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**The Useful Elements of Pre-principalship Preparation**

**A Thesis**

**Submitted in partial fulfilment  
Of the requirements for the degree  
of  
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at  
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by  
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## **Abstract**

The importance of the role of the principal in good schools is acknowledged by many sources. The preparation of new principals is therefore an important factor in ensuring children are educated in good schools. New Zealand does not have a formal system of principal preparation. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of pre-principalship preparation with the aim of discovering those activities and developments that were useful in assisting teachers to make the transition to successful principalship.

The research question addressed in this study is,;

**What are the elements of pre-principalship preparation that are most useful for potential and aspiring principals in furthering their career aims?**

Using qualitative methodology, a group of people who had attended the Aspiring and Potential Principals' Pilot run by the School of Education at the University of Waikato, were questioned using semi structured interviews about their experiences. Five of the six were holding principal positions, the sixth was in a deputy principal's position and had some relieving principal experience. The results the research generated indicated that while there were varying needs for potential principals because of their varied backgrounds, there were six useful experiences for all identified. These included, attendance at some form of targeted principal preparation programme, a background of ongoing professional learning, developing networks, developing successful mentoring, experience of models of principalship and support of 'family'. Different people had different levels of benefit from these experiences but they were common to all. It is hoped that this research will give assistance to guiding professional development for the potential and aspiring principals of tomorrow.

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<b>Contents</b>	
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Contents</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Context</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>The Research Question</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter Framework</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Chapter 2 Literature</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Themes</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Complexity</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Formal Programmes</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Examples</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Singapore</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>England</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>New Zealand</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Access and Delivery of Programmes</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>Informal Aspects of Pre-Principalship Preparation</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Coaching Mentoring and Networking</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>31</b>

<b>Chapter 3 Methodology</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Qualitative Research</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>The Interpretive Paradigm</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>Methods</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>37</b>
<b>Self Study</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>Chapter 4 The Research Process</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>The Sample</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Interviewing First Round</b>	<b>43</b>
<b>Initial Analysis</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Interviewing Second Round</b>	<b>45</b>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Chapter 5 Findings</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Category 1</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Attendance at a targeted pre-principalship     programme</b>	
<b>Category 2</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Usefulness of mentoring</b>	
<b>Category 3</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>The power of modelling</b>	
<b>Category 4</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Networking</b>	

Category 5	57
Family support	
Category 6	59
Professional Learning	
<b>Chapter 6 Discussion of Findings</b>	<b>61</b>
Introduction	61
Category 1	63
Attendance at a targeted pre-principalship programme	
Category 2	67
Usefulness of mentoring	
Category 3	70
The power of modelling	
Category 4	73
Networking	
Category 5	76
Family support	
Category 6	77
Professional Learning	
<b>Chapter 7 Conclusion</b>	<b>80</b>
Conclusion	80
Limitations of this Research	82
Recommendations for Further Research	82
<b>References</b>	<b>84</b>

## **Appendices**

<b>School of Education Ethics Approval</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Guided Interview Protocol</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Consent to Participate in the Research</b>	<b>95</b>

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

I have a personal interest in principal development. I have been a primary school principal for 20 years in the New Zealand system. I have had five principalships. This started with a two teacher school of 50 children and moved through to my current position, a school of 33 teachers and over 650 children. In recent years I have supported six staff to obtain their first principal's positions and I continue to mentor and support a number of them to this day. This has given me some insight into the challenges that new principals face in the current environment, which has new and different challenges to my own time as a first time principal which was prior to the 'Tomorrows Schools' reforms. These challenges include dealing with new national curriculum statements, including the national curriculum draft in 2006, a high level of self-management including staffing and finance, and a changing political and social climate which inevitably impacts on schools.

In 2001, I received a WESTPACTRUST travelling fellowship from the Rotorua Principals' Association and studied principal preparation programmes in England and USA. This study made me aware of how little we actually do for many of our developing principals in New Zealand, compared to those countries. In 2004, I presented a paper at the University of Calgary Summer Institute. This was a part of my Master of Educational Leadership study which looked at some of the research around the topic of the principal's role in developing potential new principals from within their own schools. This study is a continuation of that interest in the development of principalship.

This is a research study on aspiring principals' development and experiences. In New Zealand, there is evidence of difficulty in attracting principals to some schools. In particular those that are a combination of any of the following factors: small, rural, full primary, low decile, Maori medium and a high Maori or Pacific roll and remote (Strachan 2003, p. 26) find difficulty in attracting and retaining

principals. Internationally, and locally, there is evidence of a looming shortage of candidates for principal positions. In the USA, there are predictions that 40% of principals will retire over the next five years (Goldstein 2001). In the Australian state of New South Wales, it is suggested that “by 2008, a large number of current senior personnel in schools will have retired (59% of all current primary principals and 44% of all current deputy-principals)” (Marks 2004). New Zealand’s profile is similar, “one-quarter of the sector's principals over the age of 55,” (De Boni 2002) and there is likely to be a large exodus of experienced principals retiring, making a correspondingly large gap in principal ranks that needs to be filled. This looming exodus, makes it essential that those who aspire to principalship, and those who appear to have the potential to do so, be encouraged and supported through appropriate professional development. This is especially so when one considers “the pool of candidates willing to consider the principal’s role as a career choice, appears to be shrinking,” (Cannon 2004, p. 3).

## **Context**

The western world has an ageing population and going with that an ageing workforce. The demographics of New Zealand are no different, “at 30 June 2003, half of New Zealand's population was over 35.0 years of age, compared with a median age of 32.0 years in 1993 and 28.6 years in 1983,” (Statistics New Zealand 2006) and the teaching workforce reflects similar ageing. The age profile of teachers overall shows 65% of all teachers are in the age bracket from forty years and older, 27% are in the 50 to 59 years bracket and 7% in the 60 years and over group (Ministry of Education 2005). In the USA, it is noted with some alarm that approximately 40% of principals were expected to retire in the next decade and that grooming new and retaining current principals was critical (National Association of Secondary School Principals 2001; Wurtzel 2003). In New Zealand, Wylie (1999) has shown that principal turnover is high. A national survey in 1999, which was part of the study of the period from the 1989 reforms up until 1999, noted,

- that 17% of teaching and 4% of non-teaching principals were less than forty,
- 50% of teaching and 33% of non-teaching principals were in the 40 to 49 age band,

- 31% of teaching and 55% of non-teaching principals were in the 50-59 age band and finally
- 2% and 8% were in the respective categories for the sixty years plus age group,

(Wylie 1999, p. 33).

These statistics show that the New Zealand principals' population has a large percentage in the older age group. Predictions of retirements would appear to be well founded. When schools find it necessary to recruit principals it will be important to have a quality pool of candidates for Boards of Trustees to appoint from.

I conducted a survey of vacancies advertised in the New Zealand Education Gazettes from 6<sup>th</sup> February 2006 to the 24<sup>th</sup> April 2006. This revealed that there were 106 primary principals' positions advertised in that period. Of these 106 vacancies advertised, 75 (or 71%) were for U1 to U3 Grade principals, (school rolls of 7 to 150 students) which are positions more likely to be filled by first time principals. In fact says (Collins 2003), "almost 70% of all new first time principals are teaching principals," which further illustrates the need for there to be a good pool for Boards to appoint from.

In the New Zealand situation the "Board" is the Board of Trustees. This is a group comprising of elected parent/community representatives, commonly five but varying from three to nine, an elected staff representative and the principal. The Board of Trustees is the legal employer and has legal responsibility for the school. In the appointment of a new principal this is the group who makes the appointment, often but not always, with the support of a paid education consultant.

The geographical distribution of advertised vacancies was 38% in the upper half of the North Island, 30% in the lower half of the North Island and 32% in the South Island. From this survey I concluded that the demand for new principals appears to be New Zealand wide, as the spread of advertisements was

geographically equitable and the survey covered a significant segment of the year. This level of advertising equates approximately to a 5% turnover of principals in the period covered by the Education Gazettes from 6<sup>th</sup> February 2006 to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2006. If this were to be extrapolated, based on approximately 2080 primary schools in New Zealand, it would indicate an annual principal turnover in the region of 15% to 20% for New Zealand primary schools. This is consistent with the finding of (Strachan 2003, p. 9) who surveyed principal vacancies from 1996 to 2003, although my survey would indicate a higher percentage of vacancies are now occurring. That would indicate the need for a pool of high quality candidates is already here. Along with the actual changeover of principals, a study carried out in 2003 of current principals' intentions revealed that, "in five years time 18% plan to be retired; 10% plan to be in another career; 5% wish to take a break from teaching; and 16%, while unsure about what they will be doing, are certain that it won't be being a principal," (Collins 2003). The New Zealand evidence is similar to that overseas in that the current group of principals is ageing, a significant number are planning on switching careers or retiring and the demand for replacements is likely to be growing. A study on principal preparation such as this is therefore timely.

Some readers may question why there is a need to be concerned with the quality and size of the pool from which future principals will be drawn. The answer is in the relationship between a good principal and a good school and is well illustrated in the literature.

*"When TIME (magazine) picked six Schools of the Year in May, the one thread they had in common was dynamic, dedicated principals who inspired teachers, parents and students to do more than anyone thought possible. But there simply aren't enough people in education right now who are this good."*

(Goldstein 2001) , "research clearly indicates that there are few successful schools without successful principals," (National Association of Secondary School Principals 2001) and in his review of Tomorrows Schools and the literature around principalship Ramsay asserted, "research evidence world-wide argues that

the principal performs a pivotal role in a school. In summarising, this literature it is not too simplistic to say that a good principal equates with quality educational provision,” (Ramsay 1992, p. 15). With the link of the quality of the principal to a good school established and the need for new principals also shown then having a good pool to appoint principals from will enable the number of good schools to continue to be maintained and indeed grow.

Other studies also support this notion of the centrality of the principal to a good school. Studies in Australia and Japan (Gamage 2004) show differences in how school leaders should be prepared however, “they all recognize that principals are at the centre of school improvement efforts,” (Gamage 2004, p. 77).

In New Zealand, Edwards (1999) argued that good principals are of increasing importance, when he stated, “principalship is more vital than ever. Leadership and strategy are vital for the good principal who faces the challenges of the future” (Edwards 1999, p. 14). In their view of international perspectives of school leadership preparation, Bush and Jackson summed their reviews up as, “generations of research on school effectiveness show that excellent leadership is invariably one of the main factors in high performing schools,” (Bush 2002, p. 417). For schools to have good principals who can provide this leadership, pre-principalship preparation, which includes development and experiences leading to a first principal position, is important, particularly in order to provide a good pool for first time principal appointments.

At the same time as there has been recognition of the importance of the principal to a good school there has been a changing climate for principals to operate within. Internationally we have seen more demands for accountability placed on principals such as in USA with the “No Child Left Behind” legislation. This legislation places increased accountability onto districts and schools, so therefore on to principals to meet strict learning targets, especially in reading, (Johnson 2001). In England, where high stakes testing has been a feature of the educational landscape for some time, anybody can access the results on the league tables (BBC 2006) at the click of a mouse button. The pressure is very much on the principals to ensure that their schools perform in these tests. My own observations

in 2001 in England were that there was a very narrow focus on teaching to the tests and their content only. The Office for Standards in Education, (Ofsted) too noted this and commented in a press release about mathematics teaching that, “Inspectors found evidence of ‘teaching to the test’ with students being taught how to obtain answers but not what their answers meant” (Ofsted 2006). In New Zealand, the 1989 reform of Tomorrow’s Schools has led to increased responsibility and accountability for principals which has left principals with funding shortfall issues, increased workloads especially around compliance, increased frustration and especially increased difficulty in areas of lower socio economic grouping, (Wylie 1999). With this changing climate of increased accountability the requirements and pressures on principals, and especially new ones, are increasing and therefore the requirements for new principals to be well prepared also increases.

While recognition of the importance of leadership is widespread, recognition of the need to specifically prepare new leaders has not been so apparent, (Bush 2002, p. 418). This lack of recognition has seen some changes in recent years. For example in England, with the establishment of the National College for School Leadership in November 2000 (Bush 2002, p. 418) along with the required course of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has shown tangible recognition of the importance the English government has placed on leadership preparation and growth. In the United States, where accreditation is longest established, it is within a formal structured university masters programme and is a requirement before applying for principals’ and vice principals’ positions in the majority of states.

Much of this work is under review and being questioned. A notable example is the questioning of the effectiveness of the programmes. and An extensive review found much to criticise (Levine 2005). In Singapore, Scandinavia, the Netherlands and France there are extensive pre-principalship new principalship programmes (Strachan 2003, p. 52) These are formal programmes with content aimed at giving principals the skills and knowledge to lead their schools into the future. A recent New Zealand initiative has been with the establishment of the Pilot Aspiring and Potential Principals Programme (Strachan 2003) but currently

New Zealand still has nothing formally in place as a requirement for pre-principalship professional development or qualification.

Future challenges for New Zealand principals include the disparities between our top and bottom achievers, the growing concerns around issues such as boys' achievement, obesity and exercise. This is a reflection of the increasing complexity of the role of the school and therefore the principal. This is in fact a world wide trend. Additional factors such as, "new demands are being made of schools globally from technology implementation to multi-culturalism and shared decision making" (Hallinger 2003a, p. 7) add to the complexity of context of schools today and the job of leading them. With increasing complexity to the job, it would be expected that governing bodies and governments would recognise the need for increasing complexity of preparation.

This is not necessarily the case, especially in the New Zealand primary schools where "many primary principals report that they are too busy doing the job to have the time to complete such qualifications" (ERO cited in Collins 2003). While qualification is not the only avenue by which aspiring principals may find preparation, it is probably the most common, and other options in New Zealand at least, would have to be self planned and directed. Research into small school principalship by Collins (2003) found that, "they remain generally under qualified for the sophistication of the job demands. Only 5% of my respondents had completed post-graduate qualifications and almost 45% of them had lower qualifications than current graduates from colleges of education (that is, they were still under-graduates)," (Collins 2003). Clearly from this research there is a gap in the qualifications of significant numbers of people moving into their first principal's position. The implications of this are that many new principals are under prepared for the position when they start their new job. This may lead to avoidable problems and difficulties with community, with their Boards of trustees and with their staff. Recovering from these problems is challenging and for new principals especially difficult. Being better prepared may mean new principals make less mistakes in the initial phases of the job.

In New Zealand to help principals with their new role there is assistance with professional development after a position is won and taken up. This is the first time principals' professional development. Following the appointment to a first time principal's position, the principal may access training, which takes approximately the first week of the following three vacations, spread through the school year. (New Zealand has four terms of approximately 10 weeks with a two week break between each, plus a 5 and a half week summer break). This training is not compulsory, however, most first time principals are taking it up. The design was aiming to, "develop the types of leaders who can, and will, lead complex change in their schools," (Martin 2003, p. 11) and principals, "who are critically reflective of their practice, as this will continue on throughout their career lifecycle," (Martin 2003, p. 10). While the first time principals professional development course is commendable and useful, the first term, when the initial impressions are formed and much of the direction set, is undertaken without the benefit of this development.

This lack of preparation was recognised by the New Zealand Education Review Office (1996) when they commented that, "Little attention has been paid to the need of primary school principals to increase their professional understanding of broader concepts of primary school management and leadership. Some countries have demanded that, before teachers may even apply for positions as principals, they have to complete specific training based on the competencies deemed necessary for principals. There is currently no such requirement in New Zealand." The New Zealand Principals' Federation made an offer to government, following the 1996 Education Review Office Report, that was called, "Headstart, a programme for training new and up and coming principals," (Yeoman 1996, p. 3). However, it is unclear whether a programme was actually proposed or if it was just an idea, regardless no further action was forthcoming at the time. The potential of a programme that was designed by practising principals was an exciting idea, It could be designed to build on the best practice of experienced practitioners. This could have been especially powerful if teamed up with the universities to ensure the balance of professional and theoretical knowledge and skills. This would have had the potential to align, "an appreciation of relevant

theory and research,” (Bush 2002, p. 424) along with the practical aspects of leadership and management.

