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**THE PURPOSES AND PROCESSES
OF SELF-REVIEW
IN
SCHOOLS**

A three paper thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
Master of Educational Leadership
at the
University of Waikato
by

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**The University of Waikato
2007**

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

For my father

who could have done this if he had the chance

ABSTRACT

In 1993, the New Zealand Government mandated the requirement that all schools must have in place an ongoing programme of school self-review (Education Review Office, 2000). This thesis identifies the purposes and processes of self-review used in six primary schools in New Zealand. The study also identifies the roles that leaders play in the self-review process and also highlights the impact of teacher research on the process.

The research questions are:

1. What are the processes and purposes of self-review in schools and what roles do leaders play in the process?
2. What aspects of teachers' practice have an impact on the self-review process?

This research study adopted a qualitative research methodology with semi-structured interviews as the research tool. The qualitative information gathered from the six schools was analysed and written up as a case study. For the purpose of this thesis, self-review is identified as the process of review of all school practices with the intention of improving student achievement.

The findings indicated that the main purposes of conducting school self-review were to enhance student achievement, to review school policies and programmes and also to ensure accountability. This study also indicated that through a well-planned process of self-review schools can achieve their goals and fulfill the aims stated in their school charter. Another aspect which participants revealed was that self-reviews result in change and therefore leaders and school staff should have the necessary skills and competencies to deal with and manage such change. This was also identified as an issue of self-review. Participants believed that effective leadership is essential to conduct self-reviews which result in positive outcomes.

This study found that the failure to achieve school improvement through self-review, is in part due to the structure of many current self-review programmes. At

present, schools perceive self-review as the need to review everything that takes place. This perception may mean that valuable time and money is spent on something that the school does not deem significant. Rather, the findings of this study suggest that concentrating on particular areas for a certain period of time results in a better performance of the whole school.

In conclusion, this thesis found that school development and improvement cannot happen without enhancing and focusing on student achievement. For self-review to be successful, it should be carried out in a collaborative school climate of open and honest communication, mutual support and mutual responsibility. For it to be successful, self-review should also be planned, systematic, and ongoing. Data collection for self-review should be done through illuminative, participatory and responsive inquiry methods.

Finally, I recommend that further research is needed in the area of self-review and perhaps an exploration of the possible links between a school's decile level and its self-review process.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

First of all I want to thank God for giving me the strength and this opportunity to fulfill my dream to finish my masters degree in educational leadership.

I am obliged to a lot of people who have made this study possible to complete. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude and appreciation to:

My supervisors, Associate Professors Jan Robertson and Jane Strachan. Their support and direction was the most worthwhile experience for me. They had faith in me and were always available to discuss and encourage me in my work during the course of my studies. They inspired and enthused me with their intellectual debate and educational background and expertise in the field of educational leadership.

The principals, deputy principals and teachers of the six schools who took part in this study. They provided support and shared their experiences of self-reviews in their schools. A special thanks to the schools for providing me with documents and a time slot from their busy schedule at the end of the school year.

My friends, Mizu, Maaz and Alexa, for their time and advice.

My family for always being there.

My husband, Shareef, who supported and encouraged me throughout the two years of this study.

My son, Vazin, for his patience and understanding.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Information from research is more reliable than any other sources of information as it is based on empirical evidence.

(Lauer, 2006, p. 1)

Background to the Study

This study researched the practices, purposes and roles that leaders play in self-review processes used in New Zealand primary schools. A further aim of this study was to explore the aspects of teachers' practice that impact on the self-review process. This study evolved from a personal interest in school self-review, and from involvement in a Teaching Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) conducted by the University of Waikato.

I began my teaching career in 1993 as a teacher in the Maldives, teaching science and mathematics to middle school students. I spent two years in a government school before I was given the opportunity to do my first degree in Australia. I returned to my home country in 2000 and started work as a secondary teacher in an island school where I was promoted to school supervisor in 2003. This is when I developed my interest in finding out what could be done to enhance student achievement and school development.

As a school leader in the Maldives, I had a particular interest in improving student performances, school culture, school structure and the professional development of staff. As a teacher I always tried to explore new ways of teaching and communicating with children. As a leader, I tried to explore ways in which schools can reach their maximum potential, achieving their aims and objectives, which were to improve student achievement. The challenge was to raise student

achievement. To accomplish this, I felt that school self-review could play a significant role in helping to gain an overall picture of the students' achievements and their performances, to identify difficulties and successes and to check whether school policies are being put into practice. I thought that self-review could be a significant way of using the support of colleagues and the community's strengths to reveal the areas that require improving.

However, in the Maldives' education system, the process of self-review has not yet been developed. This study of school self-review may help to inform the processes and policies in the Maldives. It took place in the six schools that were involved in the Teaching and Learning Research Initiative (TLRI) at the University of Waikato with Associate Professor Jan Robertson and Dr. Mary Hill from the University of Auckland. It is hoped that the knowledge gained from this study will assist my future leadership in the Maldives as well as contribute to the knowledge base around the TLRI project. My belief is that school self-review and student achievement could be linked and that teacher research will have a significant influence on the self-review process in schools.

This chapter introduces the background to the study, the research questions, and gives a brief introduction to self-review in New Zealand schools. In addition, the structure of the thesis is outlined here.

Nature of the Study and Research Questions

This study was conducted under the umbrella of the Great Expectations (TLRI) Project. With the aid of project researchers and teachers, the Great Expectations Project aimed to identify factors that are linked to improving student achievement and teacher practices. The TLRI project was a two-year project where researchers and teacher-researchers worked together providing a unique opportunity for combining the findings of in-depth classroom action research studies which add to the existing knowledge of what happens in classrooms. For this study, the

researcher in the six primary schools as well as teachers and principals (refer to Table 1: *Information on participating schools*) were interviewed.

This study aims to gain knowledge and understanding of the self-review processes that are used in six New Zealand schools, and to share these findings with my colleagues in the Maldives. This would help to develop self-review systems in Maldivian schools with the intention of increasing student achievement and thus lead to school development/improvement, which ideally is the purpose of any kind of educational research. This is emphasised by Pring (2004), when he stated that “the central educational function of school is to enable young people to learn what is valuable and significant. That then must be the defining focus of educational research” (p. 21).

The primary purpose of schools should be to foster student learning and create healthy environments for students. Considerable efforts have been made in recent years to improve the quality of schooling (Angelides & Ainscow, 2000). To achieve this, school leaders and teachers must create suitable learning conditions for students under their care. In order to best serve its students, schools must always aim to review the practices in schools so that effective change and improvements can happen. Self-review is a process which comes under the broad category of school improvement and development. It could help schools to identify strengths and weaknesses to gain an overall understanding of how children are performing and achieving in schools.

