problems of this nature appeared to occur. Tolich (2001) notes that to ethicists, web-based surveys offer many advantages compared with emails.

Respondents' right to anonymity and confidentiality are addressed under the umbrella of their right to privacy (Cohen, et al., 2007). Tolich and Davidson, as cited in Tolich (2001) describes the distinction between anonymity and confidentiality as follows: "A respondent is 'anonymous' when the researcher cannot identify a given response as belonging to a particular respondent; 'confidentiality' is where the researcher can identify a certain person's response but promises not to make the connections publicly." (p. 78)

It was initially envisaged that a follow up focus group may be used to progress understanding on some of the themes arising from the survey. Consequently, at the end of the survey, respondents were invited to opt for involvement in a focus group by providing their name and contact details. It was conceivable that those having access to the survey data (researcher and both supervisors) could have linked these details with earlier responses to questions, but this did not occur, neither did the focus group eventuate and so all respondents retained anonymity.

Participants were encouraged to avoid using colloquial expressions, names or any other distinctive information that might invite identification of specific people or places. Furthermore, individuals' identities were to be protected. Names of the subjects would be replaced by pseudonyms within the research findings and any resulting reports. Hence, readers of the research will not be able to infer the

identity of particular participants. The burden on the researcher is to remain vigilant to the possibility of unwitting disclosure due to the 'small-town New Zealand' factor (Tolich, 2001).

3.7.4 Potential harm to participants.

The principle of non-maleficence – do no harm - is a guiding precept embedded in the Hippocratic Oath (Cohen, et al., 2007). The information sheet sought to ensure that participants understood the nature and consequences of their participation. During the course of the research, the integrity of participants was to be maintained, by honouring the conditions of their involvement including confidentiality, treating their proffered data with respect, and ensuring they had access to the findings. The "access" aspect was a key part of the ethical covenant, as is stated in the University of Waikato Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (University of Waikato School of Education Ethics Committee, 2003, p. 9 (4)(a)(v)).

Principals were informed of the potential benefits the research would bring – the principle of beneficence. In this case, the research is designed to gain information on the professional learning habits and attitudes of experienced principals, with the intention that this might be helpful to principals and their providers of professional learning opportunities. Wilkinson (2001) regards this assertion of using the promotion of knowledge as a justification, as suspect unless the balance between intrusion and potential benefit is carefully weighed up.

3.7.5 Use of the information.

Participants were informed that: -

(i) data gathered will be used for the purpose of fulfilling the requirements of a Master of Educational Leadership Thesis, and as the basis of journal publications and possibly conference presentations; and

(ii) an electronic copy of the thesis would become widely available, as Masters theses are required to be lodged in the Australasian Digital Thesis (ADT) database.

3.7.6 Other ethical concerns relevant to the research.

Privacy: Questions were strictly related to the purpose of the study and were aimed so that participants would not be made to feel that their privacy had been invaded. In this way, participants could decide what aspects of their personal opinions, beliefs, or practices were to be communicated. Questions were mostly able to be skipped; the remainder included a range of responses of which one was neutral, or were simple non-controversial demographic questions.

Follow up for clarification and/or elaboration: The ethics committee granted the researcher the opportunity of following up any item of data which proved to be ambiguous, unclear or incomplete, to the point that this could significantly affect the quality of the interpretation. However, the website tool used to collect data did not allow for identification of a particular participant and so this process became redundant.

Cultural and social considerations. Despite attempts to minimise any bias relating to the researcher's culture, gender, age and experience, there inevitably will be language constructs within the questionnaire which potentially signal to participants some aspects of my views and values. This subjectivity would influence the responses from participants and their feelings of well being. Judicious editing after feedback from both pilots was used to ensure questions were framed as neutrally as possible.

3.7.7 Distinctions between gaining ethical approval and ethically managing the research.

The above discussion has systematically examined sections submitted for ethical approval before the research commenced. Was this sufficient? Cohen, Manion and Morrison explain this as follows:-

> The difficulty and yet the strength with ethical codes is that they cannot and do not provide specific advice for what to do in specific situations. Ultimately it is the researchers themselves, their integrity and conscience, informed by an acute awareness of ethical issues, underpinned by guidelines and regulated practice, which should decide what to do in a specific situation. (2007, p. 73)

They cite Simons and Usher in stating that "ethics are 'situated'" (Simons & Usher, 2000, p. 10). Researchers have to not only adhere to principles of procedural ethics but also operate as the research progresses using "ethics in practice" (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004). They suggested that reflexivity, applied in this sense as an ethical response, is the mechanism whereby ethically important moments can be addressed within the research. It involves taking two steps back and asking "What does this data mean?" and then "What influence have I had ... on this data arising?" before making an ethical response.

3.8 Summary

I have outlined the methodology and methods used to amass data required to answer the research question. Also, the manner in which a survey meets criteria around fitness for purpose has been discussed. There is recognition of the limitations of the research and ethical principles relating not only to the manner in which the research is instigated but also in terms of quality.

Comments around reliability, validity and triangulation reinforce the fallibility of research despite the care taken to use gathered data with integrity.

The next chapter looks at the findings of the research, by way of an analysis of the data.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Data are presented within eleven sections, reflecting the groups of survey questions. Quantitative and qualitative aspects are portrayed, by way of statistics and by commentary including direct quotes (*in italics*). Where it is possible to summarise a large amount of data in tabular form, this has been included. Due to limitations of space, data which appears to be irrelevant or which does not shed any particular light on the main research question has been omitted.

4.1 Demographics

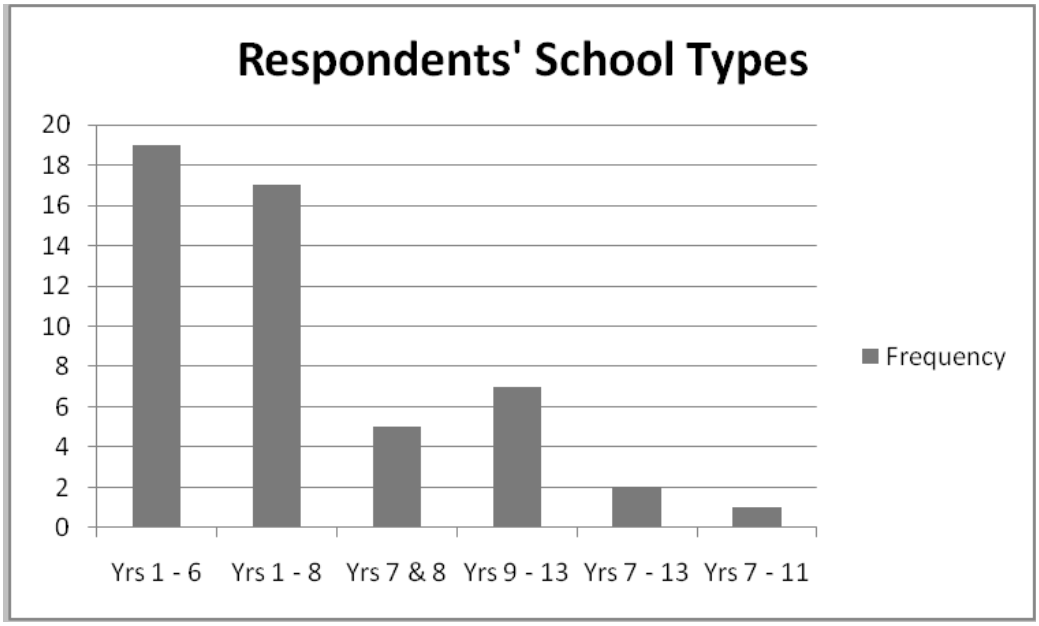
Fifty two participants attempted the survey, of which 24 were female and 28 male. Fifty of the participants gave NZ European/pakeha/Kiwi (interchangeable terms in this context) as their first ethnicity, with the remaining two Maori. Five pakeha principals gave Maori as their second ethnicity, with a smattering of other second ethnicities such as Samoan and Italian.

Respondents had been principals from 5 to 34 years, with a mean of just over 14, bringing a sum of 772 years experience in principalship to this survey. The mean number of years leading their current school was just over 9, with the longest 24 years in the same school as principal.

Half of the respondents worked less than 60km from a university centre, with a third of the total within 30km, suggesting easy access to university resources. 16 worked between 90 and 120 km away, with only 4 further than 120km. The number of respondents who are working in isolated circumstances is few, yet principals in this region could potentially be 300km away from a university centre.

Nineteen respondents (Table 4.1) were primary principals of schools with Years 1 – 6, with a further 17 teaching Years 1 – 8 (re-capitated primary schools). Five respondents worked in intermediate schools (Years 7 & 8), while 7 were principals in secondary schools (Years 9 – 13). A further 2 principals led schools from Years 7 – 13 and one a middle school (Years 7 – 11), with the final respondent not providing this information.

Table 4.1 Distribution of types of school among respondents



The school rolls ranged from less than 50 students (two respondents) to greater than 1750 (three respondents), with 31 out of 52 having rolls less than 350. 33 respondents didn't teach regular timetabled classes, while 11 taught between 1 – 3 hours weekly. One respondent taught between 13 and 19 hours per week, which would dramatically influence the type and quantity of professional learning palatable given the competing demands of teaching and principalship.

4.2 Early principalship

Rich data was obtained regarding the early years of principalship for the respondents. Due to space restraints this data is omitted. To summarise, only a small proportion had participated in programmes such as the Aspiring Principals' or First Time Principals' programmes. Questions on perceived gaps in knowledge evoked a range of responses, with all identifying significant gaps over a range of topics. This has implications for the necessity for ongoing professional learning opportunities for principals.

4.3 Individual sources of learning

This section looks at the various sources of learning potentially available on an *individual* basis for experienced principals. It is the first of six sections based on the typology provided in the survey to respondents.

4.3.1 Tertiary qualifications

Sixteen of 48, or one third of the respondents who answered this question, named Masters Degrees as their most recently acquired tertiary qualification, with 13 of these in the field of education, education administration or educational leadership. Thirteen respondents have gained a qualification *since* being appointed to their current position; 7 degrees were in educational leadership, 3 in education, 2 in Maori medium education and 1 in information technology. Thirteen respondents gained their last qualification at least a decade *before* commencing their current principalship, and 26 out of 49 have not undertaken any university study within the last decade. Eight are currently undertaking post graduate study, with a further person undertaking "some papers" (level and qualification undefined).

While 27 of 48 have obtained a Bachelor's degree or higher, it appears that 21 respondents have only undergraduate diplomas, with 2 of this group currently undertaking study. Of the 8 undertaking study at the time of the survey, 5 were either working towards post graduate diplomas or Masters Degrees in Educational Leadership, 2 specified Masters of Education, and one was studying towards a Masters in Maori Education.

Respondents were asked to specify one significant idea gained from academic study. Although heavily skewed towards positive responses, answers ranged from the enthusiastic and comprehensive to the negative. The first response was: "*Leadership, special education, principalship, transitions, performance development, social issues, equity, school improvement- sustaining evaluative capabilities -I can't think of an area that I haven't benefited from.*" Others were reluctant to pin down one idea: "*Can't recall anything specific - I learnt so much and found this a particularly stimulating part of my career. Some of the most significant memories were personal development areas.*"

Matters of cultural empathy and appreciation were mentioned twice: "*That not everyone has the same world view. A white middle class bloke has a very different view of the world from a Maori solo mum,*" and *"Being identified as a Culturally Responsive Leader and finding out just what this means through the writings of Russell Bishop and the Te Kotahitanga project*."

Seven respondents identified developing more understanding on how to assist students to learn, with a further three linking this to ICT. Some responses related to themes of communication, holding difficult conversations and SWAT (sic) analysis, reflecting skills rather than concepts. Most respondents were positive: "*Conditions for profound professional learning for experienced principals*" and "*Learning to be a learner again. Great to be doing some learning in something that does not come easily*." One respondent said "*Being enlightened* !!"

The only negative comment was: "*It (university studies) is not to encourage you to think for yourself- just find out what books the lecturer has, or is writing, and quote that. Lateral thinking discouraged. Save innovation for when you leave university."*

4.3.2 The use of websites for professional learning

Respondents were asked (Table 4.2) how often they referred to websites for professional knowledge, with 79% using them at least weekly if not more frequently.

Table 4.2 Frequency of (average) use of websites for principals' professional learning

		Freq.	Percent	*Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	2 or 3 times daily	2	4	4	4
	Daily	17	33	35	40
	Weekly	19	37	40	79
	Fortnightly	6	12	13	92
	Monthly	3	6	6	98
	Every term	1	2	2	100
	Total	48	92	100	
	Missing	4	8		
Total		52	100		

* Note: *tables generated from SPSS recalculate the percentage in each category excluding missing data – called Valid Percent.*

Respondents were asked to rank types of information accessed from websites according to frequency of use:

Table 4.3 Ranking of types of information accessed from websites

Category/ Ranking	1	2	3	4	5	6
Curriculum	18	13	8	3	0	4
Pedagogy	11	5	6	10	8	2
Resource Management finance/property/projects	6	7	5	5	5	15
Assessment and Reporting e.g. data management	5	9	9	10	6	5
Personnel Management	0	3	6	10	17	4
Leading and Managing	8	11	14	4	4	5
Non completed or Not displayed	4	4	4	10	12	17

When asked which website was most valuable for professional learning, 19 chose Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI): an official Ministry of Education site which describes itself as "a bilingual portal-plus web community which provides quality assured educational material for New Zealand teachers, school managers, and the wider

education community" (Ministry of Education, 2010b). Twelve chose www.educationalleaders.govt.nz, another official government website (formerly known as LeadSpace), with 3 opting for both sites. A further five respondents listed MoE, the Ministry of Education site which also acts as a portal for both of the two previous sites. There were a few single choices, such as IBSC (International Boys Schools Coalition) and Top Marks and other interactive learning sites, with 3 respondents preferring to state "several", depending on what they were investigating.

Thirty one out of the 46 answers for this question gave a government or government agency website as the most frequently used, with 15 listing other sites or opting for a generic answer such as 'several'.

The main official website in New Zealand for educational leaders is www.educationalleaders.govt.nz Respondents used this site in a variety of frequencies, with over two thirds finding it useful enough to warrant a look at least every term.

Table 4.4 Frequency of use of www.educationalleaders.govt.nz website

		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Two or three times a week	6	12	13	13
	Weekly	8	15	17	29
	Fortnightly	4	8	8	38
	Monthly	10	19	21	58
	Every Term	9	17	19	77
	Annually	8	15	17	94
	Never	3	6	6	100
	Total	48	92	100	
	Missing	4	8		
Total		52	100		

The website developer and coordinator for www.educationalleaders.govt.nz (Scanlan, 2010) has disclosed that there has been a steady increase in the use of this site over the past 18 months, and it is the most widely used of the MoE's suite of sites.

Between 1st July 2010 and 30th October 2010 the website has been averaging 1,000 hits per day. Of the 90,000 hits, 50,000 originated from the Auckland region, 8,000 from Christchurch, 6,500 from Wellington and the remaining 25,500 from the rest of New Zealand (including the region containing research respondents) and the world. Although there is no breakdown as to how many teachers, beginning or experienced principals used the site in this time, the greatest number of hits came from those wanting information on the National Aspiring Principals' Programme (NAPP) 2011 and the Planning Professional Learning and Development (PLD) application pages: 2,000 and 1,900 page views respectively.

This suggests there has been an improvement in the number of prospective principals at least attempting to engage in this programme. Site data suggests a disproportionately higher number of schools in the Auckland region use the website compared with other regions.