The challenge of principalship is complex as is evidenced by Collins (2003), who notes that in England, where extensive research has been done by the Hay Group, it was found that many of the first time principals became overwhelmed by the basics of their job. In New Zealand the Education Review Office (1996) commented, “All primary school principals are expected to undertake a number of management responsibilities in areas such as personnel, finances and property. Most primary school principals have not been prepared for these management obligations either by their earlier career experience or by their pre-employment or in-service training,”(Education Review Office 1996) so it is perhaps not surprising that the basics of the job could become an overwhelming obstacle for some principals. In addition the fact that, “the role of the principal under the Tomorrow's School's administrative arrangements is complex and ambiguous and differs to some degree from school to school,” (Robertson 1991) further reinforces both the complexity of the job for the principal, and therefore the need for adequate preparation.

The complexities of the principal's job are exacerbated by the context of their position. In New Zealand primary, intermediate, restricted composite (middle), secondary, full primary, composite (area) and special schools (Ministry of Education 2002) all have their different organisational structures. Within these there are other factors such as the socioeconomic area the school draws on, the ethnic mix, the special character (e.g. religious, Kura kaupapa Maori) and the physical location (urban, small town, rural, or isolated). One-size-fits-all programmes will not prepare principals for these wide variations and, “development and support initiatives need to focus on local context” (Robertson 2005). As Fullan, (1998, p. 1) stated, “the job of the principal has become increasingly complex and constrained”.

In the midst of trying to cope with the basic aspects of the job, it is not surprising that new principals find their first few years difficult. This is described by Collins (2003) saying,

*“typically they struggle during this period with proactive aspects of their role like vision, educational leadership and change-management. Sometimes these novice principals got offside with their Board and/or the community because of their inexperience. These difficulties can include relationship problems with Board and or Parents, difficulties with learning and teaching approaches and the communities perception of what is good teaching and difficulties with managing change. When this occurs it is very difficult for the Principal to recover credibility.”*

As a result of his doctoral research work with experienced urban principals, Thew (2002) commented on the complexities of the principal’s role and particularly the complex interplay of personal beliefs, new problems and career experience. He stated, “this study has exposed the limitations of principalship preparation and development in New Zealand,” (Thew 2002, p. 8). If experienced principals are finding the job difficult then the implications for new and aspiring principals are that there are many obstacles to contend with when they win a principal’s position.

It was that, Perhaps in response to concerns raised over a number of years (Education Review Office 1996) that a programme was run for aspiring and potential principals through the Educational Leadership Centre at the University of Waikato. The Aspiring and Potential Principals’ Pilot Programme conducted during 2004 and 2005 had two cohorts of twelve participants. This study is a follow up with some of those potential and aspiring principals to determine what factors were useful and helpful in their journey from when they started teaching, or even before, through their participation in the pilot to where they are now in their professional careers. The Waikato University led pilot for Aspiring and Potential Principals was a first for the Ministry of Education in focussing on pre-principalship preparation. Whether this or other programmes, courses of study or experiences had any significance for the participants in the study may add to the body of knowledge of pre-principalship preparation.

The Aspiring and Potential Principals Pilot Programme was preceded by a review of the relevant literature. From this review a number of recommendations were

made around designing the programme. These included targeting the programme to those who would be prepared to go to those schools which are more difficult to staff, making careful choices of candidates and privileging women and Maori in selection, addressing specific identified barriers within the programme including retention and providing delivery involving using identified effective techniques. (Strachan 2003, pp. 4-6). The intention was clearly to draw on the existing knowledge to build the programme. Additionally, an action research programme was run in conjunction with the programme, to further inform and guide its development, (Leckie 2005, p. 4).

The New Zealand context is unusual, compared to the rest of the world, in that appointments to principals' positions are made by the Board of Trustees, a representative parent body. Each school is governed by its own Board of Trustees, which includes 5 to 7 parent representatives elected by the school's parents, the principal, a staff representative elected by school staff, and, in secondary schools, a student representative. The Board is the body with the legal responsibility for the school, the principal once appointed has the legal responsibility for all the day to day management as well as being the chief adviser to the Board. Boards come with varied backgrounds and expertise. The Board of Trustees appoints and employs the school principal. Often a Board of Trustees will employ a professional adviser to assist with the appointment process of a new principal.

The background of the professional adviser that most Boards use to assist them with the appointment of a new principal is variable. There is no minimum standard or accreditation required before becoming one. There are also no minimum requirements or qualifications for principalship, apart from registration as a teacher from the New Zealand Teaching Council. It is possible for a beginning teacher with provisional registration to gain a principal's position in some circumstances, usually hard to staff schools in isolated areas. The emphasis on the importance of the principal's position, along with the large number of anticipated vacancies gives weight to the necessity of research to add to the knowledge of principal preparation.

## **The Research Question**

What are the elements of pre-principalship preparation that are most useful for potential and aspiring principals in furthering their career aims?

## **Chapter Framework**

The research begins with Chapter One, the introduction which outlines the purpose, and the context of the research study.

Chapter Two reviews and discusses the issues through the literature review. This is done through a review of major ideas. Examples from several countries are used to illustrate how these are put into practice.

Chapter Three outlines the features of qualitative research and a brief discussion of the features. This includes using interviews and grounded theory analysis as the chosen methodology for this work.

Chapter Four describes the research study and how the research was actually carried out.

Chapter Five outlines the major findings from the research that emerge from the collected data. They are grouped into six categories.

Chapter Six discusses these findings and considers their implications in the light of the literature review outlined in Chapter Two.

Chapter Seven contains the final conclusions and recommendations.

Appendices follow Chapter Seven.

## Chapter Two

### Literature

#### Introduction

There is considerable literature describing potential and aspiring principal development programmes. However, “it is much more difficult to find information indicating the degree of success or soundness of the practice,” (Strachan 2003, p. 54). When commenting on pre-principalship preparation programmes Davis (2003, p. 160) asserted,

*“It is interesting to note that the Australian tradition of requiring no pre-appointment training and the tradition of the USA which insists on it, seem to produce a very similar level of professional competence - an observation which should concern those involved in the professional development of school leaders.”*

While this observation neglects to consider the very real differences of educational environment between the two countries, it does however raise the question of the effectiveness or otherwise of such pre-principalship preparation programmes. Within the United States, there was also concern around the effectiveness of the principal preparation programmes and again a dearth of research was identified,

*“a scattering of studies evaluating different dimensions of leadership programmes, but nothing that would permit any conclusions about their overall effectiveness. Some studies have documented positive student perceptions about redesigned programmes, but research thus far has found no correlation between leadership programs and principal effectiveness”* (Lashway 2003, p. 2).

The wealth of writing and research around description of pre-principalship programmes contrasts markedly with the dearth of writing and research around its effectiveness. In this research, a little more insight into the important elements of effective pre-principalship preparation may be found.

## **Themes**

The themes identified through the literature search into principal preparation included recognition of the increasing complexity of the principals' job. The existence of a number of formal programmes in various countries were identified. These programmes had aspects in common although these were by no means universal. The examples sketched give some idea of the variety of programmes offered. In addition to the formal programmes there was recognition of informal aspects of principal preparation although this is fairly small at this point in time. The roles of mentoring, coaching and networking were also highlighted in the literature.

As noted above this review of literature and research around principal preparation has revealed that there are a large number of formal programmes in operation around the world and there has been much sustained effort expended in a number of countries to develop potential and aspiring principals to make them ready for principalship (Bush 2002; Huber 2004). Those countries studied included Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sweden and the United States. These efforts have been a mixture of formal programmes leading to specific principalship qualifications, and formal programmes not necessarily leading to a qualification but with a specific principalship preparation focus.

In addition to the formal programmes, there is some recognition of the place of leadership experience and role modelling in principal preparation. Spanning both the formal and the informal approaches, are mentoring and coaching initiatives which are aimed at developing potential and aspiring principals.

## **Complexity**

The complexity of the principal's position appears to be increasing. The view of d'Arbon (2004, p. 4) is that the Australian system will grow and become more complex. A review of the list of skills that principals require from just two sources confirms this complexity. For example,

*“The American Association of School Administrators (Hoyle and others 1985) claims that administrators need to develop skills in the following areas: designing, implementing, and evaluating school climate; building support for schools; developing school curriculum; instructional management; staff evaluation; staff development; allocating resources; and educational research, evaluation, and planning,” (Klauke 1990).*

The National College of School Leadership in England lists, “knowledge and understanding of the education context, personal development, facilitation skills, leading client-centred change, team working, communication skills,” (National College for School Leadership 2004). Whichever list of skills that are referred to, there is evidence of a need for complex skills for a complex job.

In addition to the increasing level of complexity of the principal’s role, there is an increasing level of demand for accountability. Examples are the requirements of the “No Child Left Behind” legislation in the United States which requires schools to meet standardised testing achievement targets and the annually published league tables of England which rank their schools according to national standardised test results. While New Zealand does not currently have similar legislation there are pressures on schools and the schooling system to perform. A simple example is the publication of qualification results of high schools in local papers which often rank the schools on the basis of these achievement rates.

Effective professional development for potential and aspiring principals needs to recognise the complexity of the job, the contextual nature of it and build the potential principal’s capacity to be self directed learners. What has been evident has been an increasing level of demand for accountability on principals, along with increasing complexity of the position and pre-principalship preparation must find ways to take account of this.

## **Formal Programmes**

In the literature describing the formal programmes that a number of countries have devised which have been aimed specifically at preparing principals for the job (Bush 2002; Huber 2003; Hallinger 2003a), a number of common elements

have been illustrated within the variations from country to country between the programmes of Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sweden and the United States. Those elements of content most commonly described in the literature were,

- mission,
- vision and transformational leadership,
- learning and teaching or instructional leadership,
- human leadership and management,
- resource management.

Additionally common, but not so universal were themes of,

- the school and community interface,
- professional mentoring,
- networking and coaching,
- an understanding of ethical, moral and values of leadership.

In his review of the changes in school leadership development from 1980 to 2002 Hallinger (Hallinger 2003a, p. 6) noted that while, “empirical research supports conventional wisdom that principals make a difference,” the picture of how is somewhat incomplete as very little, if any, research has been done in this area. One aspect that he did note emerging was that the ability of a principal to create shared vision and mission is an important aspect of how they can be effective. If the ability of the principal to create shared vision and mission is accepted as important, and Huber (2003) reviewed widely across fifteen countries, then it is important that the skills to do this are included as a part of any principal preparation programme.

In Huber’s (2004) research work a comparative study of pre-principalship programmes across a number of different programmes was completed. The sample was large with programmes from fifteen countries reviewed. Data was collected by conducting an international literature search, having meetings of experts, systematic document collection and a questionnaire. Additional research was done via email and telephone. One of the strengths of this research was that data was collected using the wide variety of methods mentioned here. Additionally, experts from each country were asked to co-author the sections on

their countries programmes as a cross checking mechanism. One of the weaknesses of this research, which is noted by Huber (2004, p. 333) was the admission that the sampling had to be selective as well as purposive due to language constraints and a reliance on existing liaisons or the ability to forge new ones. The analysis of the data was carried out by juxtaposition and then comparison. The collected data was analysed not only by the researcher but also by an independent researcher and additionally a validating expert from each country who was a co-author for each section. This research was a comparative study of the programmes being run in the fifteen countries. It was not an attempt, “to investigate quantitatively the effectiveness and empirical efficiency of the training and development programmes,” (Huber 2004, p. 13) and so from this work whether or not these programmes are actually making principals more effective through their preparation is still unanswered. This again highlights the point made by Strachan (2003) of the difficulty of finding information about the effectiveness or otherwise of pre-principalship programmes.

There was one notable exception to this lack of evidence which was shown in a research project into the impact of the Scottish Qualification for Headship. In this study, the researchers used a variety of data collection methods, including surveys of participants, their heads, selected chairpersons of school boards, the programme providers and the directors of the education authorities. Additional interviews were carried out along with nine case studies. The variety of data collection methods was a strength of the research. Unfortunately, the participants were all selected from those who had completed the qualification and none of those who had dropped out were included. These people could have contributed valuable data to the study. Nevertheless it was an attempt to comprehensively examine the effectiveness of the qualification and is notable for that in itself.

Significantly the authors of this study concluded, “when this programme was successfully undertaken by candidates it has clearly contributed greatly to development in a number of important professional areas,” (Mentor 2005, p. 19). The authors then went on to discuss the range of factors which affected that success including issues of equity, support, time management and coping with enormous pressure (Mentor 2005, p. 19). Finally Mentor et al noted in their

conclusions that study, that while a major positive impact across the system was not yet evident, there was cause to expect that the ongoing impact of this work would lead to just that.

While the literature review highlighted these listed aspects that existing principal preparation programmes contain, Huber (2003, p. 287) notes the commonalities are not unanimous across the fifteen countries that he surveyed and nor do they have equal weighting from country to country or programme to programme.

## **Examples**

From the literature reviewed, examples from Singapore, England, the United States and New Zealand have been outlined to show some of the variety of approaches currently being applied. The approaches cover programmes, which are nationally based such as in England and Singapore, and locally based as in the example from USA. Some are compulsory, as in the USA where accreditation via an approved programme is required in most states, and some are optional as in New Zealand where no principal qualification or accreditation exists. This is not an exhaustive set of examples, rather a set for illustration.

### **Singapore**

The government of Singapore supports the provision of leadership training that includes potential and aspiring principals. This is done through significant funding of the National Institute of Education which runs the development programmes (Choy 2003, p. 163). The Singaporean government took a quite deliberate approach to educational direction and instituted a programme designed to equip their leaders to be, “the architects of institutions that represent a major paradigmatic shift from the narrowly focussed compliant examination driven schools of former years”, (Choy 2003, p. 164). This deliberate change requires leaders to be able to, “design, lead and manage schools in a thinking nation,” (Choy 2003, p. 164). The aim of their programmes is to produce leaders who can find their way through the ongoing changes of education in the twenty first century, and leaders who can form their own vision and path in order to lead their schools effectively. The Singaporeans have invested much time and resource into

their programmes and as Choy (2003, p. 173) notes, “as we move forward we have to constantly look and re-look at what we are doing”. In the Singaporean context it has been recognised that while the principal needs to be able to, “guarantee high degrees of quality in teaching and learning,” (Choy 2003, p. 166) it has also been recognised that they cannot do so on their own and that there is a need for support from, “middle managers who must assume increased responsibility for leadership in learning” (Choy 2003, p. 166). The Singaporeans have been putting resources and effort into programmes to improve the skills of these people as well on the basis that building the capacity of middle management is important so that they can support their principals effectively.

Singapore is one of the few countries which include an international visit to schools as a part of their programme. The visits are a part of their stated strategy of, ‘living and working globally in a networked world over their lifespan,’ (Choy 2003, p. 164). This is part of a deliberate strategy which helps with developing strategic thinking. To do so requires principals to have a wide view of education, “only when we have a wide frame of reference can we think about developing strategic plans” (Southworth 2002, p. 1). For principals to develop the wider views that are being advocated (Southworth 1995; Edwards 1999; Robertson 2000) suggest their preparation programmes need to have a wide range of topic and audience. (Robertson 2000). The Singaporeans have made a commitment to do this with their programme of visits.

Choy (2003), in describing the Singaporean professional development, alludes to researching their programmes but unfortunately no methodology of that review was included, nor was there any mention of such in the references. Based on this evidence, there appears to be review but not rigorous research into programme effectiveness in Singapore. While useful from a programme design perspective, it does not inform us of whether or not the programmes are more effective than not doing pre-principalship development and if so, by what degree.

## **England**

In England, the government announced the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in 1998 and it opened officially at Nottingham in 2000. The

stated purpose of NCSL, “is to improve the lives and life chances of all children and young people throughout the country by developing world-class school leaders, system leaders and future leaders,” (National College for School Leadership 2006b). The college receives its objectives and targets directly from the English secretary of Education by way of a remit letter sent periodically so it is a direct instrument of the English government and its aims and objectives. It is subject to some criticism because of this, particularly from some academics, (Brundrett 2006) who highlights it by saying, “governments have created the expectation that those who undertake leadership training .... will comply with mandated requirements in order to conform to centrally defined norms,” (Brundrett 2006, p. 91).