This study provides useful information and evidence as to why self-reviews could be used in schools in the Maldives. As Lauer (2006) stated, an understanding of research will help educators and policy makers to make evidence-based decisions about the school programming and teaching practices. This a key factor for school leaders who need to provide evidence to their stakeholders and government agencies to confirm that their programmes and activities have been and are successful school improvement tools. Moreover, Lauer (2006) indicated that information from research is more reliable than other sources of information as it is based on empirical evidence. The study also seeks to investigate whether teacher

research has any impact on the self-review process. Research has demonstrated the vital importance of teacher research in schools in building teacher confidence and developing teachers' perception and knowledge of their teaching and students' learning. Since the participants in this study had already taken part in an action research project, my view is that they are already doing research in school, either at classroom or school level. This would mean that the participants could provide useful information on how successful their involvement was with the Great Expectations Project.

I believe that self-review has strong links to action research and teacher research. To enhance student achievements in schools, self-reviews need to be conducted to find out if their programmes are working for them. If not, research needs to be done to find out what can be done to improve these programmes and that is where action research could be useful. If teachers are involved in conducting the research, this would become teacher research in schools. Therefore, choosing the same six schools will help to inform the practices that teachers and school leaders use in these schools. Further, the participants may perhaps identify whether their self-review processes were influenced by their involvement in the action research.

This study explored the following research questions:

1. What are the processes and purposes of self-review in schools and what roles do leaders play in the process?
2. What aspects of teachers' practice have an impact on the self-review process?

For this study, a qualitative paradigm was used to effectively capture the views, feelings, and ideas that school leaders and teachers have about the self-review process, including its implications and successes. Semi-structured interviews were used as a research tool to gain relevant information for the study. The data gathered was analysed using a case study design. The methodology is fully described in Chapter Three of this thesis.

Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter One has already provided the background to the study, an overview outlining the rationale for the study, and detailed the research questions. Chapter Two reviews recent literature focusing on the self-review processes that are used in schools. It also focuses on action research and teacher research and the links to the self-review process. The impact of change on self-review in schools is also discussed. Chapter Three details the research methodology used in this study. This chapter is presented in two sections, research design and research process. The section on research design outlines why a qualitative research methodology and a single case study design were used for this study. The case for the purpose of this study was the six schools that were involved in the Great Expectations (TLRI) Project. This section also discusses ethical considerations, the validity of the study, as well as data gathering and analysis. The section on the research process describes the process that was adopted to gain access to schools and participants and how the study was conducted.

Chapter Four presents the findings of this study. The findings are written as an individual case study using the data gathered from the participants of this study. The case study focuses on the purposes and processes of self-review in schools. It also looks at the school leaders' roles and the impact of teacher research on the self-review process. Chapter Four also describes issues related to the self-review process which were identified by the participants of this study. Chapter Five discusses the findings of the study against the literature and highlights the limitations and recommendations arising from the study.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Literature

Self-review is evaluating and assessing the effectiveness of the school in meeting the values it has adopted, fulfilling its obligation to the community, and providing the education it wants for its students.

(Education Review Office, 1994, p.5)

Introduction and Overview

This chapter examines recent literature on self-review in schools and highlights the definitions of self-review. This chapter is divided into three major sections – the purposes of self-review, the processes of self-review and managing change through the self-review process.

The purposes of self-review in New Zealand schools have been outlined mainly by using the Ministry of Education (New Zealand) and the Education Review Office (New Zealand) documents. One important purpose of self-review explored in this section is to improve and develop the school. The other purpose of self-review is to enhance student achievement through teacher research. Literature reveals many purposes of self-review, but ultimately it focuses on student achievement and what schools can do to improve student outcomes. The definitions of self-review demonstrate a very significant link with action research and teacher research as well.

The second part of this chapter focuses on the processes of self-review used in New Zealand schools. The cyclic nature of the self-review process and its impact on school development/improvement are highlighted. The disadvantages of the self-review process are discussed as well.

The third part of this chapter explores the links between self-review and change. It discusses how change can be managed through the self-review process and roles that school leaders play to manage these changes positively and effectively. This section highlights the characteristics of effective leaders and further discusses the issues relating to managing change in schools

School Self-Review – The Purpose

New Zealand Education Review Office and Ministry of Education’s Perspective

For the purpose of this study, the government position on school self-review is presented using the Education Review Office (New Zealand) and the Ministry of Education’s (New Zealand) documents. Since the passing of the Education Act in 1989, self-review has been common in New Zealand schools. In New Zealand, a self-review process is a requirement under the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) (see Appendix A for a detailed version of NAGs) for schools, which were introduced in 1993. Under the Education Act 1989, school Board of Trustees (BOTs) are responsible for overseeing the management and development of their school. In their report on *Achieving excellence: A review of the education external evaluation services*, Austin, Edwards, and Parata-Blane (1997) commented that the *National Administration Guidelines 2* requires Boards of Trustees to maintain an ongoing programme of self-review. From their summary of recommendations Austin et al. (1997) noted that self-review should drive both school improvement and external evaluation.

According to the Ministry of Education (1997a), school boards are required to “take all the necessary steps to ensure that schools, students, and communities achieve the objectives stated in their charters” (p. 9). A school charter is an essential part of school self-management as “it reflects the vision of parents, staff and the community for their school” (Ministry of Education, 1997a, p. 10). Every

charter should aim to achieve, meet and follow the *National Education Guidelines* (NEGs) as published by the Ministry of Education in 1997. The NEGs are a three part government document which is shown in Appendix B. A school's aims, purposes and objectives are stated in the school charter and the charter also details "how the school meets the needs of students and how it will function and develop within the community" (Ministry of Education, 1997a, p. 10). Therefore, a school charter is seen as a significant school document that provides the school's vision, goals and aims. Self-review provides the information that is deemed necessary to its stakeholders on how well schools are achieving what the charter states. However, I feel that school charters are not yet publicised well enough by schools so that parents and other community members are aware of the school's goals and vision.

The Education Review Office (ERO) stated that self-review is not a new concept and that "self-review is the name given to the process of monitoring the policies and curriculum management strategies authorized by the Board of Trustees" (1994, p. 4). The Education Review Office (1994) claimed that schools in the past have under-taken some sort of self-review that helped them to inform their practices and evaluate their programmes, that teachers have been exposed to evaluation of their own teaching programmes and their performance, and that principals have been appraised for their work in schools for some time.

According to the Education Review Office (1994), the main purpose of self-review programmes is to assure the principal and the School Board of Trustees that:

... management systems the Board has approved are operating; the curriculum is being delivered effectively; personnel responsibilities are properly managed; and school property is maintained and cared for and provides a safe environment. (p. 6)

Self-review is perceived as an "integral part of good management practice" (Education Review Office, 1994, p. 6). A number of schools have developed programmes to monitor student progress, evaluate teachers, record and report student achievement, address professional development of teachers, curriculum

development, school structure development much more. The Education Review Office (1994) stated that self-review provides information to assist decision-making about school development.

Therefore, according to the Education Review Office (1994), the self-review process helps schools to monitor the school policies and management strategies and assists the board in school decision-making. Similarly, McRae (2001) also emphasized that school self-review provides school boards with necessary information for them to support the learning needs of students and to support school development/improvement although he did not clarify how this could be done. From the reports on individual schools, the Education Review Office (1994) concluded that school planning and self-review are closely related and that self-review provides information to assist the decision-making about school development/improvement.