When asked to discern what topics respondents found the site useful for, they ranked them as follows:

Table 4.5 Usefulness of www.educationalleaders.govt.nz (LeadSpace) for nominated categories

Topic	Very useful	Useful	Neutral - mixed impression	Not useful	Not useful misleading or outdated -stronger	Unsure	No answer
Curriculum	9	17	12	2	0	1	11
Pedagogy	8	18	12	2	0	1	11
Resource Management	14	14	10	1	0	2	11
Assessment & Reporting	8	22	9	2	0	1	10
Personnel Management	6	14	15	4	1	0	12
Leading & Managing	16	12	12	0	0	1	11

All six topics gained a consistent amount of support as being useful or very useful.

4.3.3 School Support Services Advisers

The frequency for which School Support Services' advisers were used for professional learning was asked. Most principals use advisers on average every term or annually. When asked to identify what particular topics SSS are used for, the following data was obtained:

Table 4.6 Usefulness of School Support Services for nominated categories

Topic	Very useful	Useful	Neutral - mixed impression	Not useful	Not useful misleading or outdated - stronger	Unsure	No answer
Curriculum	25	12	6	1	0	0	8
Pedagogy	16	19	4	0	0	0	13
Resource Management	2	8	11	7	2	3	19
Assessment & Reporting	15	12	6	3	0	1	15
Personnel Management	4	9	9	8	1	1	20
Leading & Managing	9	11	8	5	1	2	16

The table data suggests that a majority of principals find SSS advisers either useful or very useful for curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting, and leading and managing, and less so for personnel management and resource management.

4.3.4 The use of coaches and mentors

Eight respondents were currently using a coach and mentor, while 36 indicated they were not. Of the eight who were, four had worked with a coach or mentor for over two years, two for over a year, and the remaining two for a term or less. The main focus for the coach and mentor was described as "*Growing my leadership*", "*Critical friend*", and "*Honing my practice as a leader and challenging myself in this role*". Another person listed three aspects: "*A sounding board, critiquing my goals for 2010, and offering advice and suggestions.*"

When those not using a coach and mentor were asked to choose reasons from a selection provided, the following distribution of data emerged:

Table 4.7 Reasons for respondents not using coaches and mentors

Reason	Frequency
Cost	3
Unaware of any coach and mentor available	5
No perceived need	9
No time to use	1
Past bad experience	1
Unsure, never really thought of it	3
Haven't got around to it, but open to the possibility	10
Non completed or Not displayed	20

The two most frequent responses suggest coaches and mentors are considered either unnecessary or not a high priority for some, even though others are open to the possibility.

4.3.5 The use of external specialists

Specialist outsiders, such as Limited Statutory Managers and project managers, were used over the past 3 years in 27 schools out of 46. When considering the

most intensively used specialist, in 16 cases, this referred to project managers, while there were four instances of financial support, two for personnel and five for curriculum. No other pattern was apparent.

4.3.6 Most frequently used websites

The next set of questions asked respondents to identify their three most popular websites relating to professional teachers' and principals' organisations. Meanings of acronyms are provided in Table 1(p.x).

Table 4.8 Usage of respondents' three favourite websites

Site/ Frequency	Daily	2 or 3 times weekly	Weekly	Fortnightly	Monthly	Every Term	Annually	Never	No Answer
NZEI	0	2	2	1	8	11	5	2	21
PPTA	1	0	1	1	5	1	2	7	34
NZPF	0	1	3	0	8	7	6	2	25
SPANZ	0	0	2	0	3	1	1	7	38
ERO	0	0	0	0	1	4	10	0	37
MoE	1	2	3	6	13	8	0	0	19
NZCPPA	0	0	0	0	2	2	0	4	44
STA	0	0	1	2	10	9	7	0	23
Regional P's Assn	1	0	4	0	6	5	0	1	35
TKI	1	2	10	4	7	6	0	0	22
Other	1	0	1	2	0	1	1	0	46

Table data suggests that respondents use a range of sites, but not frequently in most cases. It appears that few websites were referred to on a regular basis fortnightly or in smaller intervals (the left hand columns), with modal values in the term or annual columns for most sites.

The most popular websites nominated were used for retrieving information on curriculum (13), national standards (6), change management (5), employment matters (5), personnel and general management (both 4), learning (3), pedagogy, leadership, and professional (all 2), and assessment and governance (1). Others commented on how this varies according to need, for professional readings, and current education matters.

4.3.7 Seeking advice from principal colleagues

Forty seven principals – all who responded – asked other principals for advice. In 33 instances, this included neighbouring principals. The topic distribution is as follows:

Table 4.9 Topic distribution for principals seeking advice from other principals

Topic	Frequency	Percentage of all respondents
Curriculum	25	48%
Pedagogy	16	31%
Resource Management - finance/property/projects	18	35%
Assessment and Reporting - e.g. data management	22	42%
Personnel Management	21	40%
Leading and Managing	19	37%
Other	2	4%

The frequency with which respondents asked other principals for advice is given in table 4.10:

Table 4.10 Frequency with which advice is sought from other principals

	Average	Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Two or three times a week	1	2	2	2
	Weekly	10	19	21	23
	Fortnightly	9	17	19	43
	Monthly	14	27	30	72
	Every term	11	21	23	96
	Annually	2	4	4	100
	Total	47	90	100	
	Missing	5	10		
Total		52	100		

About 70% ask for advice at least monthly and almost a quarter every week, on average.

4.3.8 Other sources of individual learning

The final set of questions covering individual sources of learning offered an opportunity for respondents to nominate other sources not previously mentioned. While 16 couldn't think of any and ten gave no answer, 26 indicated other sources, including reading research or work towards university papers or material from international resource centres such as the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) or Australian Council for Educational Leaders (ACEL). One cited leadership in boys' schools as a specific topic of interest, while several mentioned curriculum, pedagogy or leadership.

Two respondents wrote of contact with their professional association NZEI as a source of learning, while one gave the example of the use of a Professional Learning Online Tool (PLOT). Finally, two people mentioned learning from local kaumatua (Maori leaders) and one from an appraiser.

4.4 Learning within the school

The second of the six sections relating to locations of learning refers to learning within the school. Contexts could include management and staff meetings, classroom visits, sharing in school wide professional development as well as involvement in special learning groups. Some potential learning situations are more designed for operational matters than professional learning.

4.4.1 Learning from management meetings

Respondents were asked how many staff normally attended management meetings.

Table 4.11 Number of staff attending management meetings

Number	2-3	4-5	6-7	8 or more
Count	13	13	9	11

A check of the data comparing school size with the number of staff attending management meetings showed no clear correlation. For example the two largest schools were at the opposite ends of the scale in terms of numbers attending management meetings.

The majority of schools held management meetings either weekly or fortnightly. Table 4.12 gives the range and frequency of various topics covered in these meetings, and suggests curriculum, pedagogy, student issues and administration nuts and bolts are recurrent themes.

Table 4.12 Frequency of topics discussed at management meetings

Topic/ Frequency	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Often	Always	No Answer
Admin organisation nuts & bolts	0	3	13	14	11	3	8
Pedagogy – best practice	0	0	5	21	13	4	9
Personnel	1	5	19	12	6	0	9
Curriculum	0	0	2	19	15	8	8
Change management	1	1	15	13	12	2	8
New tech – admin inc. student management systems	0	9	18	14	1	1	9
New tech – ICT for student learning	0	9	15	14	4	1	9
Event management	3	8	19	10	1	0	11
Student issues	0	1	9	16	14	3	9
Other						1	

In the ‘Other’ category, one respondent added that the management team always checked out their impact on other staff and considered how they were meeting the needs of their students.

4.4.2 Staff meetings as a source of learning

Four schools held two staff meetings every week, where there is at least an element of professional learning and the principal normally attends. Twenty six held these weekly and 10 fortnightly, with 5 conceding these occurred most weeks and one less often than fortnightly. Respondents were asked to describe recent professional learning that occurred at these meetings.

Eleven wrote of work on national standards, a current government priority at primary level, while nine meetings were on maths related topics and eight on literacy. Eleven looked at aspects of learning and three on restorative practices. Two principals mentioned using data to inform teaching, student-led conferencing and ICT. Remaining staff meeting themes included looking at the special character of the school, reviewing how to deal with complaints, and planning for Matariki (Maori New Year celebration). Many principals would not be surprised at this wide range of learning, whether encompassed by the concept of 'professional' learning or not.

What is the impact of the principal learning alongside other staff at staff meetings? Ten comments were made on the degree of impact, with two unsure but the rest believing it was "*huge*". Most respondents commented in terms of their values around the principal being the lead learner. "*I think it important that the learning leader is seen to be a learner too. If it's good enough for me it's good enough for the rest of the staff*." One respondent said: *"I totally believe the PD that has the greatest impact on student learning is where I learn alongside staff*."

Often comments were made quite forcefully and in detail. One person wrote:

> *I am a part of the team of learners. Leadership in teacher experts is developed. I model being a learner. I develop trusting relationships with staff that extend to all other aspects of leadership. I know what is being asked and what the decisions are so there is accountability from all. I learn about the problems of implementation therefore I can help in how to resource change, what systems and organisational changes need to be made to enhance new learning and how to advocate on behalf of staff with BoT and in the wider educational community.*

There was an emphasis on collegial learning: "*I attend all PD staff participate in as well as take at least two leaders with me to any significant PD off site*." This was also articulated as a measure of credibility and support: "*Learning beside the staff shows that I see myself as a learner, that I value their ideas and contributions and in order to effect change the principal must lead and participate. It demonstrates that the PD has value*".

The theme of personal gain was balanced against the leadership value of showing commitment:

> *I enjoy being a part of the staff - as I still teach one class, I need the same PD and reflection in a practical sense as they do. It would be cowardly not to participate fully in all learning that the staff is involved in. I prove that you can teach old dogs! It is an affirmation that it is seen as important.*

Many comments referred to showing support to teachers and other staff by attendance and involvement. There were themes of enacting lead learning leadership through this means. Some respondents developed this idea beyond collegiality – 'we are part of a team, all in this together' – to include the idea of how important it is to remind others how much the principal knows about learning: "*My value as lead learner is also increased as they understand I know as much as they do or even more*!"

By far the most common theme was the idea of involvement and co-constructing a way forward, being able to monitor how various staff were responding to the pace of change so far, and determining how best to proceed as a team.

4.4.3 School learning contracts

Of the 48 principals who responded to the question asking the names of recent school wide learning contracts, all but one gave a range. The exception stated, surprisingly, that "*the school did not engage in external contracts"*. The range included 23 schools involved in Information Communications Technology learning clusters, 27 in numeracy/maths, 25 in literacy/reading/writing. Some schools were awarded contestable learning contracts such as Extending High Standards Across Schools (EHSAS) (9 schools) and Assessment to Learn (AtoL - 6 schools). One school had become involved in Te Kotahitanga, a project to assist staff in gaining higher standards of achievement from Maori students through relationship building, data gathering and attention to pedagogy. The remaining school wide professional development projects appeared to be school initiatives on a range of subjects, including religious education, road sense and classroom behaviour education, with the learning setting arranged by outside providers.

All but three principals (from one intermediate and two secondary schools) attended school wide learning events with their staff. Many of the backing comments were about how important this was, qualified by the reality that at times some couldn't make the training due to clashes with other commitments due to wider responsibilities.

4.4.4 Time in the classroom

Thirty three out of 51 principals did not teach a regular class. How does that impact on their credibility as a classroom teacher and their credibility as lead learners? Respondents were asked to explain how they personally sustained new learning from school wide learning events.

The distinction between being part of the learning journey but having a separate role was made: *I think it is that we learn together but have different roles that are appreciated. Teachers understand that my role supports theirs*." And:

> *I always explain to the staff that my role as principal is significantly different to their role as classroom teacher, but in order to make significant decisions that affect them all - I must at the very least be alongside and actively encouraging and supporting their learning - contributing my own expertise and experiences as appropriate*.

What are the aspects of this different role?

> *Continued professional dialogue with teachers around implementation of ideas. Growing the new knowledge back at school by bringing in new knowledge that links or expands on what has been heard. Problem solving and inquiry into practice with teachers. I feel staff really value that I continue to extend my curriculum knowledge. At times I am a learner and a teacher is the expert. At times I can lead but we act as a team. We can de-privatize practice when teachers trust that I am with them in the learning journey*.

There were other strategies and practices offered to maintain engagement, including involvement in moderating work: "*I also have children sent to me with their work and comment on it*"; "*Create opportunities to work in classes by releasing staff, covering when staff are away on PD, or sick*," and "*I observe*

every teacher's class each term." Principals discussed regularly walking through classrooms, observing and talking to students.

Some concede their teaching methods may be becoming outdated: "*I can teach but my methods are verging on pre historic*." One respondent explained the staff's remedy for this: "*If the staff feel I am not in line with some of their thinking, they will ask me to take a group of students*." Another principal used outside help to overcome perceived inadequacies: "*I ask questions and seek advice from advisers*."

Some principals continue their involvement in regular teaching, which feeds in to their credibility and mandate as lead learners: "*I see it as critical to genuinely understand the teaching by still practising it - and I love every minute of it!*"

The next questions compared actual time spent in the classroom compared with desired time. Over half the respondents spend 1 – 3 hours per week in classrooms with other teachers present. How do the statistics in the table compare with principals' *desired* time in classrooms with other teachers? Table 4.13 gauges this distinction:

Table 4.13 The difference between actual and ideal, for principal hours in the classroom

Comparison with ideal compared with actual time spent in the classroom		How many hours per week **would** you spend in classrooms in an ideal world?				
		Never	1 - 3	4 - 7	8 - 12	13 or more
		Count	Count	Count	Count	Count
How many hours per week **do** you normally spend in classrooms with other teachers present?	Never	0	0	0	0	0
	Rarely	0	1	3	0	0
	1-3	0	8	13	3	2
	4 - 7	0	0	4	7	0
	8 - 12	0	0	0	1	0
	13 or more	0	0	0	0	0

Although principals would like to be able, on average, to spend a few hours more in classrooms every week, this was qualified by comments. "*It is important to see 'teaching in practice'. However there are many sub-levels to the way that this can best be managed.*" Another respondent suggested that this is a shared task between the three in the senior team.

It seemed important to question how classroom visits contribute to professional learning, including that of principals. Respondents were asked to itemise what they had found of value from classroom visits.

Responses mentioned involvement in curriculum areas respondents had not previously taught, teaching and learning at different levels from their own background, the introduction of new ideas around thinking, inquiry, and the use of technology in the classroom. There was emphasis on the interactions, with staff and students, of working together such as co-constructing of inquiry and assessment goals, of observing innovative practice and of providing reflective questioning and feedback rather than advising.

A respondent offered a broader approach:

> *I would see myself as having a greater impact releasing teachers to visit each other. I am not the sole expert on staff. I believe that my role is to grow the ability of all in the team to contribute to school improvement: as leaders and participants and learners.*

One respondent summed up the inherent difficulties in achieving the ideal of regular visits:

> *I visit classrooms formally to observe young teachers, I pop in regularly and I visit when invited to something special. It all adds up to quite a bit. I would like to do a day a week and see every class, but with a roll of over 2,000 I don't have time! If I gave up my own class . . . .*

Some expressed frustration at the need to regularly postpone classroom visits because of unpredictable issues arising, while one saw this issue as a dichotomy: "*Principalship is a full time job and principals who are not facing the big stuff there choose to hide out in classrooms and call it staying in touch. I enjoyed the classroom but I also enjoy the principal role*."