The initial strategy of the (NCSL) was to research the programmes running in, “the best leadership centres worldwide to inform college strategy,” (Bush 2002, p. 419). The authors did however point out that there were other examples of good practice that they didn’t visit or know about. In the conclusions of what was important in aspiring principal programmes they reviewed, it was noted that vision, mission and transformational leadership, issues of learning and teaching, and administration and management task areas (Bush 2002, p. 421) were common elements in the fifteen programmes across seven countries that they selected.

The methodology chosen for the research reported by Bush (2002) involved teams from NCSL visiting chosen centres. This purposive selection was to select existing programmes based on the knowledge of the college people and their advisers. The weakness of the research was the reliance on existing knowledge of programmes of the personnel involved. On each visit the teams gathered materials, talked with providers and participants and sometimes witnessed training activities (Bush 2002, p. 419). This research used a variety of data gathering methods which was a strength. However it was conducted in a short time frame of only three to four days at each centre which was a brief snapshot and didn’t give time for in depth knowledge. This could be a weakness of the research with vital information possibly being missed. The teams that visited the centres then came together in a two day seminar to formulate policy based on the information collected. The validation of the programmes viewed was from the schools and

school leaders who were involved with the centres but of necessity, this would be brief. The intention was to be well informed about existing programmes in order to use that experience to help build their own programmes .

While the scope of the study was wide, in that it reviewed fifteen programmes across seven countries, there was no extensive component in this work to determine if the actual programmes reviewed were making the kind of difference hoped for to the pre-principal groups they were targeted to. Like the work of Huber, the question of the effective elements of pre-principalship preparation are still unanswered. Using the initial research along with the model of leadership developed by Hay Management Consultants, which was based on their research into what high performing headteachers do in their schools, the basis of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) was established. The Hay Group identified understanding others, getting people on board, planning for delivery, gathering information along with gaining understanding, and monitoring for improvement as the five key clusters of characteristics of headteachers who achieve excellence. In this research, while the place of each characteristic was differently placed, in the three variations on their main model (Hay Group 2000, p. 4) which were variously large, small and special school headship, it was present in all three. The research was a mixture of, “in-depth interviews, panel discussions and questionnaires,” (Hay Group 2000, p. 3). The programme that National College for School Leadership actually delivers for pre-principalship development has shaped this information into modules on strategic direction and development, learning and teaching, working with stakeholders and managing people and resources, (National College for School Leadership 2006a, p. 4).

The English, through NCSL, have a highly structured system of pre-principal preparation through the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH). This is a requirement before being appointed to a headship in England. The content of NPQH was based initially on the research of other countries programmes but did not evaluate their effectiveness in any depth, only their content. It could therefore be argued that their basis is programmes that have not had their effectiveness properly researched. Further, the objectives and targets are

all government based and therefore subject to political whim which may or may not be based on good research and information.

### **United States**

In their description of work with the Big Picture Company, Littky and Schen (2002, p. 87) listed moving vision as one of the three design foci which are part of an individualised approach to developing aspiring principals, along with an emphasis on moral courage and relationship building. The main theme of vision resonates with it being a common theme across many programmes for principal preparation. The Big Picture Company is working in the USA where the provision of pre-principalship accreditation has been the domain of the universities.

The aim of the particular programme that they describe is to make the difference by individualising the programme, basing it on work within schools, not within universities and concentrating on the small schools network. The ability to, “develop and maintain a consistent vision and inspire others to work towards it,” (Littky 2002, p. 91) is not only one of the three design foci but also one of the six leadership areas they list for development. Unfortunately, Littky and Schen in their description of the small school network principal programme pass over learning with the comment that, “a successful principal creates joy around learning,” (Littky 2002, p.92) without providing further information about how this skill is to be developed. This brief mention helps align the course content with the majority of the programmes researchers reviewed which include learning as an important aspect. Littky and Schen (2002) agree with Barth (2006, p. 8) who maintains, “the nature of relationships among the adults within a school has a greater influence on the character and quality of that school, and on student accomplishment than anything else,” in that they recognise relationship building as one of the three key areas to be built for the development of good principals.

The challenge, for the principal before they can become effective as a leader if Barth is correct, is to build those relationships first. There are two strands to the human management strand, the regulated or mandated aspect that requires compliance and the relationship side, that is, the human face with an emotional aspect. Again, despite the different context of this particular programme, it has a

commonality in recognising the importance of human relationships. Littky and Chen (2002) also reported a heavy reliance amongst new and aspiring principals on mentoring and modelling. The importance of networking is well established in the minds of both practicing and aspiring principals in their programme. The development work by The Big Picture Company with its work at school level rather than system level has strong emphasis on moral courage. This may be because their work is very much focussed in each school by itself and in schools in urban areas and with children who are disadvantaged socio-economically. Their work stands out as having moral courage as one of the most important aspects of a principal, somewhat in contrast to other programmes. Littky (2002, p. 92) also noted that, “a strong principal has a gift for public relations.” Unfortunately, if actual or aspiring principals do not have this gift for public relations then the implication is that they have to learn it. The relationship between the school and its community through the principal can be crucial to the school being supported or not. Without this support progress becomes very difficult. Bush (2002) and Huber (2004) also remark on the inclusion of school and community communication in the various programmes that they researched. “Schools are embedded within their communities,” (Huber 2004, p. 4) and are at times assuming leadership of new trends. The ability of the principal and school to communicate these changes positively can be hugely beneficial to the school by way of support and outcomes for children.

The effectiveness of the programmes has not been researched, instead the personnel involved have relied on the success of the participants as a guide to its success. This has been judged positively by the Massachusetts Department of Education’s Associate Commissioner who stated that, “they are the benchmark,” (Littky 2002, quoting Gerwin) when referring to administrator accreditation programmes for the state.

### **New Zealand**

The contract for the Aspiring and Potential Principals Pilot Programme was won by the University of Waikato and run in 2004 and 2005 with two cohorts of twelve. Each cohort spent a year in the programme. Participants were a mixture of primary and secondary teachers who aspired to be principals. The course

consisted of three weekend courses and participation in an online discussion group. Additionally, there were school visits arranged and a mentor-coach for each aspirant. Participants were selected to, “attract aspirants considering those schools that were outside large urban areas,” (Leckie 2005, p. 31) and with the aim of ensuring representation from primary, secondary and kura kaupapa maori schools, (Leckie 2005, p. 31). The course was a pilot that ran with an action research project running in parallel and feeding back into the course. The final propositions of Leckie (2005) at the end of his research into the first year of the pilot were that the programme, in the eyes of the participants at the time, “gave them opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of the leadership and principal role,” (Leckie 2005, p. 81) and that it gave them, “some insights into the realities of the job,” (Leckie 2005, p. 81). While the programme was action researched through 2004, evaluation as to its ongoing effectiveness as participants gain principals positions and put their new knowledge and skills to the test, has not been carried out to date. My research may provide some insight as to the effectiveness of this programme in the contexts of those participants who take part in this study.

### **Access and Delivery of Programmes**

There is a variety of ways that potential principals are able to receive professional development. These include lecture type class sessions, small group co-operative sessions, coaching and internships in group and individual situations, problem solving activities and on-line classes.

For example, in many states of the USA the delivery of pre-principalship programmes, and accompanying accreditation, is part of the job of the universities. The courses there are often a combination of formal classes and internships, some on-line, some summer school and some regular face to face classes, (Roberts 2001). The United States has had a long tradition of pre-principalship accreditation but this has been, as noted here earlier, coming under attack particularly in recent times. In an extensive report which studied these programmes across the United States serious problems were uncovered, “Over a period of almost two decades, however, those programmes—which number more

than 600—have faced a steady stream of criticism, their reputations have declined, and their future has been thrown into doubt,” (Levine 2005, p. 4). They are slated for a “race to the bottom, in which they compete for students by lowering admission standards, watering down coursework, and offering faster and less demanding degrees”(Levine 2005, p. 1). Nevertheless, most states require accreditation in some form, the generally accepted pattern includes a preparation phase which includes a masters degree in administration. “These courses average two years to complete and have an ‘internship’ component (which is completed in the school where the aspirant is teaching)” (Marks, 2004).

In England, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) has been specifically set up for the delivery of pre-principalship training and the recognition of the needs of adult learners have been recognised in the initial research which identified , “the use of a wider range of learning strategies and technologies, including study groups and virtual provision,” (Bush 2002, p. 427) as being important issues.

In New Zealand, there is currently no formal countrywide system of principal induction, although there has been at least one pilot, the Aspiring and Potential Principals Programme. Further opportunities for pre-principalship professional development in New Zealand are provided by The University of Waikato which offers a certificate, post graduate diploma and masters’ level degree in educational leadership which are open to both principals and aspiring principals. These three qualifications are unique to this University in the New Zealand context although there are alternatives such as the Massey University Master of Education Administration which is very similar. The provision of on-line classes makes them available nationally or internationally using the modern communication technology as suggested by Robertson (2004).

In both Japan and Australia, practising principals have called for, “theory with practice, especially in terms of observing exemplary administrators and group work,” (Gamage 2004, p. 77). This opportunity for working with others as requested by practising principals is echoed from an academic point of view where it is suggested that there should be provision for networking, with wide

ranging views which ideally include an international component and making use of modern communication technology. (Robertson 2000).

In addition to formal programmes, there are many publications and journals available for both formal and informal study both in hard copy and in many cases also on-line. Examples of some publications available in New Zealand are The New Zealand Principal, Education Today and Principals Digests. Many publications and much professional development materials are available in an on-line version. Additionally in New Zealand, the website, “Leadspace,” contains links to much useful material for both existing and aspiring principals. Leadspace is, “a site dedicated to building school leadership capacity,” (Ministry of Education 2006). Leadspace is a government initiative and consequently also reflects to some extent the priorities of the government of the day, in a similar way to the National College for School Leadership website in England. Nevertheless it is a source of valuable information and useful links for both existing principals and potential ones.

I hope that my research will be able to inform the wider educational community about the experiences the participants I am working with have had of the delivery of pre-principalship professional development in its different forms and how effective they found them.

### **Informal Aspects of Pre-Principalship Preparation**

The place and importance of leadership experience prior to becoming a principal has not had a lot of mention in the literature on pre-principalship preparation. The focus rather has been on the formal programmes that have been offered. Recently there have been signs that this thinking is changing. For example in the United States, which has had the longest tradition of formal principalship preparation, there has been some criticism of the programmes offered. It is suggested that they, “present the complexity of what principals do as a set of independent components, leaving candidates to put the pieces together on their own with little practical school administrative experience or context,” (U. S. Department of Education

2004, p. 3). The U.S. Department of Education is actively promoting considerations of candidates and programmes which take far more account of prior experience of potential principals and have published a paper which promotes a wider view based on programmes that they see as innovative. One of the aspects that they saw and promoted was that these programmes were, “accepting candidates who meet highly selective criteria, including successful leadership experience,” (U. S. Department of Education 2004, p. 5). The Department is hoping that by using this kind of selection criteria for principalship accreditation, along with giving credit for it, that possible candidates with appropriate experience will be able to gain the necessary accreditation without having to, ‘jump the hurdles’ of getting an administrative credential,” (U. S. Department of Education 2004, p. 1).

In England, Bush (2004) gave an address that reviewed preparation for principalship. He highlighted the issue of principalship preparation by suggesting, “that a predominantly process based approach, anchored in participants’ schools, may be more effective in promoting leadership learning than traditional content-based courses,” (Bush 2004). This was to allow for the different contexts that every school is located in, its staff, its people and its wider community. In this address, he also commented on the widespread acceptance of content of principal preparation that previous research highlighted (Bush 2002; Huber 2003; Hallinger 2003a) but then went on to spread doubt on its effectiveness as it was, “based on observation and experience rather than empirical enquiry,” (Bush 2004). Bush was advocating for a more experience-based approach. The research on this kind of approach is also yet to be done so this my research may be able to fill some of the gap.

### **Mentoring, Coaching and Networking**

When reviewing the retention of existing principals it was noted that, “one of the most frequently requested opportunities for development was the chance to network with other principals to exchange ideas, evaluate the demands of their jobs, and discuss how to implement change at their schools,” (Hertling 2001). If existing principals recognise this need and if we accept that we are increasingly

living and educating in a more globalised society, (d'Arbon 2004; Moos 2004, p. 209) then, "educational leaders should engage in ongoing professional networks that extend beyond their own cultures so that they can understand themselves in relation to the larger world," (Robertson 2004).

Networking could be defined as the establishment of relationships with others who have at least one common purpose or aim. They may be small or large groups and may be part of a formal grouping, such as a professional association or as informal as those who attended the teacher education institution. Definitions in fact abound, for example, "Networking is a systematic way of integrating systems of communication for both personal and professional enhancement," (Gibson cited in Register 2006) or "Networking is an active, systematic process of meeting people or exchanging information to get things done more efficiently... A network is the interpersonal communications pattern that results from the process of linking with others," (ncchildcare 2004). Considerable time is spent promoting networking activity and within the education community examples such as the following from the Kappa Delta Phi website advertising for their convocation, "Interact with some of the leading educators in the United States and abroad. Meet and network with other educators facing the same challenges as you, and leave Convocation with innovative ways to meet those issues head-on" (Kappa Delta Phi 2006). Similarly from the New Zealand Principals' Federation Moot of 2004 where the Secretary for Education when outlining possible steps for improvement in schools noted that, "a system that is networked and collaborative," (Fitchett 2004) as one of five important ideas he was suggesting.

Mentoring is the act of supporting someone who perceives that there is something to receive from the mentor. "Historically the term, 'mentor' has been used to denote a wise and trusted guide, adviser or counselor," (Hobson 2005, p. 25). Mentoring is not a one way relationship but generally there is one more dominant or more knowledgeable partner in the relationship that the other part will defer to in some area or areas of expertise. Mentoring is often but not always informal and often arises from situations where people work together and establish a relationship. In contrast coaching is a deliberate act, where there is a learning relationship between professionals focussed on developing new learning together,

(Robertson 2005, p. 24). Coaching is beyond mere conversations and is a relationship between peers where they both expect to make gains in knowledge, it is done with, not to.

In the leadership programmes supported by the Danforth Foundation, “students were encouraged to work with as many mentor leaders as possible,” (Grosso 1993, p.11) in order to widen their knowledge base and get the benefit of the many and varied experiences of the different leaders. In Wilson’s (1993, p. 231) summary of the same programmes, he comments on the value of networks and in particular their value as protection from professional isolation, and as an essential chance for professional dialogue and professional challenge in a safe environment. When matched with the views of Senge and Demming cited in Wilson (1993, p. 225) that the role of dialogue is important in the construction of knowledge and meaning, networking becomes even more important for potential and aspiring principals as a group. Littky and Schen (2002, p. 89) who were reporting on their very individualised principal preparation programme also reported a heavy reliance amongst aspiring principals on mentoring and modelling.

Clearly the importance of networking is well established in the minds of many practising and aspiring principals. Robertson (2005) takes networking to another level with her work on coaching, where the aim is for, “(at least) two people who work together on set professional goals and achieve them” (Robertson 2005, p. 24). While how to coach and be coached may form a part of the pre-principalship professional development, it could also be a part of the possible delivery system of a pre-principalship programme of some kind. Possible questions in this project which may add some information will be:

- How much experience if any did participants have of mentoring or coaching?
- Who were the key people who coached or mentored them?
- What were the effects?

Literature research into the effectiveness of mentoring for newly appointed heads carried out for NCSL in England, has implications for pre-principalship mentoring as well. It indicates that benefits included psychological support, improved

professional skills such as problem solving or technical expertise and the value of the mentor as a resource broker. Limitations of time, the importance of the qualities of the mentor and their training were all noted as important areas for consideration in setting up quality mentoring relationships. The authors noted the evidence for mentoring is, “based predominantly on the perceptions of those that have been involved,” (Hobson 2005, p. 39) and that there is a need for this to be validated. Their review found the evidence base is limited and inconclusive in relation to mentoring and coaching and went on to acknowledge the need for further research in this area, (Hobson 2005). This would appear to be an area of more recent development in school leadership.