According to the Education Review Office (1994), a broader purpose of self-review is to assure the parents, community, students and staff that the board's commitment to its stated vision, aims and mission has substance. However, it could be also said that self-review is not only for internal accountability purposes but also for external accountability purposes, since the review reports are made available to the Education Review Office for school visits and they examine and question these reports (Education Review Office, 1994). Perhaps, this could be why some schools view self-review as a threatening process. However, I feel that this need not be so and schools should feel more comfortable when conducting these reviews. Self-reviews should be seen as a tool which informs practice and provides evidence of what schools are doing to improve student achievement.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education (1997*b*) defined school self-review as a process whereby the school evaluates how effectively it is achieving its target goals and vision. It could be said that self-reviews evaluate whether schools are doing what their charter suggests. Self-review is identified as evaluating and assessing the "effectiveness of the school in meeting the values it has adopted, fulfilling its obligation to the community, and providing the education it wants for its students"

(Education Review Office, 1994, p. 5). In other words, schools monitor their own practices to improve and enhance student achievement. However, it should be noted that the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office are government agencies which support the self-review process, therefore their view could be very different from the school staff who actually conducts self-review. The significant concept here is that schools build upon what they already do through these reviews, not necessarily introducing something new, to improve student achievement.

The Education Review Office (1994) indicated that self-review provides useful information for school development/improvement and that effective school development plans use the findings of self-review as base-line information for school improvement. The report by Austin et al. (1997) confirmed that the documents published by the Education Review Office, *Evaluation Report on Self-Review* in 1994 and the Ministry of Education package *Governing and Managing Part Two* in 1997, have guides to self-review which have been received very well by schools. This report also stated that there has been considerable good will towards becoming involved in self-review. This indicates a positive attitude by school staff and school management towards the self-review process and from my point of view, self-review should be received well by schools. Only then can schools make the most of these reviews to enhance and improve their student achievement levels.

For the purpose of this research, school development and school improvement are used interchangeably to mean the same thing as strong links are established between them in the literature. The next section identifies how self-review can impact on school development/improvement.

Self-Review for School Development/Improvement

The literature suggests that schools are taking the responsibility for reviewing their own practices and programmes and that this is the most effective and efficient way of bringing about school development/improvement (Clift, Nuttall & McCormick, 1987). The literature indicates that the primary purpose of school self-review

should be to focus on school improvement/development. McMahon (2002) suggested that many schools undertake self-review and are involved in school development programmes. For him, self-review, school development and strategic planning, in an educational context, are different names for the same process. I agree with McMahon (2002) in that all these processes involve finding out ways to improve student achievement.

Self-review allows schools to monitor what they are doing and why they are doing it (Ministry of Education, 1997*b*). I believe that the main aim of self-review should be to try and improve the teaching and learning that occurs in school and should, in general, aim at whole school development/improvement. Stoll and Fink (1996) argued that school improvement cannot happen without school evaluation or in other words without self-evaluation. In my view this is a very valid statement as I believe that there needs to be data supporting what you are doing and your decision making, and proving that what you are doing is having a positive impact on the students. For Stoll and Fink (1996), the primary purpose of school self-review is to focus on student achievement.

However, the Education Review Office (1994) has a different opinion. For them, the main purpose of self-review is to inform the school board and the principal about the schools' management systems, the curriculum, personal responsibilities, whether they are managed properly, the maintenance of the school property, and to provide a safe environment for staff and students. I agree that all the above reasons are necessary to enhance student achievement and I believe that without these, improving student achievement would be hindered. Therefore, another purpose of self-review could be viewed as a means of informing the parents, teachers, students and stakeholders about the performance of the school and, hence, focus on school development/improvement and any effective ways of bringing about change which are deemed necessary and effective in this rapidly changing world.

School development/improvement can only be possible if schools work to improve student achievement. Sutton (1994) believed that self-review is about ensuring that students get the best possible experience during their one chance at compulsory

education, as this is what they are entitled to. She claimed that there are two main reasons for this in schools; intrinsic (to provide reassurance that the schools are providing the best education) and extrinsic (for accountability purposes). I agree that these two reasons are valid reasons for conducting self-reviews. Especially the first one, as reassurance provides schools with positive motivation to be persistent with what they are doing. Similarly, Rogers and Badham (1992) argued that self-review's sole purpose is not to point out failure in schools but to work on ways of improving student achievements. They viewed self-review as an opportunity for constructive analysis of the difficulties so that schools can formulate possible strategies to overcome these problems and hence school development. This is my view as well. I believe that self-reviews are conducted to improve practice and inform us about the change that these programmes bring about and not reveal weaknesses.

Student achievement and school development/improvement and are well linked in the literature. Hopkins, Ainscow, and West (1994) defined school improvement as an approach to "educational change that has the twin purpose of enhancing student achievement and strengthening the school's capacity" (p. 68). Similarly, Carter (1998) stated that school improvement's ultimate aim should be to enhance student progress, student achievement and development. This links well with the purpose of self-review which is to improve student achievement as well. Hopkins et al. (1994) stressed the need for a holistic approach to self-review to ensure strategies are developed which directly address the culture of the school.

According to Hopkins et al. (1994), if school improvement ignores the culture of that school then it will not succeed. Bush and Middlewood (2005) stated that culture is related to the informal aspects of a school rather than formal elements. For these authors, symbols and rituals represent a school's culture rather than the formal structure of the school. However, Stoll and Fink (1996) stressed on the importance of the role that school culture plays in changing and improving a school. They claimed that school improvement plans are doomed to fail if the school's culture is not seen as a vital part of school improvement. For Bush and Middlewood (2005), culture is seen as significant as it helps those involved to

understand the school operations and seek ways to operate them more effectively. Hence, the authors identify school culture as a significant part of school improvement and believe that self-reviews should address this component when being conducted. Therefore, self-reviews should take into account the aspect of school culture if they are to improve the school. Through the process of self-review a school can then focus on school development/improvement and thus leading to improved student achievement. It will be interesting to see if the participants of this study view school culture as an important aspect to consider while conducting self-reviews.

In New Zealand, the *National Education Guidelines 4* expect school BOTs to regularly review their systems, policies and programs to achieve better outcomes for student learning (Ministry of Education, 1997b). To achieve school development/improvement, schools must use self-evaluation or self-review strategies. School improvement is ultimately about the enhancement of student progress, development and achievements. Therefore, it is essential to address issues concerning the quality of learning and teacher development (Halsall, 1998). Based on the literature, it is clear that school self-reviews are needed if school improvement is to take place and if schools are to be able to adapt to the changes that are likely to occur as time progresses (Carter, 1998). Self-review enables schools to critically examine the current situation and provide an essential foundation for developing strategies and objectives for further school development/improvement.