How significant is the informal contact and conversing with staff in terms of professional learning? Without exception, the respondents saw this as crucial, not only to signal interest in the individuals who make up the team but also to engage in the kind of reflective practice that is fundamental to a learning community. It was emphasised that the learning occurred 'both ways'. This confirms that professional learning in schools occurs not only in structured but also in informal settings.

4.4.5 School specific learning groups

Twenty four out of 42 are involved in a professional learning group of some description within their school. Some groups were those designed to manage associated services such as Resource Teaching Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) staff, or meetings with specialist teachers to plan how to best support children with special learning needs. Others attended syndicate or faculty meetings, or met with groups with responsibilities for school wide curriculum or assessment planning.

Examples of this learning reflected the opportunity such groups provided to counter the complexity of many schools and the ease with which ignorance of what is happening can develop. One person wrote:

> *Because schools have become so complex, there is no way that a principal can know all of what is going on and it is important to share leadership. At this school key people have their own leadership portfolios and they keep us up-to-date with progress. We learn from each other and suggestions for moving forward are made*.

4.5 Learning from your community

Schools do not exist in isolation from their community, and there is potential for principals to learn from community resources.

4.5.1 Local principals' clusters

The first question in this section asked how often principal respondents attended their *local* principals' cluster.

Table 4.14 Frequency of attendance at the local principals' cluster meetings

		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Monthly	21	40	47	47
	Once a term	19	37	42	89
	Once a year	1	2	2	91
	Never	1	2	2	93
	Sporadically - no particular pattern	3	6	7	100
	Total	45	87	100	
	Missing	7	14		
Total		52	100		

Most attended either monthly or once a term with only two attending annually or never. Respondents were next asked to identify the types of learning occurring at these meetings. ('Student Management Systems' is abbreviated to 'SMS').

Table 4.15 Frequency of topics discussed at local principals' clusters

Type/Freq	Never	Rarely	Occasion-ally	Regularly	Often	Always	No Answer
Admin/org nuts & bolts	3	0	16	15	2	5	11
Pedagogy	3	4	16	11	6	1	11
Personnel	3	7	19	9	3	0	11
Curriculum	1	4	11	20	6	0	10
Change	3	7	18	9	3	1	11
New tech admin inc. SMS	4	12	19	4	2	0	11
New tech student learning	3	11	19	6	2	0	11
Event management	6	10	11	9	4	0	12
Student issues	2	4	17	11	6	1	11
Other	0	0	1	0	1	0	50

The distribution of responses suggests that many of the topics provided have a high chance of being discussed at least occasionally. In approximate order of popularity they appear to be administration (of the cluster), curriculum, student issues, pedagogy, personnel and change management, event management, and using ICT for student learning and administration. Two respondents suggested

other topics: property and RTLB usage, and the welfare of other principal colleagues.

Respondents were then asked if they belonged to a principals' cluster that was not local, but more regionally based. 24 belonged to such a group, and 20 identified that they didn't.

Table 4.16 Duration of affiliation with local cluster

		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	A month or less	1	2	4	4
	About a term	2	4	8	13
	A semester	5	10	21	33
	About a year	9	17	38	71
	Two years	1	2	4	75
	Three or more years	6	12	25	100
	Total	24	46	100	
	Missing	28	54		
Total		52	100		

Sixteen out of 24 had belonged to a cluster for a year or more, whereas eight had only recently joined.

Seven respondents commented on their involvement in the newly formed Experienced Principals Programme (EPP), one as a facilitator. While one respondent found this was easily the best way to share ideas and learn about new initiatives, another found it very hard to get others to commit to commentary online, and a third had not found the group helpful in terms of the model of contract and was considering withdrawing.

The respondents were asked to provide the topic of the last cluster meeting they attended. The most spectacular response was "*What safeguards are there for principals who are attacked by staff*?" while the more common themes were inquiry learning and teaching, national standards, and change management. Other themes included thinking strategies, learning styles and ICT practices, as well as school self review and distributed leadership. As has been previously commented,

the relatively new presence of the EPP means it would be premature to judge its effectiveness.

4.5.2 Learning from parents

Another potential source of professional learning is parents, whether through their involvement on the Board, school committees, or other contact. Respondents were firstly asked how often on average they had benefitted from using parents as a source of professional learning.

Table 4.17 Frequency with which principals have benefitted from using parents as a source of professional learning

		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Weekly	2	4	5	5
	Fortnightly	1	2	2	7
	Monthly	5	10	12	19
	About every term	8	15	19	37
	At least once a year	5	10	12	49
	Never	11	21	26	74
	Sporadically - no particular pattern	11	21	26	100
	Total	43	83	100	
	Missing	9			
Total		52	100		

About half who answered either never used a parent in this manner, or only sporadically; the other half were distributed between ‘weekly’ and ‘at least once a year’, with the most popular response being ‘about every term’. Topics of professional learning in this context included how to run meetings, strategic planning and financial matters and the training available from the School Trustees Association (STA). All of these involve the interface of school trustees and school management.

Likewise there were topics of emotional and mental health, employment - related issues, mediation and restorative practices. Technical matters were listed: utilising statistics and how to make simple engines within a class, as well as cultural foci –

learning more about Te Reo (speaking Maori) and Samoan. Feedback from parents on the factors that assisted student engagement, and the effectiveness of parent interviews in conveying student achievement information, were also mentioned.

4.5.3 Learning from local organisations

Respondents were asked how many local organisations they were involved in, where 'involved' was qualified as attending at least every second meeting and being recognised by others as a member. Organisations could include church, sports, marae, arts or service groups.

Table 4.18 Number of local organisations that principals are involved in

Number of Organisations		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	None	5	10	12	12
	1	9	17	21	33
	2	15	29	36	69
	3	5	10	12	81
	4	4	8	10	91
	5 or more	4	8	10	100
	Total	42	81	100	
	Missing	10	19		
Total		52	100		

About a third were involved in one or no local organisations, another third belonged to two, and 13 respondents were involved in three or more organisations. The kinds of organisations nominated are listed in tabular form (see table 4.21) with respondent examples of professional learning summarised:

Table 4.19 Examples of professional learning from different organisations

Type of Organisation	Freq	% of those who responded	Examples of Professional Learning
Sports	22	42	Managing, coaching, administration, running meetings, fitness, working with volunteers, synthesising ideas, the importance of communication.
Performing Arts	6	12	Relational, being in front of people, people management.
Church	11	21	Service skills, being a team player, serving the community, inclusiveness, knowledge of effective techniques for working with adults. Sometimes examples of ineffective leadership.
Service Club	19	37	Volunteering, public speaking and networking, management team skills, committee dynamics, patience! Trying out executive positions, realisation of the importance of community connectedness, experiencing followership.
Marae/ Cultural Centre	5	10	Humility, local land issues, roles and responsibilities in a different cultural context, tuakana teina (form of Maori mentoring/ buddies), iwi (regional tribal) development, holding back.
Hobby or Craft	5	10	Shared knowledge and time, literacy discussions in book club context.
Political	4	8	Strategic planning, diplomacy, networking, communication, how organisations can be developed, national leadership, meeting management and formal procedures, public speaking, media training, online environments, teleconferencing.
Other	5	10	Local youth motivation groups, a whanau (Maori families) group and hall committee.

One respondent listed membership of a regional health management team and commented in terms of professional learning:

How educational leadership differs from other sectors. For example how consultative education is. How the beliefs and values of an organisation can be used to guide all practice or how they can be empty words. Learned about ethical leadership and the strength of dispersed leadership as opposed to hierarchical structures.

Sixteen respondents (out of forty two) have gained significant knowledge from some other community source, (not covered already). The most prevalent organisations were the Police and Children, Youth and Family Services (CYFS), the social agency whose role it is to support young people and families at risk. Respondents spoke of learning the significance of building trusting relationships before negotiating change, particularly when working with people in "socially difficult" situations, of learning from the expertise of police and social workers in fields such as sexual behaviour and strength based practice.

Other examples of useful professional learning occurred through contact with a local Justice of the Peace (JP), which resulted in a clearer understanding of legal matters, and a respondent whose position of national president meant communicating internationally via specific forums. Another respondent learned about a different form of collaboration when working with business organisations, and finally a principal strengthened skills in public speaking and presenting when involved in health governance.

4.6 Learning from the wider region

This section moves beyond community contact to regional opportunities, in this case the Waikato and Bay of Plenty regions.

4.6.1 Attendance of regional principals' events

Forty out of 45 attend regional principal events such as meetings or conferences.

Table 4.20 Frequency of principals attending regional principals' events

Mean		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Monthly	3	6	8	8
	Twice a term	8	15	20	28
	Every term	16	31	40	68
	Each semester	2	4	5	73
	Annually	11	21	28	100
	Total	40	77	100	
	Missing	12	23		
Total		52	100		

40% of these regionally active principals meet other principals within the region once a term, 20% twice a term, and 28% annually. As has been the case for previous sources, respondents were now asked (Table 4.21) to identify the categories of topics discussed in this forum.

Table 4.21 Themes of professional learning occurring at principals' regional events

Theme/ Freq	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Regularly	Often	Always	No Answer
Admin/org nuts & bolts	4	7	13	8	3	2	15
Pedagogy	0	0	11	14	12	1	14
Personnel	2	2	16	9	5	1	17
Curriculum	0	0	7	16	14	1	14
Change	1	1	12	14	10	0	14
New tech admin inc. SMS	1	6	21	6	3	0	15
New tech student learning	2	6	17	8	2	1	16
Event management	8	16	8	2	1	0	17
Student issues	1	2	15	13	5	2	14
Other	0	0	0	0	0	1	51

The single response to the 'Other' category was described as notification of any professional learning opportunities and developments.

All nominated topics appeared to feature at regional meetings at least occasionally, with the exception of event management. Whereas it could be envisaged that local principals' clusters might use a meeting time to organise a combined schools event, such as a sports competition or cultural concert, it appears that at regional level event management of this nature rarely occurs.

One of the four who indicated they did not attend regional events gave the reason that there was "*too little information over too long a time frame*". The same respondent thought that "*conferences were outrageous*" and preferred less posturing and more genuine discussion. The only other person who commented said "*we have developed our own informal principals' group due to our geographic isolation - work to address common issues across all our U1 and U2 schools*."

4.6.2 Other regional sources

Twenty one out of the 41 who responded had sought information from a regional source that contributed to their professional learning. The most common response was seeking information from the NZSTA (5) or MoE (4). Others recalled attending iwi (regional tribal) education events run by Tuhoe or Tainui. Meetings on specific school topics, such as gifted and talented education and curriculum development were mentioned. One person recalled the following list of topics covered at various events: "*Legislative requirements, charter and planning and review of students' performance.*"

Finally, regional and local university education resource centres were identified.

4.7 National sources of learning

Eleven questions focussed on national events.

4.7.1 National principals' conferences

Respondents were initially asked how often they attended national principal conferences.

Table 4.22 Regularity of attendance at national principals' conferences

Mean		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Twice a year	4	8	9	9
	Every year	10	19	23	32
	Every 2 years	9	17	21	52
	Every 3 or 4 years	20	39	46	98
	Never	1	2	2	100
	Total	44	85	100	
	Missing	8	15		
Total		52	100		

Respondents were then invited to comment on their choice in table 4.22. Cost is a problem in some schools, while others have become disillusioned of the usefulness of these events, instead preferring to save and attend international conferences. Some have opted to go to special school type conferences (boys, normal school, rural) rather than more generic ones.

When considering the value of national principals' conferences in terms of professional growth, of the 41 responses, 29 were unreservedly positive, 8 were a mixture and 4 were negative. The positive comments focused on the quality of the speakers and challenge of new ideas:

> *The keynote speakers are often world authorities from overseas and having the opportunity to talk with them is invaluable. It personalises my professional growth. There is a variety of relevant topics. Incidental collegial contact affirms so much of what I think.*

Another respondent said: "*I find the speakers motivating, the company refreshing and the trade displays of interest*." Others commented on workshops being valuable, and the importance of networking including reflection on what constitutes good practice. The value of networking was the most prevalent comment, including meeting people they normally wouldn't be able to. There was a recuperative context to the learning and the opportunity for uninterrupted time learning. "*It lifts your head out of the day to day running.*"

Those who were ambivalent wrote of the potential value of conferences if the speakers were high quality and the subject area relevant to their needs. Some rejected the social aspects of conferences and were prepared to save up and go further afield less often if that was required to meet their learning needs. In a few cases, cost was a significant factor: "*Have not been to a national conference, (meet instead with) other rural and teaching principals and these I rate highly.*"

The four respondents with negative comments found little value in these conferences and preferred seeking their learning in other contexts such as EHSAS and ICT contracts.

4.7.2 Other national conferences

Thirty two out of 44 respondents have attended national conferences not designed specifically for principals. Nine out of the 31 who responded nominated Learning@School Conferences, which focus on the interface between new technologies, pedagogy, curriculum and leadership in terms of student learning. A further four simply stated "ICT".

One person had attended an interactive whiteboard (IWB) conference and four attended 'ULearn' conferences in Christchurch. The remainder of suggestions covered conferences for special types of schools (single sex boys, Catholic, intermediate and middle schools), international education (the provision of education to international students) and special themes (law and arts). A leadership conference run by the School of Education, University of Waikato, was also mentioned.

Twenty seven out of 41 respondents had other staff members with them when attending these events. Those who went alone wrote of specialist learning (such as legal parameters) and the need to keep up with matters not necessarily in the classroom. Those who went with staff spoke of the continued conversations post conference keeping the learning alive and the development of shared understanding of what is informed practice "*developing common understandings, sharing personal perspectives, using and adapting some ideas across the school*."

4.7.3 Attendance at the Principals' Development Planning Centre (PDPC)

Fifteen out of 42 had attended the PDPC, described earlier.

Table 4.23 Effectiveness of the PDPC as a source of professional learning

		Freq.	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Very effective	9	17	60	60
	Quite effective	5	10	33	93
	Neutral	1	2	7	100
	Total	15	29	100	
	Missing	37	71		
Total		52	100		

All but one who responded found the Centre either quite or very effective. The comments were particularly positive. The first comment was

> *This would have had one of the most profound impacts on my professional learning - ever. It was timed at a point my career where I didn't know where to next and certainly provided the opportunity and focus to allow this to develop.*

Also, "*Just amazing. A huge learning curve. Amazing impact.*" Others said: "*Great self reflection - really forced me to look at my practice. Very professional feedback*." And "*It was a watershed in my learning as a school leader.*" "*It was the best professional learning I had in seven years of principalship as it focused solely on me*!"

There were two comments with qualifications: "*I was the sole Maori principal and felt that maybe my specific context and way of working with whanau was not always appreciated or valued,*" and "*I had a lot of difficulty finding an ARM (Area Relationship Manager). Once I did, we set up a professional learning process and this was carried out with full support from the B.O.T."* The ARM had responsibility for assisting participants from the week-long PDPC to complete and implement a personal development plan once back in their home setting.

A final comment of endorsement: "*The very best professional development in the last five years for me. Challenging and affirming. The week long experience refined and clarified many aspects of my professional practice. EPP is an extremely weak and empty replacement*."