However, in the same year as Hobson’s comment was published, *Coaching Leadership* by Robertson (2005) was released. In this work, coaching as a deliberate professional activity, is suggested as it develops, “a framework for the development of collaborative action research processes that lead to personal, professional and institutional transformation,” (Robertson 2005, p. 73). The work has a research base, in contrast to Hobson’s criticism, which includes a study of 67 school leaders spread over several years. It pointed to significant benefits for school leaders from coaching. Further reading of Robertson’s work highlights the deliberate strategies and actions that she sees are needed for coaching in the educational leadership arena to be successful. This research was done within the New Zealand context therefore the insights and ideas are particularly relevant for actual and aspiring New Zealand principals.

The coaching work of Robertson (2005), chiefly rests on three main pieces of research, all qualitative work at different times and with different school leaders. Its strengths are that the three studies came up with some very similar findings. There were a large number of participants across the three studies, sixty seven in all from the primary, intermediate and secondary sectors. A variety of data gathering techniques were used across the three studies, shadowing, individual and group interviews and surveys, oral and written reflections, interactive interviews, observations and examinations of records.(Robertson 2005, pp31-35) A perceived weakness is that the work was done with a particularly highly motivated group of people, those that were prepared to take part, and it may be

rather more difficult to set up coaching in the same way with other groups. It could be argued though that principals as a group tend to be motivated people anyway by the nature of the job that they have chosen and so these groups would not be necessarily atypical.

## **Conclusion**

As has been illustrated by the variety of programmes reviewed in this literature search there is not a unanimous view of what professional development programmes for potential and aspiring principals should contain. While there are commonalities there are also differences. Main content themes of mission, vision and transformational leadership, learning and teaching or instructional leadership, human leadership and management and resource management were almost universal, however emphasis and treatment of each of them varied. The published research concentrates on what makes a good principal or head-teacher but not on whether current pre-principalship developments are in fact effective in equipping this group to move forward into principals positions. The exception to this was the research into the Scottish Qualification for Headship which did indicate that there was real value in that context. More time was needed to see if in fact it was going to be a system wide impact that was being hoped for. There was additionally some evidence that there is perceived value in leadership programmes in Victoria, Australia. In a survey of 1,344 teachers in Victorian Government primary and secondary schools, fifty eight percent of respondents indicated they had taken part in leadership programmes. Teachers, assistant principals and principals who had participated in these programmes indicated higher levels of satisfaction with their job than other respondents (Lacey 2001, p. 8). While not conclusive in terms of effectiveness, it did highlight that teachers see value in leadership programmes. While this research piece, along with the work from Scotland does indicate some value, there is still a considerable gap in our knowledge that this project can help begin to fill.

## **Chapter Three**

### **Methodology**

#### **Introduction**

This is a qualitative interpretive study. “The qualitative researcher attempts to gather evidence that will reveal qualities of life reflecting the multiple realities of specific educational settings from participants’ perspectives,” (Burns 2000, p. 388) and this study was aimed at gaining insights into the realities of the participants in relation to what they saw as the useful elements of their pre-principalship preparation. The use of a qualitative approach in this study makes it possible to gain in depth recounts of experiences and explanations of both actions and feelings that would not be possible using quantitative methods. The in depth experiences of the participants in the time that they were aspiring principals were the vital data this research required.

The value of a qualitative study is in it being a way to, “unravel informal and unstructured links and processes in organisations,” (Burns 2000, p. 391) and as there is no widespread formal structure in the New Zealand situation for pre-principal development it is these informal kinds of links that this research endeavoured to discover. The path to principalship in New Zealand appears to be a very individual one with research into experienced principals reporting that it was, “holistic and cumulative, consisting of his/her foundational, experiential and intentional learning contextualised within his/her particular school/community environment,” (Townsend 1999, p. 129). This showed that principal learning is complex and qualitative research methodology is a way looking for answers to complex questions that include both objective and subjective data, such as feelings, values and motivations. It should be noted that there is still a strong drive by myself to provide research rigour within the methodology.

#### **Qualitative Research**

Qualitative research is research which allows a way of reflecting multiple realities from the participants’ perspectives. Qualitative research has been, “likened to the

metaphor of the lantern,” (Shank 2004, p. 49) where the light is thrown to allow the researcher to see what was not clear before. This means that the research should have sufficient depth to, “to discern matters that only reveal themselves under careful scrutiny,” (Shank 2004, p. 49). However Shank and Villella (2004) add that it is not enough for the qualitative researcher to shed light on a new aspect or idea. They must go further and investigate in sufficient depth and with sufficient interpretation provided for others to also make sense of the aspects now illuminated. In this study where the experiences of aspiring principals were being probed to ascertain those that were useful, it was found that often it was the follow up comments and the after thoughts added that gave the necessary depth of investigation. For example, when questioned about study some participant’s initial reply was to say that they hadn’t done much or nothing, but then further discussion brought to light quite a lot of study activity. This data may not have come through in for example a questionnaire where the initial response would probably stand. Qualitative research is especially appropriate in the educational contexts because they are environments in which the power of the context is so important. “In education, broad theories and ecological generalisations often fail because they cannot incorporate the enormous number or determine the power of the contexts within which humans find themselves,” (Berliner 2002, p. 18). The different contexts that the research participants of this study came from meant they have had different experiences. By using a qualitative approach, these were captured and they have helped to illuminate the research knowledge.

The participants in this study came from both rural and urban settings and have had wide experience collectively in both. Additionally, the participants represent a wide range of educational experience, covering the full range of the New Zealand compulsory schooling sector in many different schools. As Berliner (2002) notes when commenting on educational research, “our science forces us to deal with particular problems where local knowledge is needed,”(Berliner 2002, p. 19). and he goes on to advocate for qualitative methods as important tools for educational research. The contexts that the participants came from affected their individual needs in preparing for principalship, using a qualitative approach allowed the impact of these very different contexts to be explored and their effects noted. Qualitative methods allow researchers to deal with the complexities of context

and the complexities of human interactions. Human interactions and contexts are complex and the results of qualitative research are not necessarily simple explanations. Rather they are, “richer explanations,” (Shank 2004, p. 5) which are giving more insight into the complex areas being studied. Qualitative research methodology is a particularly appropriate method when working face-to-face with participants as in this study and it accepts that human behaviour happens within a context (Cohen 2000, p. 21). In this study this methodology was particularly valuable when the emotions of the participants were reinforcing the points that they were making, an aspect that would be missing from quantitative research.

Educational settings that potential and aspiring principals work in are extremely complex environments. Using a qualitative methodology has enabled them to convey the very different experiences they have had which were important to understanding the elements that the research aims to discover. As with most qualitative work, this study will mean a form of partnership between the researcher and the participants. It was essential that the research was conducted in an ethical manner and that, “readers understand their actions, stances, and efforts,” (Shank 2004, p. 7). It was important that a good relationship was formed to enable the participants to feel comfortable in talking about their experiences and they were forthcoming when being interviewed. Being a researcher who was also an experienced principal myself helped with that partnership, at the same time readers of this research need to be clear about my stances, even though I attempted to put them aside. Accordingly a self study was conducted in order to clarify my own thoughts, inform the readers of this research and allow myself as the researcher to more readily put my biases and preferences aside. This is found later in this chapter

The choice of sample is an important aspect of any research project. In this study I used purposive sampling. Purposive sampling involves “a sample chosen for a specific purpose,” (Cohen 2000, p. 103). It was purposeful, in keeping with the needs of the research project, because I wished to target participants who are or have recently been, in the group described as potential and aspiring principals. This purposive sampling, “enables the full scope of issues to be explored,” (Cohen 2000, p. 138). The choice of potential participants for this sample was made easier

by their participation together in a programme that clearly had them identified as potential or aspiring principals. It is anticipated that because they have a demonstrated interest in this area through voluntary participation in a pilot programme that they are more likely to have an interest in pre-principalship development.

## **The Interpretive Paradigm**

The interpretive paradigm is used extensively within education research,

*“containing such qualitative methodological approaches as phenomenology, ethnography, and hermeneutics, it is characterized by a belief in a socially constructed, subjectively-based reality, one that is influenced by culture and history. Nonetheless it still retains the ideals of researcher objectivity, and researcher as passive collector and expert interpreter of data.,”*

(O'Brien 1998). In this study, as the researcher, I strive to meet these ideals of objectivity however within the interpretive paradigm there is a view that, “knowledge construction is involving a relative interaction between knower and known,” which means that the researcher , “rather than adopt a position of omniscient observer,” (Wilding 2005, p. 98) rather must acknowledge their own position as well.

In doing so, I need to acknowledge that as a principal of twenty plus years experience prior to starting this study, I saw great value in both experience and study in assisting principals to carry out their job. I had been personally concerned at the lack of academic knowledge and or qualification of many of my colleagues and more worryingly, their lack of interest in improving this. I also hoped for more positive views from the next generation of principals. I had also been concerned at the relative educational inexperience of some new principals and I had hoped to see more support for ensuring that they have a basic level of knowledge and experience before launching into a principal’s position. As the researcher, while acknowledging the above, I then endeavoured to put this position aside and be as objective as possible in my work.

In the interpretive paradigm, “reality is constructed as subjective and contextually bound,” (Wilding 2005, p. 98). The initial interviews made it very clear that the context of the individual participants and their schools made for very different views of their realities.

“It also places the participant as the experiencer in the position of expert and the investigator in the position of learner,” (Wilding 2005, p. 99). In this study, where the participants hold the recent experiences in relation to aspiring to be principals, they are very much the expert and as the researcher, my experiences of being an aspiring principal are over twenty years in the past. At that time there were very different systems in place, with the Education Boards being the employer and the local community having virtually no voice in appointments. Consequently, they relate not only to a historical position but one that precedes the sweeping 1989 education reforms in New Zealand and so in many respects their context was very different to that which now prevails.

## **Methods**

The data collection method chosen for this study was to use a structured open-ended interview with each of the participants. “The major advantage of the interview is its adaptability,” (Bell 1999, p. 133). Using an interview methodology allowed extensive opportunities for personalisation of responses, opportunities for additional questioning especially for clarification, and had an excellent rate of return. “The focus of this type of interview is obtaining rich and informative explanations,” (Munroe 2001, p. 1) and it was this rich information that can provide the valuable insights that my research project was seeking. It allowed participants to describe their experiences they perceive as useful in their ongoing development with some detail. The major disadvantages of the method which include limits on reliability and number of sources of error will be reduced by using a standardised protocol (Cohen 2000, p. 269). “The advantage of a focussed interview is that a framework is established beforehand and so analysis is greatly simplified,” (Bell 1999, p. 138). It is apparent from the literature review that there are a number of themes that can be explored as well as the themes that will arise from the interviews themselves. It was important that as the researcher, I did not

restrict the interviews and possibly cut off access to important themes that were not evident from the literature.

There were several additional reasons for choosing this method. First, I needed to allow the task time to be reasonable for the participants. They are all busy professionals and finding appropriate times was difficult. In spite of the fact that the participants were all willing to assist, we found great difficulty matching free diary times on many occasions. The second reason for choosing structured open ended interviews was to keep the variation between interviews minimised but without allowing the participants to be restricted by the interview protocol. I was concerned that the participants were to be informants, not respondents and so the interviews needed to be open enough to allow this. The third additional reason was to enable the use of both face to face and telephone interviews (where geographic location makes face to face interviews impracticable) with minimal variation between the two methods. The participants were in fact spread across a significant proportion of the North Island and I had to use a mixture of both personal interview and telephone interview.

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data began during the collection process because, “early analysis reduces the problem of data overload,” (Cohen 2000, p. 147). Delamont (1992, p. 151) also states, “ the most important thing is to not allow material to pile up unanalysed or even worse unread.” By beginning the data analysis early, it allowed the analysis to continue throughout the process of the research rather than it being an entirely separate phase. The application of grounded theory suggests that the theory emerges from the data (Dick 2006) and furthermore, “grounded theory is based on the notion that the researcher is informed and ready to make decisions about individual pieces of data,” (Huehls 2005, p. 330) a statement which emphasises the importance of the knowledge that the researcher brings to the data. However as the researcher is looking for the theory to arise from the data it is also important that they approach it with an open mind and a self knowledge of any existing assumptions. It was a case of keeping my own twenty years experience as a principal and my memories of the time around taking up

my first principal's position in mind , then reminding myself that they were not the relevant data, it was the participants responses that were. I had to endeavour to not let my experiences colour my interpretation. It was with this in mind and after reading other research which included self study that I decided to include one which would be helpful for anyone reading this work to see any biases I may have inadvertently included.

## **Self Study**

I considered it important to include a short self study in order to give readers an outline of myself as the researcher and so some insight into any unintended biases or influences that I might have brought to the study. "The sources of bias are the characteristics of the interviewer, the characteristics of the respondent, and the substantive content of the questions," (Cohen 2000, p. 121). In addressing the first of these as the interviewer, I made every endeavour to put myself there as a researcher first. However in every interview research situation , "it is inevitable that the researcher will have some influence on the interviewee and, thereby on the data," (Cohen 2000, p. 121). Keeping this in mind here is an outline to assist readers with detecting this bias.

I come from a family of teachers and principals, not only my father but a number of extended family members have been principals in New Zealand going back several generations. I have been principal of five schools in New Zealand, starting with a two teacher school of fifty pupils through to my current school at time of writing of 670 pupils plus and a staff of over 50. I have taught in the north of the country to the bottom of the south and many areas of in between. I have been lucky enough to have the full support of my family both close and extended throughout my career.

I have been involved in ongoing formal study since completing my teacher training. I completed my Bachelors degree via summer school shortly after starting teaching in 1980. I then completed a Diploma of Recreation and Sport in 1986, a Diploma of Education Management in 1995 and have been working on my Masters for the last three years. Additionally, I have been involved in

numerous informal study and learning situations. I believe in lifelong learning I try to consciously model this.

My father was a big influence on my values and attitudes towards my job. He valued and modelled hard work, fairness, attention to detail and high value placed on staff and children. He epitomised to me, from my perspective, servant leadership. He did so sometimes to the point of it affecting his own health. I adopted many of these values and have both consciously and unconsciously tried to emulate them.

My idea of attention to detail is not necessarily how it is always perceived. At times colleagues have accused me of being a pedantic person, usually with an expletive, which is always a wake up call. Nevertheless, I do consider getting jobs right important, especially if not doing so will make the job come around again. Inevitably, with a strong work ethic, I have always put in significant hours on the job and regard this as a necessary part of doing it well, although I also work consciously at ensuring I have breaks and family time too. I have strong beliefs about the rights of children, and those with special education needs in particular. Each one of my last three schools has wound up being a 'magnet school' for those sorts of children. I believe some of this support for children who may be classed as different comes from my perception of my fathers values of believing in the importance of the value of all people. I work consciously at a positive culture for my staff and school in the belief that it promotes positive learning outcomes for everyone as well as making it a better place to work.

Like many principals in New Zealand, both before and after the 1989 Tomorrows Schools reforms, I left my position as a scale A teacher and with no training to be a principal, no induction or any real preparation and I was a principal at the start of the next new term. The feeling of standing in the driveway holding a pile of mail, as the chairman of the school committee walked away from me and I was thinking that I don't know what to do with any of this, is still strongly with me. While I survived and grew to love the job of being a principal, I saw many fine teachers who did not and were lost, not only to principalship but in many cases to teaching. I have always had a belief that there had to be a better way for principals

to start and for them to be supported before they start so that they are a little more ready to cope.

As the interview data was analysed, themes appeared which assisted me to make sense of the data and some were more common than others. In time, domains (Cohen 2000, p. 149) did emerge which will allowed the data to be grouped and then linkages between them identified. Theory said it is important that disconfirming cases are considered and grounded theory suggests that the theory should be changed rather than the cases ignored, (Cohen 2000, p. 150). Shank and Vilella (2004, p. 8) emphasise the importance of the disconfirming pieces of data and assert that the, “surprising pieces of data are the most valuable but they are often the most rare,” because it is from these pieces of data that new insights and new explanations can arise. The initial analysis was very tentative but with time it did firm up by a process of, “matching, contrasting, aggregating, comparing and ordering notes made,” (Cohen 2000, p. 148) until a firmer theory was formulated. Each case was then matched against the theory formulated and the fit of the facts to the theory, or otherwise, was confirmed. When the fit was not good then the theory had to be reformulated or if the case was to be excluded then reasons for the exclusion will be required. Over time the data required the researcher, “to continue to sift and rework the list, comparing over and over again, until everything fit without being forced,” (Huehls 2005, p. 333). The final step in the data analysis was to use the ideas to generate higher level concepts which may be useful to inform future practice or further study, (Huehls 2005).