I believe self-review should ensure that schools take the responsibility for their own development/improvement and effectiveness. External evaluation is also needed for accountability purposes to ensure that schools are achieving at the highest possible level. It will be worthwhile to find out if the schools in this study are taking the responsibility to conduct self-reviews in their schools to improve student achievement, or if they are just conducting them because it is a mandatory requirement. Schools can use the process of self-review to identify the needs that they have, in order to improve and develop their school and enhance student achievement. Student achievement can also be enhanced through teacher

development and through teacher research and practice. Thus, the next purpose of self-review – to enhance student achievement through teacher research.

Enhancing Student Achievement through Teacher Research

There is evidence from highly successful school improvement projects to show that providing teachers with the opportunity to enquire about their practice leads to changed attitudes, beliefs and behaviour (Harris & Lambert, 2003). These changes affect teacher's classroom teaching and result in improved learning outcomes for students. It is important to first of all identify what teacher research is before proving that it helps enhance student achievement.

What is teacher research?

Schools employ teachers to help promote learning and to assist students to achieve academic success. Teachers are the people responsible for reporting on student behaviour and academic achievements. Therefore, it is hoped that most teachers have a very good understanding of the work of their students and the changes to their behaviour and academic understanding. This section identifies the importance of teachers as researchers as well as provides definitions of teacher research from the literature. Furthermore, this section also explores the link between teacher research and the self-review process, and the significance of teacher research in school development/improvement.

According to Carter and Halsall (1998), the purpose of teacher research “is to clarify aspects of an activity, with the view to bringing about beneficial changes – ultimately, to improve student progress, achievement and development, this being precisely the purpose of school improvement itself” (p. 73). This definition highlights the significance of teacher research. It suggests that school improvement can happen with improved student outcomes and that this is done by making change happen. Robertson and Hill (2005) stated that teacher research is a

“collaborative effort, a shared culture of learning” (p. 3) which generates the type of knowledge necessary for improved learning to take place. Similarly, Myers (1985) defined teacher research as any study conducted by teachers for their school system, class, or groups of students either collaboratively or individually.

Kincheloe (2003) viewed teachers as researchers as well as knowledge workers who reflect on their professional needs and current understanding. With this in mind, if teachers do their own research to help enhance student achievement, they will be aware of the complexities of the educational process in this changing world. Stenhouse (1975) commented that if teachers are involved in the research process they are more likely to see the need for change and apply their findings to allow change to happen to enhance student achievement. Calhoun (1994) acknowledged that the purpose of teacher research is to focus on changes in an individual classroom and emphasized that the aim is to improve and enhance student achievement – which is what self-review is all about. As the world is constantly changing, teachers themselves need to do the research to develop and implement their ideas in classrooms to improve student outcomes. Thus, a need for teachers to join the culture of researchers is recommended (Calhoun, 1994; Kincheloe, 2003; Stenhouse, 1975).

Individual teachers still hold the key to a successful long-term impact of change in their classrooms. Robertson and Hill (2005) stated that by being involved in teacher research processes, the teachers themselves recognize their role as change agents in their school. Robertson and Hill (2005) also believed that this generation of new knowledge and ideas is vital in times of rapid changes in schools for improved learning to occur. One reason why teacher research should be encouraged is that when the priorities change, funding runs out, and the policy makers and researchers move onto other things, it is the teachers who are left with the job of implementation (Carter & Halsall, 1998).

Teacher research to inform practice for school development

Teachers themselves are key contributors to school development/improvement. Carter and Halsall (1998) argued that teacher research is a powerful strategy for school development/improvement. Emphasizing this, Robertson and Hill (2005) added that action research and other teacher research methodologies are very powerful strategies for school and teacher development. The similarities between action research and self-review are discussed later in this chapter.

Hopkins (1993) suggested that teacher research lies at the intersection of a number of central policy initiatives. Furthermore, the engagement of teachers in teacher research is seen as teacher professionalism which is needed for school improvement to succeed (Carter & Halsall, 1998). Research has consistently shown that teacher development (which could be as a result of teacher research) is inextricably linked to school development and is an essential part of school improvement (Harris & Lambert, 2003).

Teacher research is used primarily for the purpose of improving both teaching and the quality of life in the classroom (Hopkins, 1985). Furthermore, according to Calhoun (1994) this type of research focuses on changes in a single classroom. He affirmed that to determine the priorities that the school place on specific student learning goals, it is essential to conduct a thorough analysis of student achievement results.

However, Cochran-Smith and Lytle (1993) indicated that teachers are expected to receive and understand the knowledge generated from professional researchers. That is, they are expected to “acknowledge the value of researchers’ work for their own professional practice and to accept its validity for their day-to-day decisions” (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993, p. 1). The values that researchers possess may be very different from the teachers. Therefore, it is significant if teachers carry out the inquiry process of doing the research, as they are more involved than researchers and know their students better (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1993). Teachers can also further their knowledge and expand their understanding of what they already know

and thus, find ways to contribute to research to enhance their professional development as well student development.

If teachers are unaware of their students' knowledge, and their successes and failures then the possibility of being able to help students achieve is quite limited. Rather, if teachers are keen to work as researchers and learn about their students, then they are putting more effort into motivating them to learn and thus will enhance student performance and their achievement. In addition to this, teachers who comprehend and appreciate educational research can conduct their own studies in their own classrooms and use it to make changes in their practice and activities (Lauer, 2006). I believe that, with the information that teachers gather for themselves, they can give the self-review process more meaning and power. For me, this is more effective than an outside researcher working to find the weaknesses and strengths of a school learning programme.

Koshy (2005) believed that the quality of educational experiences provided will depend on the ability of the teachers to stand back, question and reflect on their practice and continually strive to make the necessary changes. Classroom research generates hypotheses about teaching from the teacher's experiences, and encourages them to use this research to make their teaching more competent (Hopkins, 1985). The analysis and application of research findings by teachers as part of their routine professional activity has been shown to have a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning (Harris & Lambert, 2003). If teacher research is encouraged in schools then perhaps the quality of teaching and learning programmes can be developed to increase student achievement more effectively.

This part of the literature review has identified some common definitions of self-review and its links to school development/improvement. The purposes of self-review mainly identified in this section are that, self-review helps school development/improvement and enhances student achievement by adopting teacher research. The findings of teacher research should inform teachers' practice and this is exactly why teacher research and the self-review process are linked. Findings of self-review also inform teachers' practice. With the knowledge and information

gained through teacher research, teachers can help to identify areas of weakness and strength in their teaching. This will also inform the self-review process. The question we should ask ourselves is how do we go about executing the self-review process for it to be meaningful and successful? The next section highlights the main processes of self-review and why schools conduct them. It further details the similarities between the self-review process and the action research process used in New Zealand schools.