4.7.4 Other national sources of learning

Seven respondents (out of 41) recalled gaining professional learning from another national source. Two ideas were misplaced (First Time Principals and PDPC pilot centre). Other suggestions were Head Offices for NZSTA, NZEI and the Catholic Education Office. One person had attended a national standards meeting and another had attended a meeting on the development of KLP (Kiwi Leadership for Principals) documents. Comments on the learning that was attained were positive in all cases except the national standards, which left the respondent with more questions. The principal seeking advice from NZSTA on an employment issue was able to proceed with "*clear guidelines of processes to follow and feedback throughout the process*."

4.8 International sources of learning for principals

This is the final section looking systematically at sources for learning.

4.8.1 International principals' conferences

Twenty four out of 44 had attended an international principals' conference. Some conferences had themes reflecting special groups (boys' education, dyslexia, and middle schooling) while others focused on types of leadership: learning leadership (four respondents), 21st century learning (two) and change (two)). There were conferences on thinking, learning, and reporting and assessment.

Comments were all positive, and talked of the larger scale of conferences, with more participants, bigger venues and more workshops on more themes: "*More professional, more linked to real issues and without any political agenda driving and/or limiting the topics and discussions. Less limited in scope.*"

The following example also endorses the quality of each learning opportunity: "*Internationally renowned speakers from many parts of the world. Researchers presenting their own work. Sensational venues. Fast paced, little 'down time', no PC fillers to satisfy political or sponsor requirements*." The global perspective was significant: "*Broader exposure to thinking and to expert speakers, cross country comparisons, a world view of education and ideas*."

Cultural differences were not just consigned to the content but also the context:

> *The blending of different perspectives and contexts is exciting - the challenge is that different countries tend to have different learning styles and ways of delivery - adjusting to this to find the learning can sometimes be an experience in itself.*

The final comment contains a number of important elements:

> *The quality of the speakers. The challenge to your thinking. The taking you out of your comfort zone. The gems that you didn't expect. The looking at a problem in a new way. The appreciation for what we have in NZ.*

Of the 23 respondents, one felt the impact had been none, and that respondent wouldn't want to go again. Others used terms such as huge, invaluable, significant and empowering. There were comments about the integrity of the conference material:

> *Huge impact - more than any other PD. Hearing many different speakers talking on the same theme while presenting their own research based information which can be contrasted and compared is far superior to having one guest speaker per subject which is what you traditionally get at national conferences. The networking that occurs at international conferences is also much more robust and valuable.*

Another endorsed this theme, writing: "*A sense of confidence that the initiatives and ideas come from a wider more tested setting and so will work*." There was a theme that exposure to international ideas can accelerate school progress: "*We are considered by ERO and the MOE to be a long way ahead of most schools in terms of our pedagogical and curriculum change because I have travelled*

overseas to pick up new ideas." A final comment links isolation, and international contact with endorsement of an individual professional journey:

> *Very much so. In terms of affirming leadership practice that is new but others are not using. It can be very lonely when you are a long way from a university, have principals around you that seldom look to extend their thinking and you want to lead in ways that may not be appreciated as powerful. It has taken eight years for my leadership style to be appreciated as powerful by others in the community so I needed the affirmation of people at the very top of their game to keep going and not fall back into old accepted practice. You can see what others are doing internationally and look at how to relate this back to your own experiences. It makes you focus on themes rather than the small matters*.

4.8.2 Other international conferences and learning opportunities

Nine respondents have attended international conferences not designed specifically for principals, at least five in Australia. There were themes of gifted and talented, indigenous learning, inquiry approaches and thinking styles. One conference was specifically for Catholic educators. Two were on curriculum development and personalised learning. One respondent went on a study tour in Australia which resulted in a stepping up of 'enviro' themes, a change in property management thinking, further ICT development and impact on the transition to school programme once returning to school.

Twenty two respondents identified international sources other than conferences from which they had gained some professional knowledge. Fifteen of these went on tours, of which at least 6 to Australia and 5 the United Kingdom. Two respondents travelled as a consequence of scholarships and 2 as part of a University of Waikato study tour. One person mentioned travelling while on sabbatical.

One respondent had previously taught overseas, and another used the internet to build contact with teachers in other countries. Four others belonged to international educational research or curriculum development organisations such as ACEL and ASCD.

4.9 Other sources

The next section provided an opportunity for respondents to elaborate on how they best use the sources previously considered for their professional learning.

4.9.1 Source preferences

The first question asked for justification from those who had chosen not to attend regional, national or international professional development opportunities. Ten out of the 12 responses identified cost as the most significant factor. Two respondents felt that one off events such as conferences are not cost effective, and one person elaborated by saying s/he would prefer being able to afford to attend with someone else as well.

Of all the 29 categories covered in the research, which were nominated as the most helpful for professional learning? There were 44 responses from 38 respondents, grouped in the six sections, with six insisting on placing two categories first equal.

Table 4.24 Principals' nominations for most helpful sections for their professional learning

Section	Individual	School	Community	Regional	National	International
Popularity	6	13	2	12	5	6

Justifications for each of the sections have been assembled in table form (Table 4.27):

Table 4.25 Principals' reasons why they selected a particular section of sources

Section	Reasons: Sample of Quotes
Individual	"I have been able to target areas of learning that have maximum impact for my school as well as myself. It is the most easily accessed. It is the most affordable for the school. It is ongoing. I can access learning at a higher level". "Individual mentoring: can be customised for personal professional needs."
School	"Because it works: whole school learning." "Where I have seen it work best is in seven to nine teacher school where everyone was on board contributed and developed a good professional language." "I have found this the most effective way to implement school-wide programmes and to build the shared understandings needed to make change, to improve and develop existing systems. However as the change manager it is also vital for me to have contact with other principals through the local networks. I need these learning conversations outside my school to help me justify and clarify the changes and refinements to practices that lead to better student outcomes."
Community	"Professional learning from colleagues facing same challenges as teaching principals ensures that decisions made are "do-able" because we are all in the same waka (canoe)."
Regional	"Very good network of colleagues locally with similar schools and issues. We get on well and trust each other. Very supportive and encouraging." "Educational Leadership Centre - University of Waikato: Challenges thinking with academic rigour. Brings up-to-date research (theory) to link to practice for 'leading edge' teaching and learning."
National	"PDPC was focused on my individual needs so feedback was tailor made. It focused on my performance in the role of principal. Other PD cannot by its nature deliver in this manner. Other PD tends to be knowledge rather than performance based and is delivered to the masses . . . ." "Attendance at PDPC as a participant and then as a facilitator provided significant focus and learning for me - developing a repertoire of skills that have had a significant impact on my school leadership . . . ."
Inter-national	"The futures-focused and broader perspective of the international conference." ". . . every time I have been to research education or technologies overseas what I have learned has made a huge difference to how I run my school." "Breadth of opportunity and the range of best practice."

4.9.2 Cultural factors

A question was asked to gain information on cultural factors impacting on principals' abilities to access and benefit from quality professional learning. Only 16 answered this question, seven of whom thought there were no factors. A few comments alluded to the need to develop a greater understanding of Maori culture (tikanga Maori). A respondent who earlier identified as being Maori made the following suggestion:

> *As a kura kaupapa Maori we often find that there is not a lot of PD specific to our needs. We are however open to other PD - my view is you take what is useful and leave the rest. We also like to have access to facilitators that can deliver in te reo Maori (Maori language) as that also supports our ongoing efforts to improve our own language skills. Some of the Maori-specific PD is run in places like Rotorua which involves travel*.

Another principal found it difficult to access professional learning opportunities related to the context of leading a school with both mainstream and full immersion classrooms, while a principal spoke of geographical isolation, and having to rely on the internet, without the same level of social interaction, in order to learn.

The next bracket of questions (table 4.28) sought to find out the most popular sources of professional reading. Respondents were asked to rank the following sources, stopping once they had included all habitual sources.

Table 4.26 Respondents' rankings of sources of professional reading

Source/Rank	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
University textbooks, journals or research material	12	7	5	5	1
Magazines	5	5	14	5	0
Websites, such as TKI or NCSL	13	9	6	5	0
Articles distributed by colleagues, such as from PLCs	5	15	6	5	1
No particular pattern	8	0	0	2	6
Not Answered	9	16	21	30	44

It appears from table 4.26 that the most popular rankings of preferences were either websites or university material as first choice, articles sourced from colleagues as second choice, magazines as third choice and an even spread over the four main categories for those who opted to provide a fourth ranking.

4.9.3 Trends in sourcing professional learning

The next set of questions explored any perceived shift in the use of various sources of learning. The six sections were itemised and respondents asked to comment on whether they have been using each section Less, Same or More than a few years ago, with opportunity to comment on their choice. Each of the six sections will be briefly analysed:

Table 4.27 Principals' perceptions of shifts in sources of professional learning, covered as sections

Section	Trend	No.	Summary of Comments
Individual (39 responses)	Less	4	2 cited not as much time for reading now, while 2 said less reading now university studies over.
	Same	14	2 mentioned personal reading.
	More	14	2 as a result of current post graduate studies and 1 because of belonging to a mentoring group.
	Not Ranked	7	"Am constantly scanning what's available to meet my needs". "Change from print to web based." While two further were working on post-grad studies, one said "Self reliant and self driven. Have yet to complete any formal papers."
School (37)	Less	0	(no comments)
	Same	12	"Same - will always factor very highly. Not just school wide but cluster wide . . . there is so much research on the power of working across schools and the recent School Improvement research in NZ is powerful."
	More	16	Comments included themes of cost effectiveness, everyone benefits, and tailored to school needs: "focused on our learners, our needs and what we need to improve capacity."
	Not Ranked	9	There was acknowledgement of both changes of emphasis due to school wide learning contracts and the great resource that each teacher holds, plus collaborative learning with staff.
Community (30)	Less	3	Due to a principal cluster group disbanding and a respondent feeling more experienced now.
	Same	16	One stated: "I will always belong to community groups and you can't help but learn" while another felt there was little to learn there.
	More	5	For one person, it was a new school and new setting, while another mentioned working closely with colleagues.

	Not Ranked	6	Schools combining for PD contracts were mentioned, plus a school/community venture to build an administration block.
Regional (27)	Less	5	One respondent does not find regional meetings useful.
	Same	10	While two spoke of regional events meeting their needs, a third person who does not attend regional meetings said: "I don't think things will change to encourage me further in this."
	More	9	Many commented on more opportunities at regional level, such as PLGs, School Support Services and better networking.
	Not Ranked	3	Comments focussed on learning networks and how parents compare different schools.
National (29)	Less	7	Cost was a major factor.
	Same	11	Two go to their same principals' conference annually, while another only commits if "really good opportunities arise."
	More	7	One is going to more conferences to enhance personal learning while another commented that "the Boys School Assn. has developed greatly." The comment "Looking externally for sources relevant to my needs those of the school," suggested more deliberate use of national resources.
	Not Ranked	4	Two mentioned ICT PD opportunities while a third said that comparisons with national data were regular.
Inter-national (26)	Less	8	Cost is a major factor in at least two cases.
	Same	7	While one has never been to an international conference, another quoted the BoT as thinking this was important for the principal.
	More	6	Three discussed having needs met this way, while one contributes personally to the expenses. "More - meets our needs as we are not quite a fit with many programmes on offer in above categories." One person claimed "I know now what I need to know and choose carefully and strategically what to go to," while another saw it as the alternative to embarking on doctoral studies now that a Masters degree has been completed.
	Not Ranked	5	"Never" was one comment, as in "never have and never will."

4.10 Priorities for accessing information

This section posed thirteen scenarios where further learning was required, and asked respondents to choose from the 29 sources in the typology in order of preference for acquiring new information. Once they believed they would have covered sufficient sites to gather the material they required, they were asked to stop ranking the sources. "Where do you go to find out about...?"

Table 4.28 summarises the modal responses over the scenarios.

Table 4.28 Modal sources of professional learning for types of issues.

Source/Ranking	Types of Issues
I1 Study	Building a transformational leadership culture in your school
I2 Websites, such as TKI or NCSL	Examples of school action plans for a pandemic response
I3 Leadspace/MoE Principals	How the electronic attendance system works
I4 School Support Services - advisers	An aspect of pedagogy regarding questioning techniques
I5 Coach/mentor	
I6 Specialist school support e.g. LSM or property manager	Ramp specifications for disabled access, imaginative use of a variety of school resources to build much needed but out of code facilities
I7 Field officer from professional organisation	Process for handling suspected teacher misconduct
I8 Contact with principal colleague	Appraisal: what constitutes good practice, techniques for conflict resolution, preparing for engagement with your community in a culturally sensitive manner, administration staff configurations for your sized school
S1 Management meeting	Using spreadsheets to analyse student achievement data
S2 Staff meeting	
S3 Staff workshop	
S4 Classroom visits	
S5 Informal collegial conversation within school	
S6 Other school source	
C1 Local principals' cluster	Advice on keeping your school drug free
No other selections from remaining community, regional, national and international sources were chosen	

Note the heavy use of principal colleagues, and that the most frequent sources of information and learning occur by the principal contacting another ‘expert’ or extracting information from websites or within the school. The conclusion appears to be that national and international sources are reserved for more ongoing, longer term issues, rather than issues of the day.

4.11 Learning about leadership

The final survey section moves away from the sources typology and looks at leadership learning from a variety of perspectives, with a higher proportion of open ended questions.

4.11.1 Principalship as a body of knowledge

The first question explores which organisation is the 'legitimate holder of knowledge' regarding educational leadership, including principalship:

Seventeen respondents of the 31 who answered specified a single holder. Of these 9 nominated universities – in particular leadership centres and a further 1 combined universities with polytechnics. Six nominated the MoE, with one extra specifying the MoE-administered TKI website, one specifying MoE Leadspace (website) and a further respondent specifying both of these. Six people suggested national principals' associations and one the national principals' conference. One did not know and a second stated there wasn't a holder.

Finally, one respondent adopted a collective approach nominating "*PLCs, regional & national principal organisations, MOE."*

The next question asked how easy it was to access the body of knowledge on principalship. Twenty out of 30 believed it was easy, very easy or relatively easy. Others qualified their comments: "*Easy but in reality impossible. We do not meet regularly and when we do, the wealth and breadth of topics is overwhelming*." Another was sceptical about the usefulness of the easily accessed material: "*Easy to access the 'surface features' -management and basic governance issues. Not so easy to access the deeper features - you need to have access to experienced people who can give you the help / advice / support needed.*" Another was suspicious of the range of material offered on a national website: "*TKI should have a wider legitimate access but at the moment what is on there is politically driven. The wide range of voices is not available. To get this you have to go through universities."*

Two found it difficult to access in detail and quality: "*Difficult, expensive. We don't have a great deal of expertise available to us unless we pay a huge amount*

of money." Others suggested access through a variety of sources, such as phone calls, online, libraries, local branch offices, attending courses, speakers, enrolling in post graduate study, purchasing recommended publications and accessing on-line resources, as well as developing a relationship with your local (university) leadership centre.

What are the barriers to accessing this knowledge? Sixteen people thought the biggest factor was time, often qualified by not knowing who to contact when (which takes longer), not knowing what the right questions to ask were, and then time to process the answers.

The second most common barrier mentioned was cost, with five related comments, and three on not knowing what to ask and who to ask it. Two declared there were no barriers, with a third claiming none except time. One person saw a personal lack of motivation as a barrier and others commented on access to the right kind of information and learning being difficult. One respondent explained that all principal practitioners have considerable knowledge, but "*no-one else knows <u>who</u> knows <u>what</u> aspect, so access is the biggest problem. We are bound by current outmoded models of learning*".