## **Chapter Four**

### **The Research Process**

#### **Introduction**

The research proposal was developed early in 2006 and refined with the help of my initial supervisor, Associate Professor Jan Robertson. Ethics Committee approval was obtained (Appendix 1) and the literature search, which was already underway, continued.

This literature search was in many ways a continuation of my interest in pre-principalship development and I had been reading around the general topic of principal preparation since starting my MEd. Leadership. The difference was that it was now focussed on the specifics of my research rather than the more general focus of the previous three years.

The literature search has highlighted that while there is some research into pre-principalship preparation programmes, there is almost a dearth of research into how effective they are. It is surprising that within the United States, where there has been a long tradition of pre-principalship preparation through formal programmes, that there has been little research into their effectiveness. That is not to say that there hasn't been criticism, there has been, some of it quite vehement (Levine 2005). There is quite a large body of evidence which highlights the importance of the principal to a good school (Ramsay 1992; Gamage 2004), but there is almost none into how to best prepare principals for that role.

The possible participants in the research were the recent participants in the pilot aspiring and potential principals professional development course run by the University of Waikato Educational Leadership Centre. In consultation with my adviser, it was decided that this research would be with the primary participants only as this is my area of interest and where I work. Associate Professor Robertson approached the possible participants on my behalf and from the eighteen possible people, eight responded with an affirmative reply. Further discussion with my supervisor reduced this down to six. Two of the respondents

had no intention of becoming principals, whereas all the rest were either principals or had some experience of being a relieving principal.

### **The Sample**

As outlined earlier the sample was of six people, all of whom had attended the Potential and Aspiring Principals pilot run by the University of Waikato and all of except one had principals positions (newly won) the exception has had experience as acting principal.

There were five females and one male in the sample. The age range of the sample was from thirties to fifties with a median of thirty five. The schools that the participants in the study currently work in were varied and range in size from U1 to U5 with rolls of 50 to 350 children. The years of teaching experience of the participants ranges from ten to thirty five years with a median of fourteen and a half years. Participants have taught in a number of schools, collectively forty seven, with a range from three schools to fifteen different schools. It should be noted that the two participants who had taught in more than ten schools made the point that several had been only as a reliever either short or long term. The participants had taught in a variety of settings, urban, small town and rural with decile labels varying between 1 and 10.

When questioned about the length of time that they had aspired to be a principal three of the six replied from when they had first started teaching, the others were relatively recent in their time of motivation. In view of some of their comments, it would be of interest and use for another study (it is beyond the scope of this work) to probe this further and on a wider scale to ascertain how this may affect principal recruitment in the future.

Three of the participants had done study at post-graduate level and the other three had done study at undergraduate level. All had done informal study in various forms. The topics for study that the participants listed were wide and varied, for example; Te Reo Maori, leadership, visual language, special needs, education management, marketing. All participants indicated that they had been useful in

their current jobs as well as some previous. The impression was formed that this group valued learning in any forms.

Prior to becoming principals, the group had all held positions that could be termed middle management, from leading curriculum teams through to leading teaching syndicates as well as in several cases holding deputy principal's positions.

### **Interviewing First Round**

In mid July 2006 I conducted the first interview which, like all the interviews, was recorded onto my laptop computer and then transcribed into a word document. Following the first interview, I listened to the result checking carefully for my own contribution as my supervisor advised. This was to ensure that I was being as open ended as possible with my questioning and working at getting the participants to tell me as much of their story as possible. It was important to ensure that we give, "freedom to allow the respondent to talk about what is of central significance to him or her rather than the interviewer," (Bell 1999, p. 138). By listening to my initial interview, I was able to detect where I was talking too much or leading the interviewee rather than letting them tell their story with minimum input.

The question outline firstly asked the respondents to outline some background details, gender, age band etc. and then their current thoughts on principalship. Questions were asked to get respondents to talk about their timing and motivations to aspire to principalship, professional and non-professional experiences that helped and influenced them, their experiences of study both formal and informal, their thoughts and experiences about study and their thoughts and experiences of mentoring and coaching followed. The final question was aimed at getting respondents to talk about any other aspects, experiences or ideas that they thought impacted on their aspirations to principalship. (See appendix 2 for full details)

The interviews were arranged for the following week and I conducted them all during this week except one who, due to personal circumstances, was unable to

participate at the original time arranged. This interview was completed three weeks later. The process was both interesting and challenging. The first challenge was moving myself from being a practitioner to being a researcher. The researcher needs, “to produce valid explanations,” (Labaree 2003, p. 17) rather than trying to find immediate solutions to problems raised, (Labaree 2003). This was very important (and difficult for myself as a twenty plus year principal) as it was the respondents’ information that was vital, not my own thoughts, reactions or possible solutions which I needed to suppress and to just listen and record. During the course of the interviews, many problems with which I was familiar were raised and solutions to these had to be put to one side so I did not sidetrack the process. At the same time, it was important that I formed a relationship with the respondents quickly so that I had enough trust to get good rich data. I felt that I was successful in doing this based on the easy flow of thoughts by the end of each interview from the respondents.

There were several surprises for myself as a new researcher at this level. The first and very positive surprise for me was how willingly and honestly the respondents talked about their experiences, thoughts and motivations. The second surprise was the complexity of responses and the way that respondents went from one idea to the next and back again across the different areas that I had questions to pose for them. This has posed some subsequent challenges in organising the data for interpretation. The third surprise, and challenge, was the time it took to actually physically type up the respondents transcripts. I knew it would take time but was woefully short in my estimation compared to the time that it actually took. The very positive aspect was the value in hearing again the thoughts of each of the participants as I did so.

### **Initial Analysis**

Along with the typing of the transcripts, I was making the first analysis of the data. This was recognition of the importance of ensuring the early analysis of data to avoid data overload (Cohen 2000, p. 147). The initial analysis highlighted several apparently common themes as listed below:

- Networking

- Modelling
- Attendance at the Aspiring and Potential Principals pilot
- Family support
- Mentoring.

The resulting transcription documents were then returned to the participants for checking. The checking process was to allow the respondents to review what they said, clear up any misconstructions I may have put on their words and allow them to remove anything that they subsequently felt should be deleted. This was partly for accuracy and partly to satisfy the need for ethical conduct of the research as the ownership of the data doesn't pass to myself until it is in analysed form.

“Interviews have an ethical dimension, they concern interpersonal interaction and produce information about the human condition,” (Cohen 2000, p. 292) . Keeping the ethical dimensions very much in mind, it was particularly important that participants had the opportunity for review and it was specified in the ethics application (see appendix). As it turned out, none of the participants wanted anything reworded or removed, although several expressed rueful concern at their ability to waffle! It was after transcribing one accurately, that I realised how difficult it was to read with all the ums and verbal space fillers included.

Following that, I decided to lightly edit and remove most of the ums and errs which made it easier for the participants to review and easier for myself to read and make sense of without losing any of the sense or flavour of the interview.

## **Interviewing Second Round**

Following the initial phase, and a rather more in depth analysis of the initial interview data, the respondents were followed up with a second interview at which I asked them to comment on the common themes that had arisen. These themes were:

- The importance of modelling, both positive and negative
- The importance of networking
- The timing of attendance at the Aspiring and Potential Principals' Programme

- The value of informal mentoring
- The importance of family support.

Each of the participants was asked to give their thoughts about each of these areas. The transcripts were again returned to the participants to once again allow them to be checked for accuracy, remove anything that they didn't want included or felt was inaccurate or misconstrued and make any clarifications required.

## **Data Analysis**

The analysis of the data took a number of forms. Initially, the data was transcribed into word documents. This was a chance to review again what had been said at the same time. The next step was to reread each of the transcripts to get a feel for the data as it was emerging. Notations were made along the margins of the printed transcripts as I reviewed each one, looking for common themes which would eventually lead to categories arising from the data. Each of the transcripts was then reread again and further notations were made.

From these, the common themes were developed which then led me back to the second round of interviews at which I asked each of the participants to give their thoughts on each of the themes. The questions were formulated in the following way.

**One of the common themes coming from the first round of interviews was  
..... What are your thoughts?**

In this way I was hoping for, and got either confirming or disconfirming answers and evidence to support their point of view. Participants, as in the first round, were more than happy to give their thoughts and most, without prompting, backed their thoughts with examples. There was a surprising level of agreement from all the participants about the importance of the themes that were raised, even from those who perhaps didn't raise or glanced over one or more of the ideas in their first interview.

The analysis of the interviews continued and in addition to the previously described techniques, a combination of the use of highlighters, and computer cut and paste to allow for grouping and categorising of data was also used. The data from the second round of interviews was added to that from the first round and the analysis continued. As the data analysis continued, the themes began to 'firm up' and categories began to emerge. It was from these categories the main propositions as outlined in the next chapter were derived.

## **Conclusion**

The research process described here was fitted in around the work schedules of the participants and myself. Everybody involved had very busy schedules and the process through to completion was a little disjointed in time. The common themes began to emerge fairly early in the process and firmed up more and more as the process went on. At the end of each of the second interviews I asked each of the participants if there was anything else they wished to add. The extra comments made were a continuation of the confirmation of the themes already raised and no new ones were introduced.

## **Chapter Five**

### **Findings**

#### **Introduction**

The main findings of this study are set out in the categories that were generated by the research; pre-principalship programmes; mentoring, modelling, networking, family support and study. Propositions are generated within each category and then each category is discussed around the propositions generated.

#### **Category 1**

##### **Attendance at a targeted pre-principalship programme.**

Within the literature search there was much evidence found of different pre-principalship programmes across many countries, (Bush 2002; Hallinger 2003b; Huber 2004). In many parts of the United States attendance at a pre-principalship programme along with accreditation from it was a prerequisite for being appointed to principals' positions. There is however very little evidence of research into their effectiveness, (Lashway 2003; Strachan 2003). As noted in the sample description for this research, all of the participants had attended a potential and aspiring principals' pilot programme (ASP) prior to the research.

##### **Proposition : Attendance at a targeted pre-principalship programme is a valuable tool in pre-principalship preparation.**

Every one of the participants agreed that the programme that they had attended contained many worthwhile features. It was brought up in different comments when discussing a number of areas of pre-principalship experience and all saw it as worth repeating, "They are running ASP again, I think that's really good," participant 2 (P2), reflected the feelings of all the participants. Participant 6 (P6) commented, "I do think that ASP was useful. It really was stage one of two," when reflecting on his professional learning journey that led to a first principals position. When asked for additional comments about factors in pre-principalship development replies such as a perceived need for, "Having more opportunities for

aspiring principals,” P2 and, “It (pre principalship development) is an area the MOE seriously have to look at,” participant 4 (P4) were received. The literature search revealed a dearth of research into the effectiveness of pre-principalship programmes. This research has identified that from the participants perspective there is considerable value in the programme that they undertook. However as outlined below there were considerable differences in the perceived value of ASP.

**Proposition : Different aspiring principals found value in different aspects of programmes that they had attended.**

It was evident throughout the interviews that different participants saw different features as being the most valuable from their experiences of ASP. For some, the contacts that they made with ‘like minded’ people were the most important element. This contact with other participants and the contact with the people who were providing the content they found to be motivational. “With ASP what I really liked was getting together with like minded people and sharing experiences and things, for the first time verbalising where you are aiming,” (P2,) and, “It was neat to sit in a room with people and say this is where I’m heading and not have people look at you sideways and say, Oh Really!” (P2). The participants were commenting on enjoying being part of a community where the pursuit of principalship was an accepted and expected outcome of their professional activity, and they were very appreciative of it, “It was just great for me, woke me up and affirmed lots of things too. It was great talking to people who had just been, were or were just about to be again principals, and they loved the job, loved being a principal,” participant 6 (P6), and, “It was inspiring, it was really motivational!” (P4).

For some participants, the value of ASP lay in the knowledge content both theoretical and practical that they acquired. This knowledge about theories of leadership and about the practicalities of principalship was gained from the participants study, discussions and observations. Different participants had differing viewpoints. “I really enjoyed the Aspiring Principals course because I had actually seen it in other Principals so by then I knew what I didn’t know or I

had more idea I guess about what I didn't know," participant 3 (P3). At the very practical level "I liked looking at other schools through ASP," participant 5 (P5), and, "It filled in some gaps for me," (P3), whereas for some they would have liked more practical elements, "What's missing in the programmes that are coming through is the practical element of being a principal, you need the theory but you have to balance it with the practical," participant 1 (P1). This comment was a reflection of a participant who had already, prior to ASP, a wide theoretical knowledge and a large number of pressing practical problems recently inherited along with their new position.

The theoretical aspects were seen as valuable by participants too, "ASP just put the thinking together," (P5), and, "We got a taste of really important learning...The community of learners idea is important," (P6), additionally, "ASP was good stuff even if we weren't preparing for principalship. We could have gone into some in a lot more depth," (P5), and, "It made you think about different things," (P2). The background experiences of the sample, from people who had done extensive study of leadership theory to those admitted that they hadn't done much for some time, if ever, appeared to be the reason for the disparate views on the theoretical and practical aspects of ASP.

**Proposition: Timing in the career is important but varies from person to person.**

A number of participants commented on the timing and for example noted, "ASP was the right timing for me. I liked that I was shoulder tapped, it was important to me," (P6). More importantly perhaps the timing was right because, "My confidence was built up and the belief was that I could do the job. If I waited I might chicken out and I didn't want that for me," (P5). This showed how the timing may need to be recognised by others, not just the potential principals themselves. For at least one person the timing was so right because, "If you say you'll be ready one day, you never will be. So apply now. ...That was the turning point for me being part of that (ASP) programme," (P4). For another, "The thing you come out of ASP with is a lot more confidence to apply for jobs," (P5). So, while timing was important, and the participants referred to some attendees who

opted out with comments that it wasn't for them or perhaps it wasn't the right time for them, there was an element of the timing was right because it pushed and encouraged some people into taking the next step and applying for and becoming a principal. "ASP made me realise I was ready, some stuff you only know when you do the job," (P1).

While there were different values put on different parts of the programme by different people the one thing that they had in common when referring to ASP was that it was perceived to be worthwhile in their path to principalship. They would all like to see it or something like it, running again. For several participants, the pilot programme was the final thing needed to make them take the plunge to becoming a principal.

## **Category 2**

### **Usefulness of Mentoring**

Participants reported a number of different experiences of mentoring, some through ASP, some through the first time principals programme that most were becoming involved in and some through arrangements that traced back over a number of years. They had varying levels of involvement in both formal and informal systems. The participants all saw value in the mentoring process but had not always had positive experiences of it. Nevertheless they could all see its positive side, as one participant said, "I thought that it could work well as a new principal, having someone working closely with you giving the chance to work on something not going well or you didn't know about or weren't quite sure what to do. You could solve those problems before they got too far down the track or before it became awkward to fix up or correct. It would have to be someone you were quite happy to work with and you could trust," (P2).

**Proposition: Mentoring appears to be most useful when the potential principal organises their mentors personally on an informal needs basis.**

Participants were adamant that the most important aspect of mentoring for it to work successfully was the value of the relationship. “The important challenge is finding some one you can work with and trust,” (P2), and, “It depends on the relationship whether it works or not,” (P3), and finally, “While my formal one was set up it has really been an informal relationship and it as been excellent, I’m not sure whether XX would approve!” (P5). The informal was highlighted for one participant as being more important, “because you have targeted or seen people with skills that you want and you trust them, you can pick and choose,” (P4). The participants were very clear and unanimous about the need for an excellent relationship.