School Self-Review – The Process

As stated above, under the *National Administration Guidelines 2*, New Zealand schools are required to maintain an ongoing programme of self-review (Education Review Office, 2000). On 1st July 2000 the revised National Administration Guidelines (NAGs) came into effect. The *National Administration Guidelines 2* stated that:

Each Board of Trustees with the principal and teaching staff is required to:

- i develop a strategic plan which documents how they are giving effect to the National Education Guidelines through their policies, plans and programmes, including those for curriculum, assessment and staff professional development;
- ii maintain an ongoing programme of self-review in relation to the above policies, plans and programmes, including evaluation of information on student achievement;
- iii report to students and their parents on the achievement of individual students, and to the school's community on the achievement of students as a whole and of groups...including the achievement of Maori students.

(Education Review Office, 2000, p. 1)

This demonstrates the significance of the self-review process from a government perspective. Without conducting self-reviews to find out how groups of students are achieving, for example Maori students, schools cannot report on student achievement as they would not have sufficient evidence to back up their claims. School self-review therefore, is a process schools should use to monitor everything that happens in the school, to determine whether they are achieving the goals that they have set for the school in their school charter. It is an ongoing and planned process where the results are reported to parents and other stakeholders and which is mandatory for all New Zealand schools.

Self-review is a process that is not intended to be an end in itself (Education Review Office, 1994). It is seen as an ongoing process, rather than something with a beginning and an end (Curriculum Division, 2000). It is a cyclic procedure where actions are taken to improve the teaching and learning that happens in schools. The New Zealand Ministry of Education (1997b) claimed that self-review enables schools to critically inspect the present condition of the school and provide the necessary groundwork for developing strategic goals and operational objectives; and that self-review helps to identify strengths and needs, evaluate teaching programmes and also identifies professional development areas. This is done by gathering information on these aspects. According to the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1997b), the self-review process is viewed as a five-stage cyclic process. This cycle includes preparing for the review, gathering information, analysing information, documentation and communication and recommendation for action. There is another process which is very relevant and which exhibits similar features to the self-review process – the action research process.

Self-Review Process and Action Research Process

A major component of self-review is gathering information for the review. To do this, schools need to be involved in action research and data gathering (Clift et al., 1987). There are some common similarities between the action research process and the self-review process. Mills (2003) identified action research as:

... any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher-researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insight, developing reflective practice, effective positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved. (p. 5)

From the above definition, the features of action research can be seen as gathering information on teaching and student learning, developing reflective practice, developing the school environment as well as student outcomes. These same features are identified in the definitions of self-review. The Ministry of Education in New Zealand (1997*b*) defined self-review as a “regular process of school operations, with a planned programme which ensures that a range of operations is addressed over time” (p. 9).

According to Robertson (2005), action research is “a process involving cycles of action, which are based on reflection, evidence, and evaluation of previous actions and the current situation” (p. 76). Her definition supports action research as being cyclic. She further acknowledged that data gathered from this process are used to “inform future decisions and actions” (Robertson, 2005, p. 76). Similarly, Calhoun (1994) viewed action research as a three-step spiral process of planning which involves reconnaissance or fact-finding, taking action and fact-finding about the results of the action. Robertson (1999) also suggested that action research could provide teachers and principals “with strategies to successfully implement and sustain a school development process” (p. 12). Hence, linking action research to school development/improvement.

Bassey (1998) stated, “... educational action-research is an inquiry which is carried out in order to understand, to evaluate and then to change, in order to improve some

educational practice” (p. 93). For practitioners, action research can have several benefits. As Lauer (2006) pointed out these include reflection on educational practice, acquisition of research skills, as well as identifying strategies for improvement. Action research is seen as a powerful method for determining change and for monitoring change to ensure that it is worthwhile.

While all schools strive towards their development, there should also be a systematic approach to the process of self-review within the school development process. Hopkins et al. (1994) summarised this approach as identifying priorities, developing conditions to involve staff, selecting a strategy and making practical arrangements. Identifying priorities and selecting a focus is significant if schools are to have successful self-reviews.

Together, self-review and action research provide information for improving student outcomes and thus school development/improvement. Calhoun (1994) confirmed that the purpose of school-wide action research is student improvement which is similar to the purpose of self-reviews. Action research and self-review involve gathering data, analysing the data, and giving feedback to the necessary groups involved to improve student achievement. It will be interesting to see if the participants interviewed in this study link action research and teacher research with the self-review process as these two processes tend to exhibit similar features.

Towards Continuous School Development/Improvement

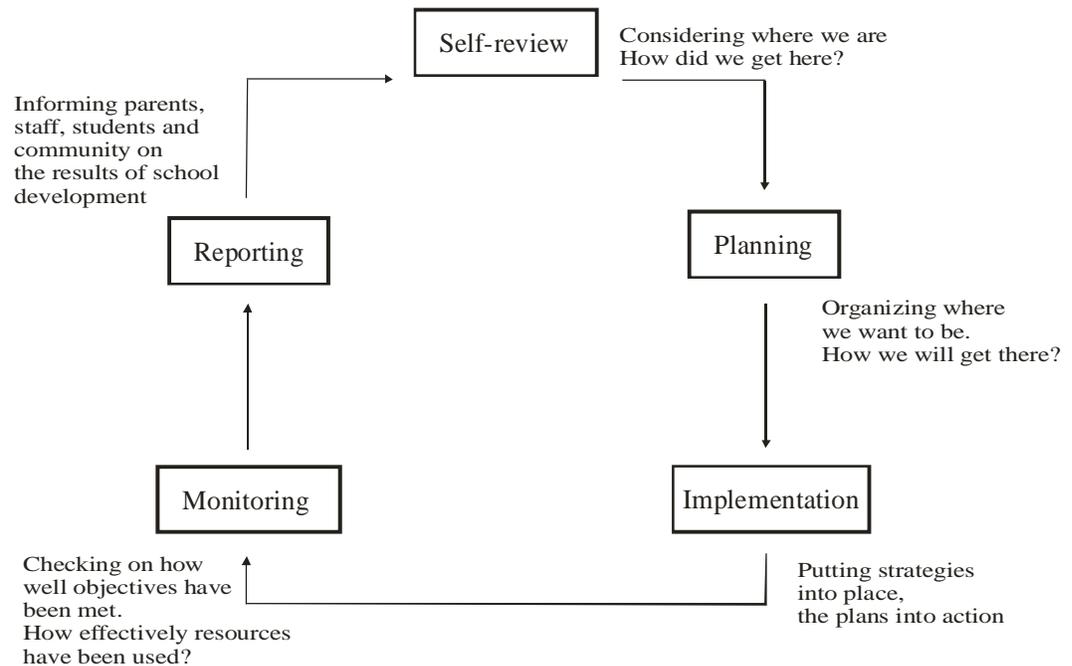
Since both the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office (New Zealand) link school development and school self-review it is important to define school development in this study. For Stewart and Prebble (1985) school development is defined as:

... a process by which members of an institution develop the capacity to reflect on the nature and purpose of their work together. It involves an emphasis on data gathering and analysis and

collaborative problem solving, structural change and program and curriculum development. (p. 7)

Stewart and Prebble's (1985) definition of school development is linked to self-review as it indicated that school development has features such as data gathering, data analysing, and also informing and reflecting on practice. According to the Ministry of Education (1997b), self-review is similar to the school development process mentioned above. Therefore, it could be said that both school self-review and school development are systematic processes where the emphasis is on improving student achievement and developing the school structure as a whole. In fact, the New Zealand Ministry of Education viewed self-review as part of the school review and development process as shown in Figure 1.