Finally, one comment proposed various elements:

> *Time, an (a lack of?) understanding of the riches available, a lack of understanding of the need for professional growth, a lack of willingness by tertiary institutions to share theory in practice and a lack of a clear structure to share.*

The next question gave an opportunity for respondents to explain what could help strengthen access to the body of knowledge on educational leadership. Responses were varied, with no particular theme emerging. One respondent looked at the model of learning as being key to accessibility:

> *Availability and funding. Best leadership work that I have taken part was a combination of term time study and block holiday courses. The combination of theory, practical application assignments and collegial discussion is the most effective. The course however needs to set up by specialist educational experts not by "high profile or retired principals". Study needs to be*

academically robust enough to ensure application is possible across a wide range of leadership contexts. Model used at UNITEC superb.

Most answers were not as detailed, making comments around a need for a central education institute such as Nottingham, England, or being part of a cluster of principals meeting online and face to face. Three felt it was already useful, if hard to access due to time constraints. One wanted time with "*the old-fashioned rural adviser*." Two looked at external agencies, lamenting that the MoE wasn't as helpful as expected and that if SSS was not contract-driven then the school advisers would be able to be more helpful.

"*Greater collaboration between educationalists and the removal of competition*" was a related response. One felt that mentors could be better utilised, and two believed that PD on *how* to access relevant information would be helpful in removing barriers.

4.11.2 Planned professional learning

Respondents were invited to comment on the proportion of principals' learning in 2009 that was related to externally imposed learning requirements. Principals estimated a mean of 44% was a response to imposed change, with estimates ranging from 5% to 90%, and standard deviation of 24%.

Did this externally imposed learning requirement impact on other possible learning? 15 respondents thought 'Yes', and 10 'No'. One person spoke of seeing everything else in the light of the imposed aspect, while another commented on how the topic dominated many of the professional development events attended, detracting from other topics. National standards were most talked about:

Preparation for 2010 for a more in depth implementation of national standards - how we would implement this with minimum impact for staff - facilitation skills - putting as much thought into the content of learning as well as the 'how' of getting this across.

Two comments spoke of having to postpone already implemented work on curriculum review and development in order to address the new issue. One

respondent explained how to factor these requirements into other school development:

> *You look for ways to make a fit. To take what is the best for your school and use that piece. To adapt with understanding and knowledge so that you can advocate for the way [to] use the change in your school. You want to adapt with understanding and make the best of it but not blindly include new directives. So you must learn all about what is driving the changes, what are the political motivations and what theory is it based on. What are the challenges or counters to these theories? Come from a position of knowledge and you have strength and make good decisions for your school*.

This comment articulates a sense of the principal being the guardian and filter of what is to become the focus of whole school discussion and development, with reference to the motives of those driving the change from 'without', and establishing the theory on what the knowledge is based, before making decisions. This links in with previous comments on the translation of episteme to phronesis.

Principals reported on establishing their annual learning goals with reference to the needs of the school, the 'pressure points', their own personal learning needs particularly in terms of how to enhance student learning, as a consequence of school reviews and parental/staff surveys, outcomes of peer reviews and appraisal processes, and aligned to the school's strategic direction. In most cases it was a combination of one or two of these factors; e.g. "*Something to take me above the school daily view, something directly related to the school direction, reflection and renewal time (think and dream time).*"

There were themes of linking needs, both school and personal, with school strategic direction and also the learning opportunities available. While some refine learning goals through dialogue with their leadership team, others focus on factors such as finance and time to follow up. One respondent said: "*What will make the MOST difference for our students and for my staff is the key determiner (is this a real word?)*".

Principals were asked to list their three most significant learning goals for 2010. It was difficult to analyse the goals provided because many were listed as topics rather than goals. However, it appeared that externally imposed requirements had

not greatly affected this year's range of goals, with many opting for more generic goals such as "*To have better staff relations*" and "*To establish goals and directions for the school alongside a new BoT and new senior staff*". It was difficult in many instances to discern what specifically was going to be learned in order to achieve the given goals.

Respondents were asked how they dealt with new unanticipated learning opportunities becoming available during the year, after the learning goals had been established and presumably embedded in an appraisal process. While three stated they ignored new opportunities, almost automatically, many considered the fit of new opportunities against budget and time, and in some cases after consultation with other staff: "*Consider its value, does it link to school goals, foci for the year, do I have the time, energy?"*

Some looked at whether the opportunity could be best picked up by others on the staff: "*Some I welcome with open arms either for personal PD, or to give staff opportunities to participate in PD that is seldom available in our rural areas*." The effect on overall workload was also considered: "*Judge whether we would be trying to spin too many plates if new learning opportunities were taken up*."

One respondent justified picking up anything that came along as '*Just in time learning.*' Another conceded that the decision making was as much about personal interest as school direction. Others hinted at checking whether the opportunity was unique, and so should be pursued, or could be postponed. "*If it is too good an opportunity I will add it to the mix*."

In the light of the barrage of questions the respondents had already worked through, they were asked how satisfied with the current balance between their needs and available learning resources: Of the 29 who answered, 8 were dissatisfied, 14 satisfied and 7 very satisfied. Those who were dissatisfied commented on trouble finding appropriate affordable opportunities compared with the past, the lack of quality providers with a current learning situation too impersonal to satisfy individual needs, proper resourcing and release being the obstacle, and not a lot in the field of special education.

Three of those satisfied commented on problems – one would love to have more time, a second had to fund a considerable proportion personally due to a lack of

school funds and a third lamented her inability to belong to a cluster group with a very high quality of commitment, dialogue and progress. A fourth person had stated 'Satisfied' because at present the school is engaged in a school-wide learning contract. Three comments from very satisfied principals were about having a mentor, being revitalised through membership and engagement in several principals' learning clusters, and because of an individual awareness over controlling personal destiny through 'evidence trends and energy.'

4.11.3 Visual metaphors of principalship

In order to give experienced principals involved in the survey one last chance to respond to aspects of their professional learning, they were presented with six scenarios and asked to comment on those which they considered relevant. The scenarios were visual metaphors, which will now be discussed.

Table 4.29 Respondents' comments on scenarios depicting leadership

Scenario	Count	Comments
You are on the lead horse, with instruction book in hand, leading the charge	18	• At times when I bring in new ideas. This is the charismatic part, the motivational times but not often and is at the beginning of a new initiative which is quickly turned into a team event. • Sometimes you need this approach • This type of Principal doesn't last long • Can happen when things e.g. national standards are landed at your feet • That's us! • My leadership is critical to the development of my school, but there is no instruction book and I am surrounded by other leaders at all levels. • I vary between the first two on this list, sometimes feeling in charge, while at other times feeling pulled by strings in a number of directions.
You feel like a puppet, with strings in turn attached to your staff.	7	• And this as well • On many occasions • Not often I control the flow inside the walls • At times the meat in the sandwich, resolving conflicts and competing needs but not very often and easy to take back to people when you have trust in the team to resolve issues • I do not feel like this • No • This person needs to get another job

The blind leading the blind.		• Sometimes • At times but seldom. At the beginning of an inquiry into a problem but it's all about opening our eyes, study reading. It's a challenge state to be in.
	6	• I do not feel like this very often
Lead botanist in a recently discovered tropical garden, with lots of new plants.		• I like it • Growing teachers and growing learning the prime job • Yes, this reflects the fact that change in education is continual and that our learners' needs are continually changing too • Occasionally • Spoilt for choice. The temptation is to stick to your knitting and not go from fad to fad, programme to programme. If you work from data, from need and look only for solutions that will help it stops this. You have to keep a single focus and at times remind people of what you are trying to achieve. What your values, vision etc is and what will make the best fit. You can't do everything and what you do must make a difference
	20	• And loving the discovery
Six months in a leaky boat - paddling, bailing, trying to find direction, keeping the crew optimistic and focused.		• We do not often have leaks in our boat, but when they are discovered they are dealt with. Our compass is generally reliable but we sometimes change direction to get to continue our journey • Rarely • Never • Not often. A culture in which the planning and direction is shared keeps you going. Keeping optimistic is a role as things are tough at times especially in low decile schools and people have to believe in themselves • Not so leaky that it prevents the boat from moving forward. In the waka (canoe) *together* is also important • Put everyone out of their misery and let it sink
	10	• (Love the scenarios!!)
Kitchen nightmares - concocting brews to please everyone, pressure, heat, unpredictable communication sometimes spectacular outcomes.		• Can be a typical day • The school is a very complex institution. We cannot hope to please everyone all of the time. We can usually cope well with the pressure in our collegial environment. • Communication channels are generally very good. Outcomes are often spectacular • Not often. Focus and joint accountability, responsibility easy communication and a trusting culture. Kids needs sometimes puts you in this situation. If you have students with disruptive behaviour. At times we take risks with what we decide but we are doing it together
	10	• Seen as challenges to overcome and let's celebrate what we do actually achieve

The frequencies against each scenario suggest that lead horse and lead botanist were most popular choices. It was interesting that some chose to comment on the ideas they did NOT like.

The next chapter will discuss the research findings, following the same structure and sequence as this chapter.

Chapter Five - Discussion.

Introduction

This chapter investigates the data presented in the last chapter with reference to ideas discussed in the literature review. It views the data from four lenses.

The first lens examines the sources of principals' professional learning. Discussion follows the same order as the findings in Chapter Four, but avoids unnecessary repetition.

As a consequence of the findings from the first lens and the subsequent interplay between emerging ideas and existing theory from the literature review, further questions arise, which will be addressed via the remaining three lenses. From this point onwards, I intend to be speculative in parts, while ensuring that the findings remain the nexus of the discussion. As much as practicable, I will let the principal respondents speak for themselves.

The second lens explores the concept of principals working in dualities. Dualities, or tensions as they are alternatively referred to (Barab, MaKinster, & Scheckler, 2004b), can exist within systems where two variables, both perceived to be desirable, can work against each other. By highlighting their existence as dualities, it is sometimes possible for those affected to more consciously secure a balance between the two. The decision to include discussion on dualities arose from the analysis of data. Because much of this literature falls outside of leadership theory, it was not specifically introduced in the review of literature.

The third lens considers the present and potential impact of new communication technologies on the professional learning of principals. Is learning when utilising new technologies learning as we know it? Are new possibilities emerging?

Finally, this chapter looks at principalship as a profession. What are the implications regarding the body of knowledge which constitutes principalship in its broadest sense?

5.1 Demographics

This first section serves as a reminder of the demographic makeup of the participants. Having only four of the 52 survey respondents working more than 120km from a university centre precludes potential insight into the region's rurally located principals and their professional learning practice. The even balance of genders is noteworthy, as is the lack of Maori principals in proportion to those of NZ European background (only two identified as Maori as first ethnicity, and five as the second ethnicity). As was discussed in the literature review, cultural factors make a difference in leadership perceptions and, by extension, are likely to impact upon aspects of leadership learning. The professional learning of rural and Maori principals is an area for future research.

5.2 Early principalship

Although detailed analysis of this subtopic is outside the scope of this thesis, salient points are included. The relevancy of earlier leadership training to an experienced principal's appreciation of and ability to access ongoing professional learning is pertinent, which justifies its inclusion here.

5.2.1 Early principalship training and qualifications

Finding One: Some principals in the region's schools lack relevant qualifications at a tertiary level
Finding Two: Many of the principal respondents without tertiary qualifications at graduate level are currently not undergoing university study.
Finding Three: Not all principals have completed Aspiring Principals programmes before accepting principals' positions.

The career paths of many of the respondent principals appear to be ad hoc rather than systematic, with 17 of 48 having qualifications below graduate level. Yet material from the review of literature suggests that principals need a 'toolkit' of conceptual knowledge, including strategies on leading, change management,

knowledge of how to research and analyse data (Timperley, et al., 2007), as well as how to communicate information in meaningful ways.

Earlier research by Patuawa (2007) endorses the need to improve the knowledge and qualifications of prospective and beginning principals. Although New Zealanders may be used to the catch-cry and connotations of 'self management', this should not preclude schools' professional leaders meeting specific preparatory standards before commencing principalship, to provide professional leadership and management. This appears consistent with the philosophy behind Kiwi Leadership imperatives such as the National Aspiring and First Time Principals' programmes.

Recommendation One: That a more thorough platform of preparation for aspiring principals be mandatory before commencement of principalship.
Recommendation Two: A minimum qualification requirement be phased in for prospective principals, so that 'self management' of Aotearoa New Zealand schools becomes 'self governance, professional management' of schools.

5.2.2 Management training for principals.

Finding: NZ principals are more likely to experience statutory interventions as a consequence of management concerns than leadership issues.

Data presented in Table 2.1 (p.16) suggests that there is a dramatic skew in the reasons given for statutory intervention, with most interventions arising from a lead issue of administration or management. Respondents' comments support the proposition that many principals begin their role with limited knowledge and understanding of important management functions, including management of finances, personnel and property, as well as staffing banking. Bush's (2003) comments in the review of literature (2.1.1, p. 11) reinforce the need to understand management theory and practices.

Also, changes in management expectations are periodically imposed by external agencies such as the MoE. Examples in Aotearoa New Zealand include 'banking

staffing' – a system which allows state funded schools limited flexibility in the use of generated staffing over the year of entitlement, electronic and nationally connected absentee systems, and statutory requirements for financial accounting and reporting. These changes imply that ongoing professional learning opportunities including updates on management and administrative functions need to be available for principals.

Recommendation Three: That training provided for aspiring and first time principals include a stronger component on school management and compliance components than has previously been the case.
Recommendation Four: That greater access to ongoing and catch up learning about management aspects of principalship be made available in a formal systematic manner, with positive support for those who opt to undertake this training.

This last recommendation can also be justified due to intermittent staffing changes in senior school positions leading to a sudden deficit of knowledge on particular management and administration practices.

A rider:

The recommendations in this section imply no criticism of current principals who lack high levels of qualifications. They have led their schools using the resources available to them, throughout their career, with "*No real support: Sink or swim*" being the reality for many in earlier years. However that does not preclude policy which ensures that all future principals have higher levels of qualification and avoids the perpetuation of earlier ad hoc approaches.

5.3 Learning as an individual

Principals utilise a range of sources of learning as individuals.

5.3.1 Websites.

Finding: While official websites such as www.educationleaders.govt.nz are becoming a more popular and effective means of communicating leadership information to a larger proportion of school leaders, many principals still don't use them on a regular basis.

Principals have access to dedicated websites such as www.educationalleaders.govt.nz and Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI), as well as a plethora of other sites. Forty percent of survey respondents acknowledged using websites for professional learning at least daily and another 40% at least weekly.

Given that there are roughly 3,000 schools (covering Years 1 – 13) in Aotearoa New Zealand, approximately one third of them are accessing www.educationalleaders.govt.nz on a daily basis. However, as 42% of the survey respondents stated they visited this site about once every term (19%), annually (17%), or never (6%), there is a discrepancy between those likely to find and use fresh material on the site and those who appear to lack awareness of its contents and value, or simply prefer not to use it.

As accessing useful information is a fundamental theme in this research, it appears important that the discrepancy between those accessing or not accessing this key website not be allowed to grow unchecked.

Recommendation Five: That the MoE strengthens data monitoring pertaining to its websites in order to gain a clearer profile of current users and their preferences, and to identify and mitigate access and usage problems.

5.3.2 School Support Services (SSS).

Finding: The support provided by SSS advisers over a range of subjects was found useful or very useful by a majority of the respondents.