With the formal mentoring setup, there were comments about the difficulties of establishing and maintaining contact with mentors who had been arranged, “XX was my mentor, he’s wonderful however he’s a hard person to get hold of... I was sad it was a bad run and there was lots to offer,” (P5). For another participant, “the mentor I had was really nice but so un-me, her school was the opposite of mine... I found the whole process contrived so rang XX and said, “You’re my mentor now,” and she said OK,” (P1). The view of informal versus formal arrangements was covered by the comments of one participant who stated, “When I have a sticky issue I would go to (informal mentor), they would give me their view based on their experience and knowledge and be happy to say this is how I see it and not worry if I saw it differently,” (P5). The interesting thing is that this person has a good relationship with the mentor formally assigned to her via the first time principals course but goes back to the unofficial mentor who provided support and encouragement and guidance in the years prior to her becoming a principal when things are difficult. This preference to take the difficult issues to the informal mentor that the participant has had an ongoing relationship with, was echoed in the other interviews several times. Some formal mentoring arrangements set up through the programmes the participants had been involved in had worked very well, “My mentor was a wonderful principal, the relationship was hugely beneficial and continues to be,” (P4).

Overall, the participants recognised and acknowledged the value that their various mentoring activities had contributed to their pre-principalship preparation and their continuing ongoing development as well.

### **Category 3**

#### **The power of modelling**

All the participants commented on the powerful influence that other principals had on them, even right from when they were beginning teachers. As was commented by one, “experiences of principals is what leads you into principalship. There have been principals I have admired for the way they have worked with people and there have been principals where I have thought I could do a better job than that,” (P6).

**Proposition: The models other principals provide are one of the most powerful forces affecting aspiring and new principals. Positive and negative models have equal power to affect aspiring and new principals.**

This modelling described was both positive and negative and even though sometimes the participants were talking about principals with whom they had worked some time back, their recollections and assessments of the impacts of these principals were still very clear in their minds. In some cases, the participants were commenting on their desire to emulate the principal that they were telling me about, or the valuable lessons that the principal’s actions had left with them. In other cases, they were commenting on how they were very definite about their negative view of the principal and their desire to do better or differently.

Some of the negative role models elicited comment such as, “As a teacher I could see how things were being done and thought I could do better,” (P1) and, “I probably started to think about being a principal when I was even a beginning teacher working with a principal that I thought wasn’t particularly good and so thought not much point in moaning about it, get in there and do it yourself if you

think that you can do better,” (P2). These people were motivated quite strongly by their belief that they had the ability and skill to do the job themselves. The negative role models appeared to trigger their self belief.

A number of the comments made were quite scathing, the tones of voice as much as the comments reflected a degree of frustration and anger that was quite strong. “I watched as idiots got principals jobs and thought well if they can do it I can do it!” (P2) and, “I worked for one that modelled what a principal shouldn’t do and I took all that on board too,” (P4). “Shocking models show how important the principal is. The whole tone of the school comes from the principal,” (P3). These negative principal models had a powerful effect on these participants. They remembered the negative at least as clearly as the positive and the emotional impact was very strong. It was clearly an important part of the learning curve that the participants had been through. It was perhaps summed up most succinctly with a final comment “I clearly saw what I didn’t want to be, that’s really powerful,” (P4). With such a powerful effect these models cannot be ignored. It is suggested that pre-principalship development could use them as a motivating factor for good practice.

In contrast to these negative models, some principals were seen as models to value, “it was empowering, if you had a problem you really knew you could go to the principal and he would not put you down,” (P3). Some participants made conscious effort to emulate their models, “the principal I worked for was inspiring, I tried to take on board what he did and emulate it,” (P 4), and, “I worked with a good principal and we worked very well together and I was happy to do that,” (P6), and even more powerfully, “When you have worked with a really good principal that is the person I strive to be, it gives me a focus and a model to work from,” (P2). There were examples where the principal talked with the participants in a deliberate way about their actions, “XXX, I used her modelling as a model for myself,” (P5), using modelling as a deliberate strategy for professional growth of the aspiring principal.

The comments of the participants reflected their very definite judgements about the principals they had worked for or alongside and the consequent lessons that

that they had taken from them. They reflected the comments that Professor Geoff Southworth made to the 1999 New Zealand Principals Conference when he said that teachers have a fascination with watching their head-teachers, echoed by Anne Giles when she said, “The power of the principal in providing the model is not to be underestimated,” (Giles 1998, p. 16). This research confirms this power and flags it as an important aspect of pre-principalship preparation.

## **Category 4**

### **Networking**

The participants commented extensively on the value of their networks. Networks were defined earlier in this thesis as the establishment of relationships with others who have at least one common purpose or aim. They may be small or large groups and may be part of a formal grouping, such as a professional association or as informal as those who attended the teacher education institution. Other writers used similar definitions for example, “an active, systematic process of meeting people or exchanging information to get things done more efficiently... A network is the interpersonal communications pattern that results from the process of linking with others,” (ncchildcare 2004).

Networking was a theme that came through nearly every time the research participants talked about difficulties or problems and how they solved them. As these people are almost all in new positions as first time principals, they are dealing with many new and complex issues, usually with the addition of being in a new community and school. By tapping into their existing networks as well as starting to build or build on, these people are finding resources to help solve problems. When discussing her networking one participant summed it up as, “It’s important when you are in a new position, a chance to listen to more experienced principals,” (P4).

**Proposition: Networking is a crucial support to successful principalship.**

In simple terms they are wanting, “A list of people who I can contact back for help,” (P2), and, “then there was XX at MM he was really good and also XX at NN has been really helpful to me and she shares with me anything I’ve wanted to know,” (P3). Participants were often referring to seemingly small problems or difficulties that can be shared and solved with a couple of minutes chat in many cases, as well as the larger more difficult issues.

Sometimes, the problems were somewhat bigger so it was interesting to know that for at least one participant, “they (MOE) were keen to be there and I have already met with them. The tone was warm and encouraging, my few dealings are really positive,” (P6).

For others the networks were of value for support in a different way especially those who are now in their principal’s jobs, “It is quite a lonely job, you need someone to offload to out of the school, a network. It’s not fair to always offload onto your partner. The support and understanding of your network people is very important,” (P3). The personal need is acknowledged too, “Its nice and its not just professional support, it is personal support as well,” (P5).

For some, the networking need is about like minds and like schools, “It’s important for me to make connections with the same kind of schools. I need to make a network for my needs, medium sized schools of our type with people who have some similar ideas. I want, need, to talk to principals with like ideas, people who are like me,” (P6). For a participant in a relatively isolated area, “The community of learners idea is important,” (P6), as a part of the essential network of support.

**Networks need to be begun to be built when the person is an aspiring principal.**

Several participants commented on making new contacts during their time at ASP in particular, “For me ASP contacts was the biggie,” (P5), and, “I really liked going out to different schools. It was a chance to meet different people,” (P2). For some there were more long standing networks, “Some of the principals I’ve

worked for I've maintained contact," (P4), and these sentiments were representative of all the research group.

From the pragmatic point of view one participant stated, "I could say at a job interview I didn't have all the answers but I know who to ring because I already had the contacts," (P5). Her feeling was that during her time at ASP in particular, as well as through the rest of her career, she had developed a network of contacts that would allow her to succeed. It gave her a feeling of confidence when embarking on a new direction in her career.

One participant commented about their networks established right back at the time of initial teacher training, "I've kept contact with the people I trained with, they are in all sorts of different schools. I go for a wander and see how they do things, get new ideas and its also affirming for what we do," (P4).

Networking then was seen as essential, particularly for those in more isolated locations and for those feeling the isolation of their position which several people mentioned in the course of their discussions.

## **Category 5**

### **Family support**

The place of the family around the aspiring and new principal caused much comment from the participants. The family structures of the different people in this sample varied considerably. While it wasn't specifically probed as a part of this research, it came to light during the course of the conversations that participants were in a wide variety of family circumstances. These ranged from single through to married with no dependants at home to having a number of dependent children along with partners who were engaged in a wide variety of jobs.

**Proposition: Family support is an essential to making the transition to principalship successfully.**

The participants nearly all commented on their families and the need for support from them. Comments such as, “You need some one who can understand and you’re supporting each other in your jobs and professions, and its understanding the stresses each of you brings home, and it is finding ways to deal with that,” (P2), illustrated their point of view. For some, the removal of that support would make it difficult or impossible to do their job as they currently have it, “My family is not only mentally and emotionally supportive but physically too. If I was busy with a family doing all the family chores I couldn’t do it,” (P3), and, “Its important for family to give you support in any career, particularly when they have time demands, meetings at night, working bees etc.” (P5). For one participant, “My wife and I have discussed it and we are going to put some money into home help. We’ve always done it ourselves in the past. Now I don’t want to come home for the weekend and find a big list of chores to do so we are looking at getting some paid help, something we would never have thought of in the past,” (P6). Clearly the participants are highlighting changes in family organisation which go beyond the minor, “It’s changed some of the dynamics of our family,” (P6), and that, “maybe we could have been better prepared if knew what was coming,” (P6). This places further importance on the place of the family in the transition from aspiring to actual principal, many of which may have not been obvious in advance to at least some people.

Sometimes support went beyond just helping people get through and went as far as assisting them to take the next step in their career for example, “Supporting you in your aspirations and helping you and giving you a little push and making you feel yeah, I can do this its worth giving it a go,” (P2).

It was summarised by one participant who said in relation to her circumstance, “I’m very aware of the support I get from my partner and how important it is to me,” (P2), and most participants expressed similar kinds of sentiments.

## Category 6

### Professional Learning

Without exception, the participants all described a history of ongoing learning with a very wide range of content and type. Formal study included university and postgraduate level work with topics as diverse as marketing, leadership, special needs, and visual language. Informal study topics included curriculum reading, curriculum change, middle schools and restorative justice to list just a few.

**Proposition: A background of ongoing learning is useful for aspiring principals to assist them to cope with the extensive new learning once they win a principals position.**

When questioned about their study, both formal and informal, the initial responses from the participants were often that they hadn't done much. Yet when asked for a few details about what they had done, they revealed that there was a wide variety of ongoing study, both in formal and informal ways happening for every participant. There was also an incredibly wide range of topics and learning activity. These included Te Reo Maori papers, marketing study, sociology, time management, a wide range of curriculum papers and curriculum professional development work, restorative practice, behaviour management, leadership and formal education study. In the more formal learning areas, there were comments such as "I've done some papers in Te Reo Maori," (P6), "I finished my degree a couple of years before ASP," (P5), "The paper I did was marketing and that was quite relevant to the school I was at, at the time," (P2). The study was seen as relevant and useful at times, "the formal is useful – sociology makes you think about inequities in society and how things fit," (P1), although some frustration with aspects of formal study was expressed at times.

In addition to the formal learning, there was a wide variety of informal learning activity as well, "Time management stuff like Steven Covey, I listened a lot to him, downloaded audio books and listened to them," (P1), "I have done some professional reading in the areas of area and middle school education, I kept up with the teaching and learning stuff and have done some work around restorative

practices, not restorative justice,” (P6), and, “I did readings and things. I wasn’t actually looking to use it but didn’t read it for that purpose, I see it as useful later,” (P2).

When asked about the relevance of their learning to their professional goal of becoming a principal, the responses indicated that the goal of principalship was not the motivating factor. The participants through their study and learning appeared to reflect an in built commitment to learning for its own sake rather than learning to a particular end. The point was made by one participant, “theory behind the practice was the most useful but if I didn’t get a principal’s position then I would be on study leave and doing my masters. It becomes an out rather than a tie because it is so interesting, something you do, that keeps yourself going,” (P5), while for another, “I took more opportunities for the informal stuff, alongside I kept on with my degree, so it would all contribute to being a package in the end,” (P4), and, “and I took leadership papers then, more because they were interesting rather than with the determination to be a principal,” (P2). Participants were engaged as noted above in a very wide variety of learning opportunities, formal and informal. The commonality was that they were all actively engaged in learning, in some cases without consciously thinking about it.

For aspiring principals there does not appear to be a need for learning in a particular field based on this research. Rather there is a need for a commitment to learning in any form. The new principals in this study have all commented on the vertical learning curve that they have undertaken in their first months to a year in the job. Being in the habit of being an ongoing learner could make this an easier process.

## **Chapter Six**

### **Discussion of Findings**

The intention of this research was to identify the useful elements of pre-principalship preparation. During the course of the literature search it was identified that while there was much research into what elements constituted pre-principalship preparation, there was little research into which elements were useful or effective. In this section of discussion of findings, those elements identified within this research and outlined in the previous chapter are related back to existing literature where possible or discussed on their own where none was found.

#### **Introduction**

The analysis of this research data led to the development of the six categories and propositions discussed below. The categories, and the propositions arising within them, were based on the research participants data obtained through structured interviews. The propositions under the six categories have implications for the work of aspiring and potential principal preparation. They suggest aspects that could be included or enhanced in existing or new programmes.

The first category considered attendance at pre-principalship programmes. Implications from the first category, attendance at a targeted pre-principalship programme, are that there is considerable value in formal pre-principalship programmes, that programmes will need to take cognisance of the differing needs of the participants and that it is not only self selection for attendance that is needed. The finding of the widely differing needs of potential principals suggests that programmes need to be flexible enough to meet the widely varying needs of potential and aspiring principals. The recognition of the need for the right timing of a pre-principalship programme in a teacher's career means that principals, in particular, need to be both knowledgeable about and mindful of when members of their staff are ready for such professional development and to assist them to access it.

From the second category, mentoring implications of the research are that there is a need to provide for a mixture of mentoring opportunities which allow the aspiring principals to make some of their own choices of mentors. There needs to be recognition that not all proposed mentoring arrangements will be successful and if persisting with formalised arrangements, there need to be processes for review and reassignment.

The third category, modelling, shows the importance of the role of existing principals in helping groom the principals of tomorrow. There is a need for existing principals to be not only conscious of this, but to be actively striving to provide the necessary positive models. Any design of pre-principal professional development needs to ensure that the best use is made of exemplary models.

The research results from this work in networking, the fourth category, imply the need for a profession that is well networked and supportive. The need for networks before becoming a principal as well as maintaining them suggests that conscious efforts to improve networking opportunities are important. These opportunities and some professional development on how to maintain and grow networks could well form a deliberate part of the design of pre-principalship courses.

The fifth category, family, highlights the importance of family and the recognition that principals do not carry out their tasks and roles in isolation. The implications are that principals need to be prepared for some of these changes that will affect their families prior to starting their new positions. Perhaps support from existing principals in how they cope could be useful in this.

The final category, study, highlighted how each of the participants in this research was engaged in lifelong learning in many and various ways to the point that they didn't recognise it as an extra, it was just a part of their professional life. The implication from this category is that an important criteria for selection for pre-principalship professional development should be a commitment to ongoing learning.

## **Category 1 Attendance at a targeted pre-principalship programme**

Propositions in the first category suggested that attendance at a targeted pre-principalship programme is a valuable tool in pre-principalship preparation, different aspiring principals will value different aspects of the programmes they attend and timing in the career is important but varies from person to person.

### **Usefulness**

One of the research weaknesses identified in the literature search was that there had been almost no research done into the effectiveness or otherwise of pre-principalship programmes, even though there were a number running world wide that had been researched for content, (Bush 2002; Huber 2004). This research identified that for this particular group the programme that they had taken part in had been perceived as a very worthwhile experience in their path to principalship. Factors identified by the participants as useful included making contacts with like minded people, theoretical and practical learning, networking and a chance to observe good practice. They saw both their theoretical and practical knowledge base was enhanced. "This finding is consistent with the work of Mentor et.al. (2005) who concluded their study of the success of the Scottish qualification for headship with, "It is certainly achieving a great deal of what it explicitly set out to do in terms of the individual candidate's learning and professional development," (Mentor 2005, p. 20). They went on to note that, "The impact has been particularly marked in schools which are geographically or professionally remote," (Mentor 2005, p. 20). This feeling of isolation, either geographical or professional was something that participants in this study commented on. The belonging to a community of learners was seen as essential by (P6), "The community of learners idea is important," and he saw the aspiring principals' course he attended gave him a chance to join one that had people who were of like mind in aspiring to principalship, "To aspiring principals I would say get into ASP or somewhere where like minded people are talking," (P6). While the effectiveness of programmes around the world hasn't been extensively researched the conclusions are clear that from this research, as from the research on Scotland,

that there is considerable perceived value in programmes that bring together a community of learners with a focus on principalship.