Fig: 1. Model for School Review and Development



Adapted from the Ministry of Education (1997b, p. 8)

Through this process schools can systematically plan to meet the requirements of the National Education Guidelines (Appendix B). In 2003 (April), the Ministry of

Education introduced a new school planning and reporting process that encourages all schools to adopt a culture of continuous improvement (Ministry of Education, 2003a). This process is based on an annual process of evidence-based self-review. To do this, schools need to investigate their current processes and student outcomes to find out where improvement is needed.

Two key elements of self-review to be considered by schools are emphasized in the *National Administration Guidelines 2* (Education Review Office, 2000). They are strategic planning and evaluation of student achievement (Figure 2). These are discussed separately below.

Strategic Planning

The Education Review Office (2000) stated that self-review should complement strategic planning which should provide the context for self-review. Strategic planning is seen as a “constant process of planning, monitoring and review” (Ministry of Education, 2003b, p. 5). Strategic planning provides the framework for self-review. It is not a solution for the problems that an organisation faces, rather it is a means by which problems and risks can be recognized and thus solutions can be identified or proposed (Radford, 1980). McMahon (2002) added that strategic planning is not about producing a plan but to about collecting data, making decisions based on the data and implementing the plan.

Strategic planning is identified as a management document that sets a course for the school (Education Review Office, 2000). The starting point for any strategic plan is “not the present but the future – a vision of where you want to be” (Education Review Office, 1995, p. 3). This could be said to be the basis for any kind of planning. Strategic planning is an essential part of school development and change. The Ministry of Education (2003a) saw self-review and strategic planning as part of the same process. That is using evidence to work out what steps are required to achieve school development/improvement. The Ministry of Education (1997b) suggested that results and recommendations arising from self-review can inform effective school planning and therefore, identify future issues and areas of change.

Fidler (1998) and Stewart and Prebble (1985) proposed strategic planning as a successful way to help schools guard against failure, but emphasized that the process of strategic planning must have appropriate structures and systems. Flexibility is an important feature of strategic planning. The Education Review Office (1995) also believed that flexibility is important. They documented that strategic planning should not be rigid, but should allow for guidance and adaptivity, since it is about dealing with future uncertainties. As Forshaw (1998) noted, the challenge is to ensure that the overall strategic direction remains clear, no matter how turbulent the environment is. All of these theorists acknowledged that the educational context is dynamic and that flexibility within the process is important.

Evaluation of Student Achievement Information

An important aspect of self-review in schools is the analysis of student achievement information and the identification of areas of underachievement, accounting for results by identifying strengths and weaknesses in the quality and effectiveness of teaching and learning, and developing strategies for improvement (Education Review Office, 2000). By adopting these strategies, schools can analyse their programmes to ensure they are of significant value to their students. If schools identify areas that need development then there is a possibility that they would address that issue in the near future. In any case, some kind of change is involved. Myers (1985) suggested that self-reviews should result in change, which is addressed later in this chapter.

The Ministry of Education (1997*b*) stated that the school self-review process enables schools to specifically:

... examine school wide and classroom organisation, consider the effectiveness of policies, identify strengths and weaknesses, determine which planning targets have been met, evaluate the effectiveness of teaching programmes, identify barriers to learning, monitor the progress of identified groups of students, identify

opportunities for curriculum and teacher development; and celebrate the good things that are happening. (p. 9)

Perhaps the focus of self-review programmes for the Ministry of Education is more centered on identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the students and monitoring their progress. Similarly, the Education Review Office (2000) also focused on using self-review programmes to analyse student achievement information, identify the strengths and weaknesses, and develop strategies for improvement. However, many schools seem to perform activities which evaluate school processes and procedures rather than analyse student achievement information. In the study discussed by the Education Review Office (2000), they stated that many self-review activities conducted by schools were concerned with school processes and organisation rather than student achievement.

Planning the Process of Self-Review

Strategies for school improvement/development should be developed. For this to happen, planning is vital (Ministry of Education, 2003*a*). Figure 2 shows the link between planning, self-review and student achievement (Education Review Office, 2000, p. 4).

The Education Review Office (2000) argued that “starting with student achievement information provides a focus for evaluating teaching and learning and maybe a better use of energy and expertise than trying to review everything with equal rigour” (p. 3). Here, the Education Review Office is stressing the idea of being selective when doing reviews and not just doing the reviews for the sake of doing them. The Ministry of Education (2003*a*) further stated that planning requires schools to set out goals and targets for student improvement and to make the changes that are necessary to bring about those improvements. Therefore, a focus should be established before gathering or collecting information as to where the school is headed before self-reviews are conducted.

Fig: 2. Planning, Self-Review and Student Achievement



Adapted from Education Review Office (2000, p. 4)

Another aspect identified in Figure 2 is that the planning of self-review results from input from two significant stakeholders. One is government requirements and the other is parental expectations. I believe there should be another included here – the school board’s expectations.

The planning of documents such as strategic plans, school policies, programmes, and student achievement information are used as the basis for self-review. In one urban primary school case study discussed by the Education Review Office (2000), the reviews were based on documents such as the school charter, student achievement statement, school promotional statement, annual educational plan and self-review policy.

While self-review for enhancing student achievement and school development/improvement is desirable, it is not without its disadvantages.

Disadvantages of School Self-Review Process

Self-review is a collaborative activity, designed to improve teaching and learning programmes (McRae, 2001). However, some literature has identified its drawbacks as well. McRae (2001) viewed self-review as a threatening process especially in schools where student achievements are extensively influenced by socio-economic factors. In New Zealand schools a low decile indicates that students are usually from a low socio-economic background and a high decile is an indication of the opposite.

Sutton (1994) stated that for self-review to be successful it must be voluntary and must not imposed on the staff. Some overseas studies (e.g. Nevo, 1995) claimed that when self-review is imposed teachers feel threatened and unappreciated. This is supported by Schollum and Ingram (1991*a*) as they stated that staff may wonder whether their judgments are being questioned. The self-review reports being available to external agencies may prove to be threatening for some. Schollum and Ingram (1991*a*) also reported that these fears have been identified in several studies as the main reason why self-review fails to achieve what it is supposed to achieve. Furthermore, McRae (2001) claimed that self-reviews could then be viewed as a means of finding fault with teachers or school programmes. However, the Education Review Office (1994) argued that this is not the case.

Unfortunately, there has been a lack of studies and literature specifically exploring negative effects of the self-review process. The New Zealand Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office do not identify any disadvantages of the process. Keeping in mind that these are the government organisations which promote the self-review process, it seems only natural that they would identify only the advantages of self-review. It will be interesting to see if the findings of this study identify any negative issues related to conducting self-reviews in schools. In

addition, it will be worth finding out if schools, especially teachers, see self-review as a threatening process. Even though there is a lack of literature in this area, it is evident that self-review processes could be used to find the areas of development in schools and could help to gain an understanding of strategies that could be used to develop these areas and thus bring about change.