Just as principals take responsibility for building the leadership capacity for staff, regional support organisations take responsibility for building and sustaining the leadership capacity of their principals. There is no doubt that the principal respondents perceive advisers as a major source of regional support.

The profile of SSS advisers amongst schools, particularly those more remote, has been affected by government funding cutbacks and the requirement for SSS

providers to restrict their services to those fulfilling more narrowly defined government priorities. Data suggests that respondents value advice from SSS on a wide range of topics fundamental to education leadership.

It is likely that the more isolated the school, the more limited the range of support options, and the more reliant school leaders may be on an adviser to assist with a range of issues.

In accountability driven systems, organizations tend to value what they can measure rather than measure what they purport to value, resulting in a backwash effect of narrow measures (Mulford, 2008). SSS are accountable to central funding agencies on such a basis, so this tendency needs to be monitored.

Recommendation Six: That funding contracts be sufficient to allow SSS advisers flexibility in providing general and school-initiated support, in addition to government development initiatives.

5.3.3 Coaching and mentoring.

Finding: Coaching and mentoring is under-utilised amongst principal respondents, although some are open to this possibility.

Coaches and mentors form a valuable part of the learning network for a minority of principal respondents. They appear to be an under-utilised resource dependent on factors such as principals perceiving there might be some value in these ongoing personalised relationships, awareness of the availability of respected coaches and mentors, with aspects of cost and time listed as of lesser importance for most respondents.

The literature review discussed how professional learning needed to be treated not solely as an academic exercise but also connected to emotional wellbeing and development (Beatty, 2005, 2008). This approach supports the coaching and mentoring relationship. Elements of coaching and mentoring may exist in some schools when external appraisers conduct principal appraisals. A significant number of respondents indicated that while they had not got around to organising coaching and mentoring they were open to the possibility. There is strong research

supporting the contention that undertaking coaching and mentoring is worthwhile (Orvando, 2003; Robertson, 2005; Suggett, 2006); this is endorsed by several respondents using this support.

Recommendation Seven: That principals make better use of coaching and mentoring as a personalised form of professional development and support.

5.3.4 Principal to principal contact.

Finding: Principal respondents regularly seek advice from other principals, including those in neighbouring schools in many cases.

Asking other principals for advice is a popular mechanism for learning, with no respondent declaring they *never* did this. Securing relevant information from a selected colleague provides immediate learning and seventy percent sought advice on a weekly to monthly basis. Such interactions allow principals to strengthen professional relationships, build networks and resolve problems. Many issues that arise are commonly experienced, encouraging conversations beginning with "What are you going to do about. . . ?" or "How are you going to handle . . .?"

Of the 47 who responded, 33 sought advice from a neighbouring school principal, whereas 14 only sought advice from principals who were not in neighbouring schools. It is encouraging that the data seems to indicate that the market model of competition over students and resources has not fully diminished collegial support in a majority of cases.

5.4 Learning in the school setting

This section discusses the ways in which experienced principal respondents become involved in school based learning.

5.4.1 Principals leading the learning.

Finding: Respondent principals recognise the importance of participating in learning opportunities with their staff, and in learning from each other, as well as from external sources.

Much of the theory on educational leadership discussed in the literature review suggests principals are responsible for developing a learning environment for staff, and leading the learning (Marzano, et al., 2005). This occurs within the school on most occasions according to respondents. Management meetings, while primarily focused on operational planning, covered a wide range of topics. Staff meetings, which occurred mostly weekly or fortnightly, again covered a wide range of topics over time, but with the main feature often being the 'topic of the day' in terms of national imperatives. During 2010 this topic in primary schools was the requirement that each school prepare to assess and report to parents on each student's progress against national standards in literacy and numeracy.

Many principal respondents felt strongly that staff professional development is valued far more if the principal is working alongside other staff. This concept of working alongside staff in learning settings extends beyond staff meetings to other forms of whole-school learning, including initiatives undertaken by contract with the MoE. Despite the rhetoric of leadership needing to be distributed in order to manage the complexity of demands that schools operate under (Gronn, 2003a; Timperley, 2005), many staff expect that people occupying senior leadership positions will signal the importance of collegial professional learning through their presence whenever possible.

There is also recognition that teachers are the school's main resource and much can be learned from each staff member.

5.4.2 Principals in the classroom

Finding: Many respondent principals would like to spend more time engaging in classroom interactions, but find their workload precludes this.

By engaging in reflective practice with teacher colleagues, principals are able to pursue important aspects of leading learning. The biggest barrier is the principal's administrative workload (Wylie, 2009). Thirty three out of fifty one respondents don't teach a regular class. A majority try to spend one to three hours per week in the classrooms of other teachers, and would value being able to spend a small number of additional hours per week becoming more involved in classroom learning.

External agencies appear to need to reduce the volume of communication that the principal must read and respond to. Perhaps specific 'gatekeepers' at MoE and other government head and regional offices could filter all draft material before dissemination. Also, if tertiary providers were funded to organise specific structured training for administrative support staff to carry out a greater proportion of administrative and management functions to a higher level, principals and schools would benefit. Such training could be linked to (possibly newly created) qualifications and remuneration for school support staff.

In order for a 'sea change' to occur in the balance of who does what administration, both principal and senior office staff would require specific training on how to initiate and develop this.

Recommendation Eight: That administrative obligations for principals be streamlined through the reduction of externally imposed administrative requirements for schools, the more deliberate targeting of communication to specific office holders other than the principal, and greater accessibility to and support for training of other staff to administer a greater proportion of administrative and management requirements.
Recommendation Nine: That training specifically designed to reduce the administrative load on principals be made available to all school sectors, including not only 'principal class' teachers but also office administrators, and attuned to the size of the school.

5.4.3 Informal interactions with staff

Finding: Interactions with staff simultaneously serve a number of purposes, including signalling the value of working together, modelling professional learning, facilitating learning from each other, sharing leadership and evaluating school progress across a range of parameters.

Principal respondents understand the value of informal interaction with staff, as well as involvement in specific groups designed to further school learning in some manner. Respondents wrote of learning what issues teachers were facing, getting to know what goes on, and being able to supervise delegated leadership through engagement with other school leaders in various settings.

5.5 The community as a source of professional learning

A variety of opportunities for professional learning exist for principals within their community. Although no recommendations arise from community learning, its significance is explained in the findings.

5.5.1 Local principals' meetings.

Finding: Local principals' cluster groups are an important mechanism for collegial learning and for the organisation of community wide school based activities.

Eighty nine percent of principals attended local principals' clusters monthly or once a term, and a further 6% sporadically, so these events are seen as important enough to be a priority for almost all of the respondents. Meetings appear to cover a wide range of topics beyond administration of the group, including curriculum and pedagogy, student issues, personnel and change management. Because some school resources, such as RTLB entitlement, are funded on a community basis, local cluster meetings become a natural forum to administer the distribution and provide the support needed to make effective use of the resource. Likewise, at times local schools combine for special events, such as sports, maths and spelling competitions. Local clusters become the vehicle which enables the necessary

organisation and positive promotion of the events, and the schools participating, to occur.

Some principals participate in other cluster groups whose members are located from a wider area. These will be discussed in the next section.

5.5.2 Learning from parents.

Finding: Parents can be an invaluable resource for a school in terms of their qualifications and experience in a range of areas. Principals value being able to capitalise on this where possible.

Parents are a potential source of learning, either as trustees on the School Board or independently because of particular expertise. As the principal is automatically a trustee on the School Board under the New Zealand self management system , the principal-as-trustee is eligible to receive training from the School Trustees Association (NZSTA) or its agents on matters of governance, personnel and financial management, strategic planning, education and the law, and other topics (NZSTA, 2011). Survey respondents acknowledged the benefit of this resource.

Principals also gave examples of parents with particular expertise who had provided insights into particular issues affecting the school. These included human resource skills and technical understanding relating to property and classroom projects. Because some parents view helping in this way as their contribution to their local school, they can become a cheap yet effective source of learning and support. There are risks however when enthusiasm extends beyond expertise. Most principals become adept at exercising careful stewardship of the limited financial resources available and utilising parental expertise is one way of doing so.

5.5.3 Involvement in local organisations.

Finding: Involvement in local organisations exposes most principals to additional community learning opportunities.

Principal respondents invest considerable time and energy in local organisations, including sports, performing arts, churches, service clubs, maraes and other cultural centres, hobby groups and political party events. Thirty one percent belong to three or more such organisations, 57% to one or two, and 12% to none. Involvement allowed a rich range of learning opportunities, as discussed in Section 4.5.3 (p.99), as well as side benefits such as time out from principalship to pursue personal interests, and the development of relationships within the community that reflect favourably on the school.

Respondents were able to give examples of other sources of community learning, including contact with social agencies and the police. External agencies such as these are often involved with families of students on common issues, and have developed their own expertise regarding effective interventions.

5.6 Learning opportunities for principals within their region

This section looks at regional learning opportunities and compares them with closer to home options.

5.6.1 Attending regional events.

Finding: Most principal respondents participate in regional principals' meetings as well as in special workshops according to need.

Principals have opportunities to participate in occasional regional workshops by organisations such as NZSTA, MoE and The University of Waikato Leadership Centre. Respondents were able to cite a range of examples of such events, including activities run by iwi educational groups. Organisations are able to offer workshops on specific subject areas across the region that might cater for only a

proportion of principals yet gain sufficient registrations to allow the event to proceed.

Forty out of forty five respondents regularly attend regional principals' conferences and meetings, of whom 60% meet once or twice a term and 30% annually. For principals of very small schools, facing financially prohibitive transport costs, regional meetings bridge the gap between local learning (school and community) and the at-times-too-difficult further afield learning (national and international). The few respondents who do not attend regional events justified this by expressing disappointment at the lack of learning for them from these sources.

5.6.2 Other regional resources.

Finding: Principals value access to regional field officers and advisers when planning to resolve difficult issues.

Regional centres also provide sources of procedural information for personnel management. Advice can be obtained from teachers' unions such as PPTA and NZEI, trustees associations such as NZSTA, principals' organisations by way of specialist field officers, as well as SSS advisers and government agencies such as MoE and ERO. A common use of field officers is to establish the correct procedures within a collective employment contract for pursuing competency or misconduct issues with individual staff members. Because of the potential damage should mistakes be made, principals rate access to quality support and learning from field officers highly.

These field officers are in turn a potentially valuable source of information for conference organisers on what appear to be current and emerging issues affecting principals.

Recommendation Ten: That organisers of regional principals' events be encouraged to secure systematic general feedback from regional field officers and advisers on topics that all principals may benefit from learning more about.

5.6.3 Regional clusters as communities of practice (COP).

Although a number of respondents signalled that they belong to regional clusters, with a number belonging to the newly formed Experienced Principals' Programme (EPP), it appeared too early to adequately judge how well this style of COP was meeting the needs of the participants. Further discussion on COPs will be included later in the chapter.

5.7 Principals learning from national sources

Principals at times travel further afield than their region. This section considers the range of national learning opportunities available to them.

5.7.1 National conferences.

Finding: Principals value opportunities to participate in national principals' conferences.
Finding: National conferences on specific themes and particular types of school can provide a valuable niche in the professional learning of principals and staff.

Most of the respondents attend national principals conferences at least once every two years, if not annually. They value the opportunity to hear from national and international speakers, to get away from their busy and often interrupted everyday principalship, and to socialise and share ideas with colleagues. In some cases the conferences they attend focus on a specific type of school, such as single sex, religious character, middle and intermediate, and rural.

Many principal respondents have also attended other national conferences, with about two thirds of them accompanied by teaching colleagues from their school. Robinson et.al. (2009) explain how principals promoting and participating in teacher learning and development has an effect on student achievement outcomes, although without specifically identifying co-attendance at national conferences in terms of effect size. These conferences ranged from ICT focused events to ones that reflected the special character of the school. This data reinforced the impression that although regional and national of a generic nature are valued by principals, they also appreciate opportunities to attend special conferences more aligned to their school, its character and specific needs, and at times accompanied by other staff.

5.7.2 National assessment and planning centres for principals.

Finding: Development and planning centres such as the PDPC fulfil an important and unique role in the ongoing evaluation, learning and professional progress of principals.

A significant research finding was the strong response to questions asked about the now defunct Principals' Development Planning Centre (PDPC). Its focus on gaining quality data on each principal's current leadership behaviour before summarising this in a report and inviting the principal to plan personal development based on current strengths and weaknesses, was unique, and highly valued.

A number of respondents reported that the PDPC had had a profound impact on their learning, yet since its demise, no replacement has emerged which enables similar or improved styles of personalised evaluation, learning and planning to occur. Whereas PDPC focused on behaviours – while encapsulating theory, emotions and values, cluster groups tend to revert to discussions about particular issues, and are unlikely to match the intensity of a week-long workshop such as the PDPC.

Honey is cited by Foskett and Lumby (2003) regarding an earlier definition of learning as not only the acquisition of knowledge, insights and skills, but also the

translation of these into different behaviour. Assessment and planning centres enable the evaluation of this behaviour and the provision of high quality feedback in a safe supportive environment.

Recommendation Eleven: That a national centre for the assessment and development of principals be re-established.

5.8 International opportunities

Finding: Many principal respondents value opportunities to learn at international conferences, and believe this has a significant effect on their ability to inject new ideas into their schools.

International learning opportunities positively impacted on the professional learning of roughly half of the principal respondents. They reported on the quality of international conferences, the depth and breadth of the research reinforcing themes, cultural richness, the challenge of different styles of learning and presentations, and the value of networking amongst esteemed international colleagues. The integrity of conference material, cross country comparisons, the lack of political interference, and the consequent appreciation of existing positive qualities in our own education system were important factors.

Many respondents would like to attend further international conferences, whether generic or themed, with cost being the major prohibiting factor. Other international exposures, such as study tours, visits to principals' learning centres, membership of international educational leadership organisations and creative use of sabbaticals, enable principals to gain in depth knowledge and understanding of particular areas of interest not able to be covered in a brief conference. The internet is facilitating initial connections with these types of experiences.

Recommendation Twelve: That principals' professional organisations investigate the feasibility of greater regional and national support being provided for principals wishing to learn in international settings.

5.9 Principal preferences for learning

Finding: Respondents undertook professional learning from a variety of sources, with no clear overall pattern emerging.

Data suggests that the main barrier to respondents not attending regional, national and international events for professional learning is cost. When they were asked to nominate their most helpful source of learning, individual and regional sources dominated. The responses to questions in this section reinforced the perception that principals adopt a range of learning strategies, possibly depending on their school situation, but also due to the availability of learning they have previously found helpful. This perception of diversity is stronger than any other observation regarding possible learning trends.

Comments justifying the choice of a particular category seemed plausible to each individual situation. The theme seems to be that if principals find a particular source that works, they hold on to it. This theme, slightly modified, was reiterated by a Maori principal when attending a learning event that did not quite gel with the cultural realities of their particular school: "*My view is you take what is useful and leave the rest*". This theme reinforces material in the review of literature (see section 2.8.1, p.40) regarding diversity in adult learning preferences (Kolb, 1984).

Websites are emerging as a major source of reading material, now comparable with university textbooks and have the potential to influence professional learning to a greater extent than previously. When principals were asked to review the learning they undertook within each of the six categories now compared with a few years ago, summary data suggests a slight increase in individual, school, community and regional learning, much the same at national and maybe a decrease at the international level.

Recommendation Thirteen: That principals be provided with access to a variety of learning situations to meet individual preferences.