### **Different People Value Different Aspects**

The literature review identified a number of common components in programmes that were being carried out internationally. These were mission, vision and transformational leadership, learning and teaching or instructional leadership, human leadership and management, resource management. As well as these aspects, there were additionally common but not quite so universal themes of the school and community interface, professional mentoring, networking and coaching, an understanding of ethical, moral and values of leadership, (Bush 2002; Huber 2004). When comparing these lists to the issues raised by the research participants, there was little congruence. Many of the content topics were not raised in the course of the interviews. Rather their comments were around much more pragmatic concerns, to a degree survival concerns as people in a new job. As one participant commented, “Novices need rulebooks – a how to handbook. Something that says in January do this and so on, it would make starting off so much easier,” (P1). This is not to say that those items as listed above in pre-principalship programmes weren’t important, but for the principals who had just moved from being aspiring to actually being in the job, survival information and skills were at the forefront of their consciousness and efforts.

Participants did see value in both theoretical and practical learning around the job of being a principal, “The imposed reading, you will read this and discuss it, was the best thing...It was just great for me, woke me up and affirmed lots of things too,” (P6). For one new principal, “I am one of those who eat their broccoli before their meat and so try to do all the things I need to get done first, the reports to the Ministry of Education before the curriculum,” (P3). She then went on to say how she felt she had spent too much time on the reports etc. and was now going to work more on the balance with developing curriculum and the school. Essentially she was ensuring that the items that she saw as important, especially those around learning and teaching were to resume their proper place. (P3) was wanting to return to those aspects that were identified by the writer who reviewed the content

of principal preparation programmes, especially learning and teaching, curriculum, school and staff development. (Bush 2002; Davis 2003; Huber 2003)

For some participants the actual content knowledge that they met in their particular course wasn't new. For example "I know leadership theory and stuff inside out and back to front," (P1) however there were other aspects that they valued, "the contacts were the biggie," (P5) and, "It was great talking to people who had just been, were or were just about to be again principals, and they loved the job, loved being a principal," (P6).

An important area participants identified was the building of confidence, "My confidence was built up and the belief was that I could do the job," (P5), "It gave me the kick start I needed," (P1). One participant initially stated, "It wasn't the right time, I wasn't ready to be a principal, I knew where I was going in my current job," (P1) but then later stated that, "ASP made me realise I was ready," (P1). This indicates that there is an important role to play by existing principals in pushing forward people who are ready even if they do not recognise it themselves. "It gave me confidence," (P4). This was mirrored by the Scottish research which found, "evidence of growing confidence and self-awareness demonstrated by this study," (Mentor 2005, p. 20) . Gaining this belief enabled the research participants to make the step to apply for jobs to become a principal, as (P1) stated it made her realize she was ready. The researchers also expected that this kind of professional development would ultimately lead to long term improvements across their system however this last point, although the motivation for the programmes the Scottish study researched, is yet to be proven.

Principalship is recognised as a position of increasing complexity, (Klauke 1990; d'Arbon 2004; National College for School Leadership 2004). The preparation of potential principals therefore must take account of this. There is no simple solution that will fit every person, "the content of professional development programmes should not be a one-size fits all format," (Southworth 2002) and each potential principal will have his or her own needs, however, "Professional development can provide good ideas, direction, and insights, but principals can't

be told exactly how to do it because principalship is far too complex,” (Strachan 2003, p. 47).

### **Timing**

The two areas of timing and confidence have a link. The timing for pre-principalship preparation is important, and may or may not be recognized by the potential principal. When that happens, it is up to someone else to recognize it and push them forward so that they can gain the confidence needed to make the next step. For many of the attendees, there was real value in getting the push that the aspiring principals course gave them, “I do think it’s very important to encourage people to think about principalship,” P6, and, “ASP made me realise I was ready,” P1. They see the need for others to do some pushing, “Principals need to be reminded to shoulder tap, especially people in the hard to staff schools who would make good principals,” P6.

An important point was made about women and aspiring towards principalship, “Women need the push because they won’t put themselves forward until they think they are ready,” (P1). In the literature review by Strachan the point was made in the summary that, “the high workload and associated long hours spent working, a focus on administration and management rather than leadership for learning and demonstrated models of leadership that are not congruent with an aspiring and potential principals own preferred style. These factors particularly impact on women and Māori,” (Strachan 2003, p. 4). In the primary teaching profession which is dominated by females, 82% at the 2004 Teacher Census (Ministry of Education 2005), this is an important point as it puts a particular responsibility back to current principals to both recognise potential principals from these groups and then to encourage and support them to make the next steps. It is the current principals of aspiring principals who need to recognise that the time is right for people from these groups and help them make the next step. There was some self recognition that people were ready to make the step, “It (the timing) was right for me getting the job. My confidence was built up and the belief was that I could do the job,” P5, and, “It was the right time because I was starting to get itchy feet and think what next,” P2.

The enthusiasm of the participants for their potential and aspiring principals programme indicating a perceived degree of success, matches the findings of the research into the Scottish Qualification for Headship, a standout as a solid piece of research in this area. The authors noted that when successfully completed, the programme had success in bringing about important learning for aspiring principals, (Mentor 2005, p. 19).

## **Category 2 Usefulness of Mentoring**

The second proposition, that while opportunities for mentoring are useful, they appear to be most useful when the potential principal organises their mentors personally on an informal needs basis, has implications for the way that mentoring is setup, organised and used. Whatever arrangements are adopted, they need to be flexible enough to acknowledge when the relationship is not being productive and move to make changes. This next section addresses the value of mentoring, some organisational issues and how it may be used to support aspiring and new principals.

### **The Value of Mentoring**

Research participants were all quite clear that a good mentor was very worthwhile though as one suggested, “There aren’t going to be enough good mentors around,” (P6). This comment was based on the participants knowledge of the number of new principals that were already required. This knowledge appears to be correct as studies have confirmed a growing need for more principals (Wylie 1999; Ministry of Education 2005) and with these new principals the need for more mentors will come too, if mentoring is to be used as a tool in pre-principalship preparation. Participants in this research also asserted that unless the mentoring relationship is positive, then the mentoring process will not be effective. As (P2) commented, “When I have a sticky issue I would go to XX.” XX is not her formally assigned mentor but the informal one she has established. Another commented, “Mentoring is critical, different for different things,” (P1) Participants also reported a number of problems with mentoring including problems in actually making contact, the quality of the relationship and the levels of trust needed. The problems of making contact arose particularly from the

challenges associated with the mentors often being very busy professional's themselves and the mentoring was another added extra job that they were trying to fit into their day. The quality of the relationship between the mentor and the mentees varied enormously, several participants commented with envy about one relationship and wished theirs had worked as well. Clearly there are challenges for both mentors and mentees in this area. Daresh (1995, p. 11) suggests that mentees or proteges as they term them, may well need as much training as mentors. This could be an area for further study.

In the literature, mentoring was identified as significant in supporting aspiring and new principals, (Grosso 1993; Hertling 2001; Littky 2002; Hobson 2005). The value was outlined as, "through the modelling, guidance, and support of one another, teachers and principals can transfer theories into practice, exercise leadership, and critically examine and reflect on their educational beliefs, values, and practices," (Strachan 2003, p. 38). In some work, mentoring was given a very high priority, "students were encouraged to work with as many mentor leaders as possible," (Grosso 1993, p. 11) and in their work on principal preparation (Littky 2002) identified high reliance amongst new and aspiring principals on mentoring. All the participants in this research had experiences of mentoring but there were a range of feelings about the value of the mentoring they had experienced. They were unanimous that the quality of the relationship was paramount to it being successful. While the literature reviewed identified much perceived value in mentoring, as Hobson and Sharp identified in their review (2005, p. 36) the matching of mentor and mentee was identified by several writers as a critical element to successful mentoring.

The literature further defines the value of mentoring as including, psychological support, improved professional skills, and having a resource broker, (Hobson 2005). There were confirming comments from the research such as, "I want, need to talk to principals with like ideas, people who are like me," P6, and, "and so I would have this real honest reflection," P1. Psychological support was perhaps seen as the most important aspect of mentoring but other parts like the resource brokering, "You use their strengths to get stuff that can help you," P4, and the

improved professional skills were evident too, “They need to have knowledge, and they need to have that theoretical base,” P5.

Limitations on mentoring, especially time, qualities of the mentor and their training (Hobson 2005) were identified. These echo the specific concerns raised in this research, “My arranged mentor turned up for his first visit. He had his own agenda but when I started talking he abandoned it and let me talk,” P6, which contrasted with, “Mentors need to hear what their mentee is saying, not talk about themselves and their ideas,” P6. The time aspect was a factor, “Xx was my mentor, he’s wonderful but however he’s a hard man to get hold of and it was just as he was changing jobs,” P5, and so was the quality of some mentors in relation to their mentees.

*“The mentor I had was a really lovely person, really nice but she was so un-me, her school was the complete opposite to my school, she was in a decile 10 very small rural school all Pakeha and I was at a bigger all Maori, decile 1 school... the way that she was as well, um, I found her frustrating!”*

(P1). Several participants reported deliberately stepping away from arranged mentors to their own that they either already had or had sought out in recent times because they were not happy with the relationship that had developed with their arranged mentors. The provision of mentors on an assigned basis, for the participants in this research, with one exception was either only partially successful or not at all successful. The most effective mentoring process for them was to find their own mentors based on their needs and set up or develop the relationship from that point. It is suggested from this research that much of the time and effort in setting up formal mentors is not having the positive flow on effect of assisting with the development of aspiring principals as they are often stepping away from the organised mentoring situation in favour of their own informal arrangements.

### **Organisation of Mentoring**

During the course of their pre-principalship professional development, several participants commented on the setting up of a formal mentor system. Only one of these relationships really seemed to have worked in a positive way and was continuing. The problems, as highlighted above, difficulty of contact, mismatch of

people, mismatch of relevant experience, unsatisfactory relationships were all barriers to the other mentor arrangements working well. It suggests therefore, that if setting up a mentoring process rather than a one on one matching, a rather more informal system should be used. This kind of system would allow for some choice between mentors and mentees may be more effective. It was evident that the research people were going to use their own mentors, outside of any formal setup to support themselves through their first few years as a principal at least. Perhaps good value could also come from making opportunities to support and build existing mentor relationships.

### **Use of Mentoring**

If using a definition of mentoring as, “to denote a wise and trusted guide, adviser or counselor,” (Hobson 2005, p. 25), this research has clearly indicated that the trust aspect is a vitally important aspect. It is also important that the mentor is wise so that they can give good advice, guidance and counseling. ‘Wise,’ in this context I loosely define as intelligent, astute, sensible, prudent and judicious. It is suggested that the role of the pre-principalship professional development provider may be to assist people to identify whether or not their chosen mentors fit this mould, and if they do not to assist with possible alternatives. The pre-principalship training provider needs to act rather more as a broker between possible mentors and mentees, rather than attempting a one to one match.

The literature and the research findings both are in agreement that while good mentoring is of immense value, the challenge is to match mentors and mentees. The mentees need support to ensure that they have identified appropriate mentors and any formal programme needs to ensure that the relationships are working for it to be successful.

### **Category 3 The Power of Modelling**

The proposition, that the models other principals provide are one of the most powerful forces affecting aspiring and new principals. Positive and negative models have equal power to affect aspiring and new principals, has implications

not only for those involved in principal preparation but for every principal in every school.

Principal modelling was not an area that was strongly evident as important in the literature review of school principal preparation although it was mentioned by several authors. “Through the modelling, guidance, and support of one another, teachers and principals can transfer theories into practice, exercise leadership, and critically examine and reflect on their educational beliefs, values, and practices,” (Strachan 2003, p. 38). It was however, a very strong category within this research. Participants commented on both negative and positive principal models and the effects that these principals had on both shaping their careers and influencing the kind of principal that they ultimately wanted to be. In a Minnesota study it was, “reported that some mentees involved in a mentoring programme regarded it as important that mentors be seen by their peers as an educational leader and role model,” (Hobson 2005 citing Monsur, p. 36). Clearly from the point of view of aspiring and new principals they expect their colleagues to be models. It was clear from tone and body language that the disapproval of the perceived negative models was at a deep emotional level for the participants in this research. The negative models described by participants had an effect that impacted so strongly that even though some were describing events quite some time in their past, they still brought to the surface a strong emotional reaction. This powerful emotional reaction which was evidenced by tone of voice and body language during interviews, demonstrates how important negative models are, as well as positive ones, in shaping the next group of principals. The emotional reactions to negative role models were strongly evident and I made mention of such at the time in my written notes.

In their review of Japanese and Australian principal professional development Gamage and Takeyuki observed a desire for modelling too, “recommendations for improving pre-service and in-service training programs for school principals also were similar, with both groups emphasizing theory with practice, especially in terms of observing exemplary educational administrators and group work,” (Gamage 2004, p. 77). In England, when reporting on a study of seven primary heads it was observed, “Their genesis lies in personal history, reading and

experience and perhaps most of all personal example. The power of modelling in teaching is unsurpassed” (Mortimore cited in Townsend 1999, p. 124).

There are some challenges for providers of professional development if they are to identify these exemplary practitioners and then to organise chances for others to observe them. The first challenge is the identification of the exemplary principals. There is little consensus in the literature about what defines a good leader. For example, over the years, leadership has been correlated to social dominance, vision, intelligence, interpersonal competence, energy, technical skills, charisma, and many other qualities, (Lashway 1997) yet aspiring principals want to observe those people who are good leaders in their practice in order to learn from them, “especially in terms of observing exemplary administrators,” (Gamage 2004, p. 77) The second challenge would be to organise observation. There is much evidence of the busyness of a principal’s working life, (Robertson 1991; Wylie 1999) and for a principal who is already feeling overloaded the idea of having a stream of potential principals coming and observing to learn the job may well be too difficult to manage.

Are current principals actually aware of the effects that they have on the potential principals of tomorrow? As one of the research participants said, “Positive role models – Oh God I hope I’m one of those now!” (P4). This example illustrates how very much aware of the importance of their modelling these new principals are. I suspect that it is not something that many New Zealand principals think about and I was unable to find any references to reminders of this kind of modelling in recent national or local principal professional publications. Consequently there is a need to highlight and remind current principals of this important aspect of their role and their influence on the potential principals of tomorrow.

As noted earlier, negative modelling was as powerful as positive modelling in forming the attitudes of this research group when they were aspiring principals, summed up with “I clearly saw what I didn’t want to be,” (P4). Many ideas of leadership were and still are based around models of an, “aggressive rational strong leader,” (Blackmore 2002, p. 64) even though as Blackmore argues it fits

neither women or the majority of men. Nevertheless, it is this aggressive kind of model that the research participants were adamant that they wanted to avoid in their own work. They aspired to be positive and collaborative in their approaches. As one participant noted, “I had a principal and he fostered and encouraged me,” (P4) when describing the model she valued and aspired to.

Modelling, as we know is a powerful form of learning from right back when we are young. Often but not always the copying of a model is unconscious. The research participants however showed a full awareness of modelling, its power and how it shaped them. It is important that this power is harnessed for the support of aspiring principals.

#### **Category 4 Networking**

The fourth proposition, networking is a crucial support to successful principalship and that networks need to be begun to be built when the person is an aspiring principal, implies a need for this to be given deliberate support and encouragement. Networking can be defined as, “a systematic way of integrating systems of communication for both personal and professional enhancement,”(Gibson cited in Register 2006). It is rather more casual than mentoring which can be defined as, “used to denote a wise and trusted guide, adviser or counselor,” (Hobson 2005, p. 25). While this research shows evidence that both have their value, it is networking that this section is concerned with. Networking can be seen as being a powerful tool in supporting teachers and principals at all stages of their careers, “Mutual benefits can therefore be generated through the structure of collaborative professional network,” (Strachan 2003, p. 38) and the benefits are, “to contribute to better relationships with colleagues, increased job satisfaction, greater organisational commitment, and improved employee retention,” (Strachan 2003, p. 38).