School development/improvement is essentially a process of changing the culture of a school (Harris & Lambert, 2003). To achieve this, school leaders and teachers need to be committed to a process of change that involves them examining and changing their own practice.

Managing Change through School Self-Review

School self-reviews play an important part in change and change management and without effective school leaders the process of change through self-review would be almost impossible. This section details the roles that school leaders play in the process of self-review and change management. Furthermore, it details the issues that are faced by schools and school leaders when introducing change through self-reviews. Some of the reasons why some people resist change even if it benefits the school are identified.

Leadership and Change Management

As described by Fullan (2001), leaders face the challenge of how to cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex and rapid change. The process of change has been broadly categorized into three phases (Fullan, 1999). Phase one is the initiation stage where schools are beginning their work and seeking a focus for their improvement (Harris & Lambert, 2003). During the second phase, the implementation stage, schools are putting their improvement plans into action and in phase three, maintaining and sustaining, the process and practice of school improvement becomes an integral part of school development (Harris & Lambert, 2003). Even though these phases of change are described in detail, it is effective

leaders with the help of the school community, who actually makes the phases work.

Stego (1987) claimed that school leaders at different levels will, more than ever before, be dealing with change because the world is changing rapidly and we are preparing students for an unknown future. Self-reviews could reveal the need for change in particular learning areas in order to make learning more meaningful and beneficial to the students. At a local level school leaders need to deal with teachers, students, administrators, parents and the community. Research findings from different countries have revealed that the impact of school leadership was significantly related to school development/improvement (Hopkins et al., 1994; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

Effective School Leaders

Good leaders get to know their followers, learn from them, understand their attitudes and values, take time to treat them with regard and bring them together as a community (Shields, 2004). Researchers are increasingly examining the role of leadership in implementing and sustaining school improvement (Dahlstrom, Swarts & Zeichner, 1999; Foster & Hilaire, 2003). Five components of leadership are identified by Fullan (2001) as being necessary for change to happen. The first is moral purpose – having the desire to make a positive difference in the individuals and the society as a whole (Fullan, 2001). Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley and Beresford (2000) stated that effective leaders are informed by, and communicate clear sets of personal and educational values which represent their moral purpose for the school. Second, it is also vital that school leaders understand the change process and focus less on strategy and more on strategizing. Effective leaders should also prepare people for change so that it does not surprise or disempower them (Day et al., 2000). Third, according to Fullan (2001), the relationship with other staff is seen as significant. Adding to this, Day et al. (2000) stated that leadership means respecting teachers' autonomy, protecting them from extraneous demands, looking ahead and anticipating change.

The fourth component of effective leadership stated by Fullan (2001) is creating knowledge and sharing this with staff members. While the fifth component, coherence making, states that although the process of change is messy, the experience is essential and leads to creative ideas and solutions (Fullan, 2001; Noonan, 2003).

These five components could be regarded as characteristics of any effective leader. Without understanding the process of change, and the strategies needed to overcome any disadvantages faced, it is very unlikely that leaders will be able to implement change in their schools. As Fullan (2001) stated, leaders need to establish the need for making a positive difference in schools and maintain effective relationships with staff members and thus create a collaborative atmosphere where knowledge and experience is shared. DiPoala (2003) also stressed that building positive relationships is a key to effective leadership. DiPoala (2003) mentioned that principals and school leaders must be aware of two kinds of problems: “the socio-psychological form of change, and the lack of technical know-how of skills to make the change work” (p. 152). I feel that if these problems are not worked out before, then the overall goal of implementing change would not be achieved.

Transformational leaders are seen to foster in others the ability to see the potential and also, what is necessary when opportunity arises (Lewis, 1997). From his studies, Leithwood (1992) suggested that transformational school leader’s have three fundamental goals: helping staff members maintain and develop collaborative school culture, fostering teacher development, and helping teachers to solve problems together more effectively. Perhaps the goal of fostering teacher development and getting teachers to solve their own problems could be met by teacher research or action research. These programmes could be reviewed through the self-review process. Linking this to student achievement, Martin and Robertson (2003) emphasized the need for transformational leaders to explore ways of improving student outcomes by implementing quality teaching and learning programmes. These programmes need to be reviewed to find out if they have a positive effect on students and this is where self-review comes in.

Transformational leadership motivates the school staff to perform at their best for the sake of their students (Bush & Middlewood, 2005). Such a leadership has the capacity to take charge and get things done with teamwork and collaboration between members.

Foster and Hilaire (2003) claimed that most definitions of leadership reflect the assumption that it involves a process whereby influence is exerted by one person or group over others to structure and facilitate the activities and relationships in an organisation such as a school. To my mind, leaders need to exhibit these characteristics; however, I do not believe that influence can always result in positive consequences. Influence can sometimes be regarded as having a negative effect resulting in the breakdown of a school.

My belief is that leaders need to pass on the idea that the process of change or any other adjustments may not be accepted at first, but that they are essential if schools are to move forward in this changing era. It will be interesting to find out if the school leaders in this study reveal any of these components of leadership which make change possible in their schools. These ideas will guide some of the interview questions used in this study. In my view, leadership is about making the right choices, working on the priorities of the school, and being prepared to learn, share and change.

Managing Change

Since change and self-reviews are interwoven people need to understand ways of managing change (Schollum & Ingram, 1991*b*). Sergiovanni (1994) stressed that change can only be achieved through people's acceptance of responsibility to further their goals through their worldviews and actions. Leithwood and Jantzi, 1990, in Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991), cited some successful strategies for managing change. These include strengthening a school's culture, using a variety of technical assistance to motivate and strengthen cultural change, fostering staff development, engaging in direct and frequent communication with all members of the school community, and also sharing power and responsibility with others. It

could be suggested that self-review plays an important role in implementing change. Therefore, self-review perhaps could also identify successful ways to manage change in schools.

As stated by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (1997*b*), the primary responsibility of school leadership must be to establish an environment where learning is taking place. They also state that the process of change through self-review is one that requires effective leadership. Hopkins et al. (1994) identified a number of goals that they believe are important for school leaders to achieve. They suggested that a school leader's role is to gain full staff understanding and commitment and also to ensure good communication. This is very similar to the characteristics of leadership identified by Fullan (2001). Effective school leadership is also about making choices deciding on priorities and, of course, being willing to learn and change (Riley & MacBeath, 2003). To make change possible school leaders need to make the right choices about what they do and also how they do it. Furthermore, a school leader's role is to ensure that the process of change and self-review have appropriate priorities ascribed and hence, provide a style of leadership which is inclusive and allows for the participation of most school staff. Effective leadership in my view helps to manage change positively and thus result in better outcomes for the whole school.