5.10 Acquired habits of sourcing information, skills and knowledge

The next section attempted to tease out principals' habits for using various sources of information, learning and support, by posing thirteen dissimilar scenarios.

Finding: Although respondents indicated a variety of strategies for acquiring information and learning on specific issues, it was not clear what factors were considered when choices were made.
Finding: Principals may need training on how to optimise the selection of learning sources according to the specific learning need.

Although theory associates professional learning with student achievement outcomes (Fink, 2005; Stoll, et al., 2003), there are many demands on principals that are indirectly rather than directly related to student learning; and the scenarios were designed to reflect this.

The last chapter 'summarised' respondents' data for these scenarios, a blunt instrument, as there were a variety of stances taken by respondents for each scenario. The overall modal response was contacting a principal colleague for advice. Reflecting on the range of responses, the following issue arose: these questions occurred late in the survey, and respondents may have chosen the most expedient answer, rather than the sources they may, with greater reflection, believe would provide the most quality. Perhaps in everyday leadership, expediency rather than quality becomes a necessity due to time pressure. Maybe principal respondents automatically balance expediency against other issues such as quality before deciding on the learning source. This remains an open question.

When people shop in supermarkets, whether with a pre-planned list or by impulse buying, they potentially suffer from 'supermarket anxiety', paralysis by excessive choice: which is the best choice and how do they find this out? Consequently many revert to established habits of purchase, to avoid the time and energy required to evaluate new possibilities. Applying this metaphor to this research, over 23 sources of learning potentially available for principals have been identified. Do principals normally stay with tried and true established habits of

learning or are they open to new types in new contexts? If they are open to new learning experiences, what precipitates this?

There was awareness amongst some respondents that their decisions about which source to use for a given situation may not be the best. Two respondents suggested that principals may need PD or facilitatory help in identifying the best choices available regarding learning specific to particular situational needs: "*No-one else knows **who** knows **what** aspect, so access is the biggest problem. We are bound by current outmoded models of learning*"

It appeared from the data that respondents have developed habits of learning from many sources but are unclear as to the merits of their choice. Some are aware that their habits of learning may be outmoded.

Recommendation Fourteen: That principals' professional organisations investigate how they can upgrade principals' decision-making abilities relating to sourcing quality information.

The second lens: Dualities

5.11: The use of dualities to evaluate professional learning

Barab, MaKinster and Scheckler (2004b) draw on previous definitions of *tensions* and *dualities* to describe the interplay that exists between two 'variables' within systems. Dualities can be considered as the "overlapping yet conflicting activities and needs that drive the dynamics of a system" (Engeström, 1987, p. 9).The origins of this discussion are based on ideas by Wenger (1998), but the concept of dualities is used more loosely.

Imagine the professional learning of all the experienced principals in Aotearoa New Zealand as constituting a kind of system, where all kinds of learning in different contexts make up part of this over-arching system.. My contention is that research data already referred to in the previous chapter and under the first lens above can be better understood by considering a number of possible dualities formed by variables within this system.

5.11.1 Reason versus emotion.

Western culture has been profoundly affected by the hegemony of Cartesian thought, where a dichotomy exists between reason and emotion. Beatty (2008) contends that most of available educational leadership research has an underlying assumption of rational thinking within a rational framework and that principals consequently tend to ignore or downplay the emotion-based aspects of their role. Yet many of the problems that principals are expected to address stem from human issues, and so have an emotional context.

The professional learning of principals therefore needs to acknowledge the significance of 'people skills and attributes' as part of the principal's conceptual toolkit – communication, conflict resolution, questioning and reflective listening styles are examples of these. Respondents may be able to contact a field officer to establish a process for managing a potential misconduct issue concerning a staff member, but who do they contact to develop skills, based on informed practice, on initiating difficult conversations?

Principals likewise are human beings experiencing emotions, so this notion is not limited to dealing with *other* people and their emotions. Beatty's (2005) comments regarding the emotional legacy that principals unwittingly cultivate reinforce the necessity that principals engage in learning and support events that address emotional aspects of their principalship. Maintaining a working balance between the duality of reason and emotion is critical to principals' effective learning and practice.

This theme forms part of the concluding ideas in the next chapter.

5.11.2 Internal and external communities of practice.

A second duality emerges as a consequence of a principal's affiliation to two communities of practice (COP). Respondent's data suggests that most principals value belonging to COPs, whether they be within the school, a local principals' cluster, a regional group such as the EPP, or some other collection of people based on a particular style or aspect of schooling where learning is the focus.

Various theories discussed in the review of literature (Fullan, 2002a; Hallinger & Heck, 2004, 2010; Hallinger & Heck, 1996) suggest that it is a prerequisite for principals as instructional leaders or lead learners to be heavily involved in the COP comprised of staff. This is an internal COP in which learning originates primarily from the evidence arising from student data. Other theories, including comments from Argyris and Schon (1974)on double loop learning, and those of Fullan (2002b, 2005), suggest principals also benefit from belonging to external COPs. These provide fresh learning challenges outside school boundaries.

Schon is quoted by Hargreaves (2003) :

> We must ... become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations, and requirements; we must invest and develop institutions which are "learning systems," that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation. (p. 74)

This quote emphasises schools as learning systems, the internal component of the duality. Knowledge is gained through a social and interactive process (Fullan, 2003a). Rather than understanding knowledge as something belonging within a database or a textbook, it is better to view it as existing among its people (Brown & Duguid, 2002). In order to increase knowledge you have to increase the amount of purposeful interaction between those involved, *at all levels of the systems* (emphasis added) - school, district and state (Fullan, 2003a). In New Zealand these levels might be written as 'school, region and country'. This is the external aspect.

Consequently it may be that optimal learning for principals occurs when they belong to at least one external COP as well as their internal COP, with a high degree of purposeful interaction occurring within each, and they mediate the information gained from one source to use in the context of the other. On one hand, principals need to avoid becoming bound by their own microcosm/school and ignoring outside possibilities; on the other, they must avoid downplaying interactions with staff while focussing on newly acquired external knowledge. Principals as learners have to hold this affiliation to both internal and external COPs in tension, monitoring the interplay between each source.

Likewise, as principals foster distributed leadership within their schools, other staff exercising leadership will be exposed to this internal/external duality as they learn within and outside the school through 'purposeful interaction' (Fullan, 2003a). Principals can help facilitate this mediating process.

The notion of communities of practice, or communities of learning, needs to be treated with caution. The concept of engagement in a learning enriched school community appeals to many educators (Kaser & Halbert, 2009), yet the word - "community" - is not well defined (Barab, Kling, & Gray, 2004a), let alone - "community of practice" . Barab and associates continue: "*communit*y has become an obligatory appendage to every educational innovation" (p. 3). They quote Grossman, Wineburg and Woolwooth's contention that: "groups of people become community, or so it would seem, by the flourish of a researcher's pen" (2000, p. 2).

Several researchers have warned of the difficulties of establishing COPs (Barab, et al., 2004a; Earl & Timperley, 2008; Louis, 2006) and there is a lack of sound research on how COPs become effective learning situations. By extension, rhetoric which positions regional or community based COPs as the panacea for perceived ills within the professional learning landscape needs to be treated with scepticism.

5.11.3 Local versus global.

While it may seem admirable for principals to offer their local setting as a learning laboratory for outsiders (Fullan, 2002a, p. 19) so that critical conversations can be used to evaluate specific leadership actions, major assumptions are made. These relate to situated leadership (see section 2.4, p.25): can an outsider viewing life in a closed system, namely a school, adequately capture all the contextual factors impinging on the leader's decision making and its effect? How transportable are aspects of the scenario to another setting? Are any idiosyncrasies of each setting sufficiently dominant that learning techniques would become distorted and lost in translation if applied elsewhere? This issue relates to that of an outsider or new teacher observing an experienced teacher in action and not being aware of the important subtleties that the teacher brings to bear on the classroom dynamics, despite being present.

Conversely, global solutions/theories/practices acquired by the principal may not gel well in a particular school due to factors (such as the personalities and cultural backgrounds of the teachers and students) not accounted for in the new information. Imposition of outside ideas assumes educational leadership relates more to that of a social science than an art (English, 2007). Principals and those providing professional learning opportunities for principals need to keep this factor to the forefront of their planning for learning. This links with Huber's (2008) analysis in Section 2.8, (p.39). Authenticity is critical to learning.

5.11.4 Battery versus free range.

Battery hens are known to endure a uniform regime of feeding and existing, where variation in routine and diet is minimised. Conversely, -"free range" - conjures up images of hens wandering in the sun and shade according to desire, pecking at a variety of grains and retaining sufficient control over their lifestyle so as to happily flourish.

If the professional learning of principals, in terms of contents and context, were fully developed into a set curriculum, and delivered to principals in a prescriptive manner, this might relate to the concept of 'battery'. If principals were able to choose from a variety of subjects and sources, according to personal need, this may be thought of as 'free range'.

Although it appears desirable for all principals to receive sufficient learning opportunities to build a foundation of core knowledge, it also seems important that this is supplemented by a range of optional topics and contexts that can be chosen according to the specific needs and interests of principals-as-individuals. This is the dilemma of the battery versus free range duality: what is core and what is optional? Comments on who might decide this are covered in the last section of this chapter.

5.11.5 Designed versus emergent.

Concepts of designer leadership (Gronn, 2003a), covered in the review of literature section (see 2.5.2 (p.27)), hint at leadership learning being imposed by

external agencies according to their own agenda. One could argue that employers, as the providers of resources and employment, should have some say in the professional development of their staff. In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education not only oversees the payroll of the vast majority of teachers and principals, it also provides the major websites used by the respondents and thereby significantly influences principals' ideas on leadership.

An alternative perspective adopts the tenet of enabling educational leaders to develop their own leadership concepts according to their own agenda and situation. Principals are principals whether they are appointed to a state, an integrated or an independent school. This duality could be named 'designed versus emergent'.

The same duality also applies to the creation of the ubiquitous COPs (Barab, et al., 2004b; Wenger, 1998). There is no formula whereby communities of practice can be constructed in a step-by-step manner. There is a tension between designing learning groups of this kind comprehensively enough to build developmental momentum yet lightly enough to nurture an emergent environment which is sufficiently flexible to cater for the particular needs of its members.

5.11.6 Reification versus participation.

A related duality refers to a body of shared artefacts including knowledge, norms and processes becoming so accepted as established practice by the majority of participants that it becomes 'reified' - seen as beyond criticism. This may inhibit fresh interpretations and have a detrimental consequence on newer participants taking opportunities to learn through engagement and seeking to establish their own meaning via their experiences. The fidelity of existing knowledge lies in tension with possibilities of newly negotiated knowledge borne through participation. This interplay aligns with concepts discussed in the methods chapter regarding objectivism and constructionism (see section 3.1, p.52) and is being challenged by the advent of new communications technology opening new possibilities in learning.

5.11.7 Identification versus negotiability.

Another perspective proposed by Wenger (1998) looks at the extent to which new members can identify with the mutual enterprise, surmising that this determines their potential participation and growth. Opportunities are provided for individuals to build their identities in alignment with important aspects of the enterprise. For instance, principals attend conferences and workshops and interact with others, thus building common identities within the organisation. 'Negotiability' refers to the degree to which individuals can maintain some control over the meanings they are invested, held in tension with the building of identity. This duality relates to reification versus participation, and seems particularly applicable to principals operating in schools of special character, who may need to attend both generic and special conferences to build their identification.

5.11.8 Diversity versus coherence.

Having a learning system which encourages diversity means that those who do not fit the homogenous majority may feel sufficiently supported to participate and flourish. This concept might include those in ethnic, religious and gender minorities. However, if a system becomes too diverse, coherent core values, principles, and established practice may become diluted below some critical mass leading to confusion and disarray. This is a speculative comment designed to introduce the duality without further elaboration or claim of knowledge. There is a tension between upholding the core, and encouraging research of the rest, a theme first introduced in section 5.11.4 (p.146).

5.11.9 Online versus face-to-face.

Access to learning online is rapidly increasing. Respondents' data reinforces the alacrity in which some are embracing new possibilities of learning, while also suggesting others either ignore website resources or use website resources less frequently. There is no doubt that the availability of learning online, as is the case with some university courses, opens up new possibilities for learning. However the pace at which new technologies in new configurations is occurring appears to

be much faster than the pace at which research into specific IT learning events determines the veracity of the learning.

Previous comments on social constructivism centre learning on social interaction. An epistemological assumption is that people engage in the pursuit of learning through dialogue – it is language-based and face to face. What is the impact on learning when the dialogue is by way of emails, or blogs, or downloading and reading set material for a course? How 'face to face' does optimum learning have to be?

While this section introduces this topic from the perspective of a possible duality, section 5.12 (p.150) considers research on information technology and learning.

5.11.10 Learning for context versus learning for professional growth.

The final duality looks at the tension between learning for a current context and learning for professional enrichment in a more general and possibly long term sense. In the first scenario, learning is seen as a means of equipping principals to meet the needs of their current school context in some way. The second scenario assumes the principal-as-professional is able to carry out professional learning to enhance professional understanding and capacity, which may or may not have a direct positive impact on the current school.

The de facto scenario is that principals' professional learning is skewed towards systems learning rather than personal learning – meeting the needs of their school, their staff and the school communities (Dempster, 2001).

The concept of principals as professionals is elaborated in 5.13 below. As a consequence of the findings and recommendations covered earlier in the chapter, and the dualities listed above, two important themes are now briefly discussed to close this chapter.

The third lens: The emergence of information technologies

5.12 Current and future impact of information technologies on principals' learning

The internet has undoubtedly facilitated more immediate access to specialist information on at least some aspects of school management and leadership, and this is reflected in the respondents' increased use of some sites in particular. There has been an expansion in the quantity of information available and improvement in search technology to access particular aspects. New Zealand principals can access specialist principal websites in Australia and the United Kingdom, for instance. Respondent comments suggest this has led to an increase in connections to international ideas and proponents. It has also enabled geographically isolated respondents to pursue university qualifications more readily.

A second use of communications technology is within the context of learning communities. "Building online communities in the service of learning is a major accomplishment about which we have much to learn" (Barab, et al., 2004a). Schlager and Fusco (2004) propose that an effective model of web design would not begin with the virtual environment but would instead begin with the learning groups to consider how best the technology could support their growth. Barab et. al. (2004a) further challenge some of the theoretical optimism around building online communities, noting that "online communities face all the challenges of co-present communities with the extra challenges added by the technologies and by the physical distancing these technologies both permit and cause" (p. 56).

Thus, while there is rapid growth in efforts to create web-based or web-assisted learning environments, there is a natural delay in the emergence of strong empirical research data to identify those aspects that constitute progress and those that amount to little more than technological dazzle.

A third aspect of communications technology is the explosion of expectations around data collection and use, a phenomenon prevalent in both health and education. For instance, the ability of computer systems to host, sort and present assessment data doesn't necessarily result in improved student achievement outcomes. Purchasing and using these systems can drain resources and time,

distracting from other important ingredients of schools, such as shared lesson planning and resource collection.

The tool has become the taskmaster in some instances. New technologies challenge schools to clarify not only what is possible but then what is best. The impact of communications technology on the professional learning of principals remains an open question.

The fourth lens: Principalship as a profession

5.13: Connecting to a body of professional knowledge.

Terms such as ‘teaching profession’ and ‘nursing profession’ are used without controversy in everyday speech. Their status as professions appears beyond question by such usage. By definition, principals as head teachers, with practising teaching registration, are also professionals. But does this extend to all aspects of what might be considered as ‘professional’ or is it simply a loose description?