#### **The Importance of Networks**

The education community within New Zealand is quite small, approximately 2080 primary schools in total. That means the potential size of any principal network is

limited. While not all members of a principal's professional network need to be principals, it is from this group that the most like minded people will be found. Building networks is about building relationships,(ncchildcare.org 2004; Register 2006) based on interests (education is the obvious one here) and commonalities. There need to be enough commonalities for communication but sufficient challenges and differences for learning. The participants in this research placed high value on their networks, "It's the biggest thing, huge," (P5) and, "Absolutely critical, without networks I wouldn't survive," (P1), and even more tellingly, "If there is no networking then it would be a really lonely job," (P3), and, "I want, need to talk to principals with like ideas, people who are like me," (P6). These sentiments echo the findings of Hertling (2001) who noted that existing principals were very keen to have chances to network. It appears, based on their comments such as, "I wouldn't have survived without my networks," (P1) and, "I need to make a network for my needs," (P6) that the new principals participating in this research know instinctively that they need to network.

Networking takes on even more importance if we also accept that we are living and educating in an increasingly globalised society (d'Arbon 2004; Moos 2004) with a job that is increasing in complexity (Klauke 1990; d'Arbon 2004). There is then a need for principals, and aspiring principals to think beyond their immediate geographical and cultural areas, "so that they can understand themselves in relation to the larger world," (Robertson 2004). The larger world of education does impact on New Zealand schools with ideas easily crossing different geographical and political boundaries.

A positive example of this being some of the ideas behind the Early and Advanced Numeracy project which had its origins in some work done in Queensland, Australia. The principals in this study, who had so recently transitioned from aspiring to actual principals were not thinking along these larger view lines, possibly because they were too tied up in the immediate survival problems of a new position. Nevertheless, some did talk about wider networks, "I use other principals, school support services, teacher design network – that way I can get good feedback and can grow," P1, and, "I kept up with the people I trained with, they are now in all sorts of different schools, I went to visit one the

other day... I go for a wander and see how they all do things. It's also important for affirming what we do," P5. Further support for networking is outlined by Robertson (2000), "Our recent studies of leadership development initiatives suggest that leadership development programmes should include opportunities for active participation within professional networks of a variety of stakeholders in education, should expand beyond school, local or national issues."

The challenge for aspiring principals is to keep the larger picture in view during that time and immediately after they make the transition to an actual position, the networks may be crucial to this process to go from, "Head above water, just," P1, to a more comfortable phase where impact can be made on changing and improving the education in their schools and areas.

### **Building Networks Early**

There is a need to build networks early in a principalship. The participants talked about their existing networks and using them to assist them with their current positions, "I kept up with the people I trained with, they are now in all sorts of different schools," P4, "I started with ASP, I built on that and first time principals," P5, and tellingly, "I wouldn't have survived without my networks but then I'm a networking person and I've used them since year one," P1. Research into principals professional isolation confirms this, "It is important that networks are well established and maintained – it is too late to access this form of support at the time of crisis," (Leitch 2004). In this summary, it was further asserted that among other aspects, principals need to know that they need to stay networked, (Leitch 2004). This building and maintaining of networks before becoming a principal, along with a continuation of that activity coupled with their deliberate use to support the participants in their new principals' positions, highlights the necessity of potential and aspiring principals to have built their networks before becoming a principal and to continue to do so.

If we accept networking as important, and it appears that this is the case both from this research and the literature, then some guidance and facilitation in this direction could well be an important component of any principal preparation professional development. While some of the literature reviewed did highlight the

place of networking,(Grosso 1993; Wilson 1993; Hertling 2001) in the development of aspiring principals there has been little if any work done on how this may be best achieved.

### **Category 5 Family Support**

This proposition, that ‘family’ support is essential to making the transition to principalship successfully, has implications for selection and self selection of those who would become principals.

Family structures are diverse and even within the sample of this research there were a number of different types. The need for some kind of family support was seen as essential by these people to making the job workable. While there is no suggestion that selection criteria should include a review of family, it would be an unconscionable intrusion into privacy, it is suggested however that potential principals must be made aware of the impact on their families. For example, it was with some surprise that a participant noted, “On social occasions I am still the principal. I went to an occasion and was sitting drinking wine and parents wanted to talk to me about their children,” P 3. Potential and aspiring principals need to be aware and prepared for this. There are some individuals for whom this would not be the case as they have no family, however for those that do the proposition needs to be considered.

The impact of family responsibilities, especially the impact on women who aspire to principals’ positions, was noted as a factor in women in particular not applying for these kinds of jobs. Balancing family and work was highlighted as an area to be addressed in the literature search (Strachan 2003, p. 29) which preceded the University of Waikato’s Potential and Aspiring Principals Course that the participants in this research attended. Teaching is a profession that is dominated by females, (Ministry of Education 2005). Any barriers to females taking on principals’ roles will restrict the majority of the teacher work force from seriously seeing principalship as a career option. This is not an environment that will allow the best people to consider principalship and so needs to be addressed.

The participants in this research had spent some time making adjustments and putting in to place suitable arrangements, “My wife and I have discussed it and we are going to put some money into home help,” P6. They were very conscious of the support they needed and received, “If I was busy with a family doing all the family chores I couldn’t do it. My family is not only mentally and emotionally supportive but physically too,” P3. This need is echoed within the business community. For example, when Elken (1995) was reviewing managerial competence and leadership, one of the four main environmental determinants of development was support of parent/spouse, (Elkin 1995, p. 263) so it is not merely an issue for educators but for leaders in business too.

If principals are to survive, prosper and lead their schools forward then ways need to be found support them before they become principals. This would give them the necessary strategies that they need to deal with the challenges of being a principal. Unlike the majority of new principals in New Zealand, the research group had the benefit of a pilot preparation programme. Whether or not the pilot helped them to make the adjustments within their families was not shown by this research. What was shown, was that some deliberate thought and action had gone into how these people were going to make the adjustments with the support of their families. If it was a part of the programme, then it needs to be retained. If not then it should be incorporated.

## **Category 6 Professional Learning**

The proposition, that a background of ongoing learning is useful for aspiring principals to assist them to cope with the extensive new learning once they win a principals position, has implications for the kind of person who is selected for potential and aspiring principal professional development.

In the United States, the delivery of pre-principalship programmes and accompanying accreditation is a job of the universities, the majority of whom require the gaining of a masters degree for that accreditation, (Roberts 2001; Strachan 2003). There is no similar requirement in New Zealand nor is there any special requirement for principal accreditation of any kind, apart from teacher

registration. Nevertheless, it was significant that the research sample, without exception, were engaged in ongoing learning of various types. The content of this ongoing learning was not necessarily directly related to becoming a principal but it was often relevant. It was also noticeable that the tone and body language picked up markedly when these people were discussing different learning they were or had been engaged in. These people projected an enthusiasm for learning.

In England, the National College for School Leadership in their principal preparation programmes have a structure which requires potential headteachers to cover modules on strategic direction and development, learning and teaching, working with stakeholders and managing people and resources, (National College for School Leadership 2006a, p. 4). When comparing this list to the areas of study identified by the research participants, it was noted that they were all covered by at least one person in the sample. For example; “I’ve done some papers in Te Reo Maori. I have done some professional reading in the areas of area and middle school education. I kept up with the teaching and learning stuff and have done some work around restorative practices,” P6. “I read an awful lot, so a lot of leadership and organisational type texts,” P1. “I finished my degree a couple of years before ASP and took leadership papers then, more because they were interesting rather than with the determination to be a principal,” P 5. “I’ve done a post graduate paper on Leadership,” P2, “I’ve done a Diploma in Special Teaching Needs, I’ve got my higher Diploma of Teaching and my Bachelor of Arts and Post Grad Diploma in Educational Management,” P4, and finally, “The paper I did was marketing and that was quite relevant to the school I was at,” P2.

Clearly the range of topics covered in these examples is large, but it is by no means exhaustive. The sample group had huge areas of expertise and knowledge from both formal and informal learning. In spite of the pressures of new positions, many principals continue with at least informal learning over and above their job survival needs.

In her study of experienced principals, Townsend (1999) noted that, “the principals in this study perceived that their learning was cumulative,” (Townsend 1999, p. 111). This was a study of experienced principals looking back on their

paths as a learner. The sample people in this research were early in their careers as principals yet they still were engaged in learning that was cumulative in nature, even if it wasn't always recognised.

It is also very clear, from this sample that the learning requirements of potential and aspiring principals like this group is diverse. This means that the design of professional development programmes for a group such as this needs to have a flexible framework able to cater for the needs and “fill in the gaps” when required. For example, a person with a post graduate diploma in education management with senior management experience has far different pre-principalship professional development requirements from someone who is a classroom teacher and has done no study or learning in the area of leadership and management area at all.

## **Chapter Seven**

### **Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations**

#### **Conclusions**

The position of principal is a complex task (Klauke 1990; Strachan 2003; Hallinger 2003b; d'Arbon 2004), The preparation of aspiring and potential principals is therefore a complex task also. There is no one right principals' preparation development programme that will be a fit for everyone, but it does appear from this research that there is value in having programmes targeted specifically at preparing teachers for principalship. The challenge for both the providers and the aspiring principals is to undertake programmes that are flexible enough to cater for their different needs. Within these programmes, there are some common elements that this research identified as being useful for all. These were good networking, good self driven mentoring, promotion of a culture of learning, access to excellent principal models and building family support.

For potential principals to establish good networking they need to be brought together with the people that they might network with. They also need to be given some guidelines on how to do so successfully, both in establishing networks and in keeping them active. Developing networks may well be an area that business and sales training providers could have a part in assisting with pre-principalship professional development.

If it is accepted that there are difficulties with formal mentoring, as this research suggests, and that more informal mentoring appears to be more successful then we need to either abandon more formal approaches or look more closely at how they are set up and identify the problems so that they can be made to work more effectively. Alternatively, the provision of both a pool of possible mentors and the ready availability of training and support for new mentors may be of benefit.

The importance of a culture of ongoing learning amongst potential principals is high. Townsend (1999) in her research with existing principals noted, "the main implications for professional development from the findings and their related

conclusions; the importance of self knowledge, the importance of holistic and the interrelated nature of learning and the importance of levels of learning.” (Townsend 1999, p. 176). Learning was an important part of the makeup of the participants in this research, they were learners at deep levels across many different areas and with deep passion for their learning. When selecting potential principals for professional development, the importance of this kind of attitude needs to be recognised.

The influence of existing principals as role models was clearly illustrated in this research. Both this research and the literature, highlighted the need for access to excellent principal role models. The impact of negative models was also profound with their impact and effect being noted by all the participants. There were strong statements showing the participants were very clear about the kind of principal they did not want to be, as well as the kind they did. Good reflective practice may enable these participants to avoid those kinds of behaviours that they found so reprehensible.

The building of family support for potential principals is a difficult issue as it clearly is an aspect outside of the direct working environment. The participants in this research were very clear however that family support was essential to their ability to do their job effectively. One aspect in particular that Townsend noted, “some may need assistance and support to handle the shock of moving from a climate of personal popularity to one of possible hostility,” (Townsend 1999, p. 178) could in the case of a new principal in an isolated situation be entirely up to the family. It should be noted that not all new principals will be moving into a climate of hostility but that the potential is always there. Any pre-principalship development must take this factor into account and it is proposed that as a minimum ensuring that these people have an awareness of the potential impact on both themselves and their families is a basic requirement.

The literature is clear that it is important that we have good principals (Ramsay 1992; Edwards 1999; Goldstein 2001) and from this research it is suggested that it is worthwhile building programmes containing these elements to enable aspiring principals to become good ones. There are already predictions and signs of an

exodus of principals from New Zealand schools, which are similar to the predictions in other western countries. Putting in place suitable support will enable the replacements that are required, to support and grow the education system in this country. To neglect to do this, will leave the success of the next round of principals to chance. I would argue that we can and should do better by our children and communities than that.

### **Limitations of this Research**

This research was limited by several factors. The size of the sample was small, there were only six participants. It was also limited in geographical location as all participants were in the area south of Auckland and north of Gisborne. The gender makeup included only one male. The sample did not include anyone from a large urban area. All the participants were very early into or on the threshold of their first principal's position. While this gave a sample with clear recollection of immediate pre-principalship development, it was not a sample that had had time to be recognised as being successful principals.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

There are a number of areas identified where further research could be useful. Firstly, research into the way that mentoring practices for aspiring principals can be optimised would be useful. It appears from the findings of this research that possibly some of the effort in this direction is wasted. Finding ways to maximise the mentoring process, which was perceived as valuable would help make best use of this resource.

Secondly, research into factors that existing principals could use to assist in the identification of teachers suitable to making the step to principalship could be useful. This will benefit particularly those participants who are ready to make the next step but have not necessarily recognised it themselves.

Thirdly, in the research, networks were identified as being extremely important to the survival and support of the principals who had made the transition from

aspiring and potential, to winning and taking up a principal's job. It would be useful to know if these networks also help or hinder these principals from making the next step, from initial survival to effective educational leader and change agent.

### **Finally**

The lack of research into the vital area of pre-principalship preparation is of concern. With many new principals being required in the next few years, it is important that New Zealand prepares them as well as they can. The continued evolution of pre-principalship development programmes is a positive way of ensuring a stronger potential principal pool. My hope would be for more and larger scale research followed by funding and action to produce a better prepared new principal group. It is hoped that this research will be one piece of work that will give assistance to guiding professional development for the potential and aspiring principals of tomorrow.

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## **Appendix 1**

### **Sshool of Education Ethics Approval**

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THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** **Barry Roberts**  
**Cc:** Associate Professor Jan Robertson

**From:** Dr Rosemary De Luca  
For School of Education Research Ethics Committee

**Date:** 25 May 2006

**Subject:** Research Ethics Approval

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The School of Education Research Ethics Committee considered your (revised) application for ethical approval for the research proposal:

### **Pre-principalship Preparation-What are the Useful Elements?**

I am pleased to advise that this (revised) application has received ethical approval.

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

**Dr Rosemary De Luca**  
**Chairperson**  
**For School of Education Research Ethics Committee**

## **Appendix 2**

### **Structured Interview Protocol**

#### Potential and Aspiring Principals

Aim: To discover the elements of pre-principalship preparation that are most useful for potential and aspiring principals in furthering their career aims and why.

#### **Background**

What is your gender?

What is your age band, 20's, 30's, 40's, 50's, older?

How long have you been teaching?

How many schools have you taught in?

What levels have you taught?

How would you describe each of those schools that you taught in? (a) urban, small town, rural. (b) low, mid or high decile?

How long have you aspired to be a principal?

#### **General Thoughts**

Tell me about your current thoughts on principalship?

What has influenced you on your path towards (or away from) principalship?

Which of these influences do consider the more valuable and/or useful so far?

If you were giving advice to someone starting on the path of aspiring to be a principal what would you tell them?

#### **Study**

Tell me about any formal study that you have done?

Was it useful in your path towards (or away from) principalship and why?

Tell me about any informal study that you have done?

Was it useful in your path towards (or away from) principalship and why?

**Experience**

What professional experiences have you had that have been useful in furthering (or changing) your principal career aims and why?

What other experiences outside your professional ones have you had that have been useful in furthering (or changing) your principal career aims and why?

**Mentoring and Coaching**

Have you had any experience with mentoring and/or coaching in an informal way that has been useful in furthering (or changing) your principalship aims? What aspects were useful and why?

Have you had any experience with mentoring and/or coaching in a formal way that has been useful in furthering (or changing) your principalship aims? What aspects were useful and why?

**Final Thoughts**

Is there anything else you would like to add about what you have found useful in furthering (or changing) your principalship career aims and why?

## **Appendix 3**

### **Consent Form**

I have read the information letter concerning this research and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage.

I know that:

- My participation in the research is entirely voluntary.
- I am free to withdraw at any time up until 30<sup>th</sup> August 2006 without giving reasons and without any disadvantage to the research.
- The data collected from the interviews will be kept in secure storage.
- The results of the project will be published as a thesis and may also be used at a presentation in an academic conference or seminars but my anonymity and confidentiality will be preserved, I will not be personally identified in this work.

I am happy to participate in this research.

.....(signature of participant)

.....(date)

.....(signature of researcher)