This fourth and final lens principalship as a profession, the body of knowledge that might be regarded as ‘principalship’ in its broadest sense, and the guardians of this body of knowledge.

James Dean’s (1995) exploration of earlier research and theory led him to propose six characteristics of a profession: autonomy, commitment, collegiality, extensive education, service orientation, special skills and knowledge. Dean points out that the six aspects occur to a greater or lesser extent in all vocations regarded as professions.

‘Autonomy’ refers to the professional’s right to practise, the responsibilities that underlie the contractual position and the right to make decisions within the scope of the profession. ‘Commitment’ refers to the ‘calling’ into the profession, manifested by the use of special skills and attributes to serve others. ‘Collegiality’ refers to the significance within the professional organisation of co-operative endeavour, mutual support, sharing of knowledge and operating within codes of ethics and practice.

> ‘Extensive education’, while self explanatory, serves two main purposes – it provides a means to build, maintain and evolve standards relating to ethics and practice, as well as to enhance the credibility of the organisation by socialising new recruits to refined ways of practice. The existence of these standards serves as a public declaration of a desire for excellence in practice. Dean (1995) explains the fifth characteristic, of a profession having a ‘service orientation’, by pointing out professions are client centred rather than self serving: “Because the service is beneficial, society allows professions control inherent in their autonomous positions, both individually and collectively” (p. 29). Finally, as a consequence of this extensive education, professions have special skills and knowledge, developed initially upon induction to the profession but also ongoing, as the professional body of knowledge is expanded. The phrase ‘professional learning’ encapsulates learning by an individual as part of a profession, which assists not only the individual but also the profession: the learning is taking place in the context of developing the profession while supporting its members.

While examples can be readily found of how principalship conforms to this description of a profession, two comments of disquiet are made.

Firstly, it appears that while principals’ organisations may have traditionally enjoyed benevolent oversight of the induction training and ongoing learning of members, in conjunction with universities and other agencies, this influence may have diminished. Respondents’ data suggests that many decisions regarding which learning to engage are the consequence of acquired habits and do not necessarily cover a wide range of sources. Many chosen sources of learning have no direct connection to principal organisations. This potentially diminishes the ‘professional’ collegiality.

Convenience of access to well resourced Ministry of Education and other official websites (such as ERO and NZSTA) may increase the ability of government agencies to influence leadership learning to the detriment of professional bodies. A watching brief needs to be kept by principals and their professional organisations on both the sources and content of professional learning , so as to

resist any incremental movement towards ‘designer leadership’ scenarios, in which unquestioned conformity becomes the norm and autonomy is dissipated.

Secondly Ingvarson et.al. (2006) stress that : “the capacity to develop standards is a necessary condition for any professional body if it is to claim a right to greater involvement in quality assurance related to professional preparation for leading schools and continuing professional learning and development.” (p. 8)

Previous comments (see section 2.1.1, p.11) refer to the development in Aotearoa New Zealand of principal professional standards not solely by principal members for principals as members,(as would be the case in many professions), but by government officials and other agencies, with invited principal representatives being part rather than the core of the team. This has the potential to diminish both the influence of the principal profession on its progress, (a decrease in collegiality), and also its ability to remain autonomous. Society is currently not allowing principals to control important aspects of their destiny.

Ingvarson et.al. (2006)elaborate by explaining that the dual purposes of standards are to enable principals to keep up with research developments (furthering their learning to meet new standards) whilst simultaneously satisfying contractual obligations. By meeting standards principals are serving two separate audiences, their professional body and their employer.

It is my contention that a stronger emphasis on ‘professionalism’ by principals, and a greater claim on the development and guardianship of the body of knowledge by principal organisations, in partnership with universities and other reputable sources of research, would assist principals in raising the quality of professional learning and contain moves by other external agencies to overly influence this.

Principals-as-professionals would be better positioned to raise the status of their profession with a consequent improvement in working conditions in a demanding and important occupation. “In return for professionalism in client relations, some professionals are rewarded with authority, privileged rewards and high status” (Evetts, 2006). This should not be seen as a threat to the public interest in

education: “Public interest and professional self interest are not necessarily at opposite ends of a continuum and . . . the pursuit of self-interests may be compatible with advancing the public interest” (Saks, 1995).

One final clarification: A distinction between organisational professionalism and occupational professional is made (Evetts, 2006), where the former is seen as a consequence of new public management theory (a means of central bureaucratic control) and the more desirable latter aligned with Grace’s (1995) ideology of professionalism as applied to principalship.

A national Maori health hui held in 2010, adopted the theme “Hangaia To Whare Korero Ma Nga Pou Rangahau E Tu” – Building Your House of Learning (Health Research Council of New Zealand, 2010). This same theme could usefully depict the need for principals to more consciously, systematically, individually and collectively build the learning resources they need to carry out their job. Greater awareness of the dualities and subsequent issues presented earlier in the chapter may assist principals in re-claiming the professional component of professional learning as they build their house of learning.

The next and final chapter offers a conceptual mechanism whereby the professional learning of principals can be more clearly envisaged.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

6.1 Platforms of professional learning

This research started with the premise that a new research perspective on the professional learning of a group of experienced principals in Aotearoa New Zealand might illuminate the depth and breadth of their learning. A typology of twenty three possible sources of learning was created as a framework for survey questions, with scope for respondents to suggest further sources. Data confirmed that principal respondents valued and relied upon a variety of possible learning sources to meet the complexity of their job.

The basic research question was "How do experienced principals undertake professional learning?" This may be construed as seeking to establish a *single* way in which this learning might occur. The variety of responses suggested otherwise. The complexity within research data and sparse references in literature suggests that a simple answer is unlikely.

In order to advance understanding of this topic, I offer a model involving platforms of learning: the premise is that principals need access to and involvement in professional learning opportunities via a number of different and mostly complementary platforms that together constitute their learning landscape. Each proposed platform synthesises material from the literature review and research data. While the platforms and the research concept of sources of learning are original, the details within each description of a platform of learning reflect current literature from the review, and data findings.

Suggestions are offered both as an endorsement of what is already in place – the many aspects that principal-respondents value – and a suggestion of what the next developmental steps might be in progressing Aotearoa New Zealand's Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework and enhancing the well being and effectiveness of principals.

The first two platforms set the scene for, but by definition are outside the scope of, the professional learning of experienced principals. Consequently they are identified for completeness without elaboration.

Platform 1: Preparatory.

Prospective principals benefit from extensive training and qualifications to match the complexity and expectations around principalship, prior to securing a principal position. This exposure forms their first platform.

Platform 2: Apprentice.

The second platform concerns first time principals working their way into the role over the first three or so years. This is a time of intensive evaluating and synthesising ideas from the interfaces of (a) prior experience, (b) theories of leadership, (c) strategic visions and expectations for the school and (d) current school learning culture. This platform relates to the First Time Principals Programme. "*[It's about] balancing the demands of managing the school with being the educational learning leader, when both roles were relatively new to me and there was much to learn."*

The next four platforms are not sequential but complementary, and apply to all principals. They focus on learning as a refinement of current practice.

Platform 3: Quick Response.

The third platform entails easy access to the quality 'just in time' information needed to facilitate routine decision making on immediate matters, whether this is by searching purpose-built websites, utilising the field experience of trusted colleagues or locating written material. Time is a scarce commodity and such access enables judicious use of available time. The learning may be deemed eclectic rather than deep, possibly a simple clarification or factual in nature, but it is fundamental to principals confidently and efficiently "*dealing with the day to day admin and multiple interruptions*".

Platform 4: Process Learning.

A number of important issues require "*clear guidelines of processes to follow and feedback throughout the process*." These might include a personnel issue, strategic planning or a building development. Principals may utilise the services of 'outside experts' such as regional field officers or building consultants to ensure that risks (including legal) that arise as the consequence of decision-

making are minimised, and opportunities maximised. This platform also includes updating skills concerning management practices, such as optimising the use of Ministry-required specialist software, by way of workshops or online conferences. Aspects of principalship that have strong connotations of compliance are likely to link to this platform.

Platform 5: Internal Communities of Practice.

The fifth platform centres on school based communities of practice. It entails working collegially with staff and the school community to learn how best to meet the needs, learning and otherwise, of staff and students. The majority of educational leadership theory relates to this. Effective principals recognise that their schools need to be regarded as living systems made up of people rather than machines (Day, 2007). The principal undertakes roles as lead learner, instructional learner, proponent and practitioner of distributed leadership, and situational leader. *"I think it is that we learn together but have different roles that are appreciated. Teachers understand that my role supports theirs*."

The capabilities of staff are utilised as best they can be to advance student learning, with emphasis on data-driven decision making and collegial learning in context, a situated activity. Involvement and engagement in school learning alongside other staff is the primary mechanism for the principal to influence school wide development and progress while continually reformulating personal understanding of contextual factors and issues. Participants endorsed this: *"I totally believe the professional development that has the greatest impact on student learning is where I learn alongside staff*." "*I am a part of the team of learners. Leadership in teacher experts is developed. I model being a learner."*

Platform 6: External Collegial.

The sixth platform exposes principals to fresh ideas outside of the school community. Principals build relationships with principal colleagues, whom they meet at clusters, regional and national events. Networks of colleagues who are likely to offer empathy and support provide a resource that is one step removed from everyday interactions within the school, and which lessens the isolation

which principalship can entail. Often these colleagues provide a reference point when deciding which external learning resources to engage with.

The learning focuses less on immediate professional needs than those medium to long term. Examples of this kind of learning include regional meetings, clusters, university study and national conferences. Exposure to such events helps counter the risk of re-inventing current methodologies of school practice and being limited by ingrained habits. There is an emphasis on learning through collegial interaction from external sources, with an expectation that the principal will at some later stage mediate this learning to best address school needs. One participant described this as "*growing the new knowledge back at school by bringing in new knowledge that links or expands on what has been heard."*

Final comments in the previous chapter propose that this learning should be centred on learning as a profession, through exposure to what is regarded as excellent professional practice: identification through participation, and reification as the synthesising of new ideas with established principles and practices. "*The keynote speakers are often world authorities from overseas and having the opportunity to talk with them is invaluable. . . . There is a variety of relevant topics. Incidental collegial contact affirms so much of what I think*."

Platform 7: Special External Collegial.

The seventh platform focuses on schools of special character, type or emphasis, such as Catholic, kura kaupapa, middle or single sex. Principals of these schools, which are often geographically dispersed, value opportunities to learn from principal colleagues of similar schools. This may be as an alternative to Platform Six or in addition to it, depending on personal preference and accessibility to resources. The focus is on maintaining and further developing the special identity, examining the nature of student learning and its relation to what is upheld as special, and " *developing common understandings, sharing personal perspectives, using and adapting some ideas across the school*."

Information and communications technology has enabled participants to more easily access each of the abovementioned learning platforms as a supplement to

face to face engagement for learning, as well as enabling more extensive domestic and international networking .

Platform 8: Integrative.

All previous platforms are based on meeting the needs of the school through the training of the principal. This next platform recognises the principal-as-person, where the needs of the principal become paramount, and school needs are met incidentally, as a consequence of the personal wellbeing of the principal. Learning on this platform links to appraisal, supervision, coaching and mentoring, and informal contact with principal colleagues. It supports the ongoing health, welfare, and development of the principal and is essential for all principals.

Both the research data collected and personal anecdotal evidence suggests this platform is under-utilised or downplayed by many principals, to their detriment. New Zealand's one major initiative which enabled principals to receive high quality independent assessment and assistance in personal development, the PDPC, has been disbanded. Nothing has replaced this resource. Respondents' data suggests that the PDPC stood out in its positive impact on a majority of participants. "*It was a watershed in my learning as a school leader.*"

Kiwi principals would benefit from an upgraded centre based on PDPC methodologies, or its equivalent, as well as greater opportunity for receiving ongoing coaching and mentoring post-centre, with opportunities to attend centres every five years of principalship. This would be run predominantly by principals for principals, with oversight from principals' professional associations and perhaps universities yet with a negotiated level of autonomy from government. Not only would this provide national assurance of the general quality of educational leadership, but it would also enable principals to create and pursue career goals one step removed from their current school setting. "*It was the best professional learning I had in seven years of principalship as it focused solely on me!*"

Learning centres for experienced principals would potentially maintain strong references to both emerging research and established practice, with Kiwi

Leadership identity at the core. It is possible that the values system would prioritise formative assessment and positive support – helping principals plan and take the 'next step' of their learning journey rather than critiquing their practice against a prescribed set of criteria solely for the purpose of determining remuneration or suitability for employment. "*A sounding board, critiquing my goals . . ., and offering advice and suggestions."*

Platform 9: Emancipatory.

The final platform of professional learning for principals recognises the need at times for intensive learning to create an environment which is transformational in depth and breadth. It is not a complementary platform: its purpose is as wildcard. Its justification may be the desire to tackle a perplexing ongoing school issue from an entirely new perspective; its conceptual basis was propounded by Mezirow (1991), as mentioned in section 2.8.1 (p.40). The learning may include immersion in another learning environment which challenges the principal's personal values and deeply embedded concepts around an aspect of student learning. The consequence might be returning to the home school planning how to kindle transformative learning events that take the staff on the same learning journey. This kind of professional learning has the most potential for creating wholesale change in a learning organisation. Mechanisms for this to occur include immersion experiences during sabbaticals, international trips, principal exchanges between schools, shadowing other principals for extended periods of time and possibly some university experiences. This platform and platform eight are likely to be resource intensive.

Using the platforms – a proposition.

The platforms provide a conceptual framework against which experienced principals can assess their exposure to different learning settings. This may assist them in determining any aspects which need to be further developed. It is my contention that minimum levels of involvement in each of these platforms are necessary for experienced principals to be able to keep pace with the professional learning necessary for their school and leadership to flourish. Exceptions may be the Special External Collegial platform and the Emancipatory platform. By

monitoring current learning practice against the descriptions of each platform, I am hopeful that principals and their learning providers will be better positioned to fine tune and improve the professional learning for all experienced principals, which fulfils the aim of this research.

6.2 Limitations of study

Being able to judge professional learning against a series of connected platforms provides a useful contribution towards research understanding on this topic, but is not without its limitations. The research methodology, sample size and demographic information all serve to remind that this research is a snap shot of a particular group of experienced principals in two regions. The range of questions was not exhaustive, and had to be curtailed to meet the requirements of a Master's thesis. Consequently, data, discussion and conclusion are offered with appreciation of these limitations.

6.3 Suggestions for further research

Comments on areas under-researched have been made throughout the thesis, particularly in sections 2.9. (p.46) and 2.10 (p.47). Two recurrent themes have been the lack of research on what constitutes effective professional learning of experienced principals and the lag between the availability of new technology and research on its best use in enhancing different aspects of learning. There are social and financial implications in implementing all aspects of the proposed platforms of learning, just as there are social and financial costs in *not* implementing aspects of them. Further research on the interface between principals, employing agencies and their professional bodies would help clarify aspects of professionalism alluded to in the last chapter.

Further investigation of how the platforms of learning may best serve the needs of a disparate range of principals in locations throughout New Zealand, may advance the proposals in this research by clarifying interrelationships between each platform. What are the minimum desirable levels of engagement for each platform? New platforms may emerge as technology further challenges habitual ways of exercising principalship, and as more understanding of how distributed

leadership relates to principalship emerges. These examples illustrate the rich opportunities for further research around this topic.

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