As mentioned in Chapter One, self-review is part of the five stage-cycle of school review and development. The Ministry of Education (1997*b*) outlined five steps involved in the process of self-review in schools. The cycle includes; preparing for the review, gathering information, analysing results, documentation and communication, and recommendations for action. Rogers and Badham (1992) suggested that school self-reviews give an opportunity for a constructive analysis of difficulties so as to formulate a strategy for future action. This leads to planning for the future appropriately to raise the achievements of the school as well as students. This I believe is a significant way of managing change - using self-reviews to appropriately plan the change that is about to happen. The Ministry of Education (1997*b*) stated that managing change is one rationale for the use of school self-review. Therefore, to prepare students and communities, schools must adopt and

develop ways to keep up with change. The Ministry of Education (1997*b*) report added that schools will have to use self-review to make the necessary changes and adaptations. However, many teachers and other staff members resist change. The next section discusses some of these issues in detail.

Issues Relating to Change Management

Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) claimed that change can be imposed on us, but that sometimes we voluntarily participate in or even initiate change when dissatisfaction, inconsistency, or intolerability occurs in our present situation. In order to understand change, there is a need to identify both the forces that are operating to promote the change and those that are working to oppose it (Elkin & Inkson, 2000). Elkin and Inkson (2000) reported that this idea of forces that promote and oppose change was developed by Lewin in the 1930s when he suggested that what is occurring at any given time is the result of a field of opposing forces. Some of these are forces of change which promote or facilitate change and some are forces of resistance which inhibit or slow down the process of change. The balance of forces creates what Lewin referred to as a state of “dynamic equilibrium” (Elkin & Inkson, 2000, p. 289). It will be of significance to find out if participants in this study suggest any forces of change or forces of resistance or if they link change and transformation to self-review.

Preparing for Change

Many aspects of school management change as a result of minor changes in the school environment. By conducting self-reviews, schools should be able to cope with these changes. As changes occur in schools, the policies and practices for managing change need to be reviewed. This could also be done through self-reviews. The Education Review Office (1994) suggested that both planned and unplanned changes require a specific purpose for review of policies and procedures. Such changes include appointment of new staff, curriculum changes, new resources, and school roll changes.

In order to increase the effectiveness of any organisation it is necessary to bring about planned change. But the question to ask is why there is a need for change? Jones (2003) identified community attitude, new and improved technology, competition, changing legislations, changing demographics, and unpredictable catastrophes as some of the reasons why change is needed in schools. Schools face these issues every day. The number of students enrolling from different demographics and cultures may change, the competition for students and other members of the school community may change, the laws and regulations may change and schools need to find ways of coping with these changes. The Education Review Office (1994) stated that a self-review program is useful in managing and coping with change. MacGilchrist (2000) claimed that there are some who argue that for significant change to take place, schools must take control of their own improvement, whereas others who argue that external intervention is the only way to improve schools. However, whether it is internal or external intervention which leads to change and improves schools, there should be more focus on what change does to schools – does it facilitate or inhibit learning?

Change in itself may not necessarily be effective or beneficial. However, it is essential to be prepared for change in order to improve student achievement and the school as a whole. Fullan (2001) suggested that leaders face challenges of how to cultivate and sustain learning under conditions of complex and rapid change. Tronc (1977) viewed a school's major goal in an era of change as being to prepare children for an unpredictable future. Stressing this point, Hargreaves and Evans (1997) stated that no one is more aware of the turbulences of these changes than the teachers who have to implement them in schools. This indicates that teachers' practice is very relevant to school self-review. It also reveals that teachers need to be aware of the changes that occur with their students and by doing research they can make a significant difference to student achievement. The process of self-review can help address these challenges and changes, and identify new strategies which may help to improve the school system. In today's schools, it is possible to observe teachers who are change agents through their engagement in research activity (Halsall, 1998).

Change can be frightening and difficult, particularly in schools. The first thing to learn about change is that changes are always changing (Ramsey, 2006). There is no ultimate, final change to end all changes. However, there is always the possibility of improving and effective leaders bring about the necessary change as smoothly as possible. The ability to change things for the better is a true mark of an effective leader.

Resisting Change

Many issues relating to change are identified in the literature. Ramsey (2006) stated that administration may not want change to happen, as it will mean more work for them; students may not want change to happen, because it will involve higher standards, more tests, more studies and more time in school; parents may not want change to happen, as they like to keep the school as it was when they went to school; and school boards may not want change to happen, because of the increased cost, and the fact that if it does not work it will have been a waste of money and time. Change need not be this hard to implement and process. We need effective leaders in schools to bring about meaningful and positive change to schools and show staff and all the stakeholders that it can be a rewarding process. Ramsey (2006) described how effective leaders know that change is hard and support is soft, but that this should not stop the leaders from going ahead with the change.

Elkin and Inkson (2000) acknowledged that not all people like the concept of change and therefore, people resist the notion of change. Similarly, Kanter (1988) pointed out that leaders need to identify the reasons why people resist change and that knowing these may help them to identify what needs to be done to convince them to commit to change. Kanter (1988) identified some reasons why people resist changing.

First, for some people, ownership of their programmes or teaching methods is what counts, and when change occurs they can feel that they have lost control – these people need to feel that they are in control of the change (Kanter, 1988). Second,

people who resist change feel that they do not know what is ahead of them. This is regarded by Kanter (1988) as excess uncertainty. Third, some people act surprised, shocked and uncomfortable by the decision or request to change, as well as being afraid of losing face (Kanter, 1988). These people insist that their way is the only correct way and refuse to admit that the old ways need to be changed for the better.

The fourth reason for resisting change is due to the difference effect where change requires people to become aware of and to question common practice and habits (Kanter, 1988). The fifth reason is because change also requires more time and effort, which means that it is more work for teachers. Some people believe that teachers no longer have enough time to reflect on their own practices, which I believe is true in some cases. Kanter's (1988) sixth reason was that people who resist change have concerns about future competence. These people might question whether they will be able to cope with the changes and whether they will be effective in the future. There is also what Kanter (1988) described as the ripple effect where change can disrupt personal plans and activities. Past resentments are another reason why people resist change – they feel that until leaders listen to teachers, they will not listen to leaders. Finally, sometimes the threat is real (Kanter, 1988), for example, the threat of people losing status due to change.

For whatever reason people resist change, school leaders need to be able to deal with these situations. Kanter (1988) suggested that “resistance to change is not irrational: it stems from good and understandable concerns. Managers who can analyse the sources of resistance are in the best position to invent solutions to it” (p. 159). Nevo (1995) and Schollum and Ingram (1991*b*) also identified the issue of self-review as being threatening. This study is looking at self-review and the concept of change is linked to this. Therefore, it will be interesting to find out if participants of this study reveal any similar reasons why people do or do not resist changing. It is helpful for the school leaders and team leaders who implement change, to be aware of the reasons why people resist changing. Only then can they minimize some of these factors to make change possible in schools.

Summary

This chapter has outlined some common definitions of self-review and the reasons for conducting self-review in schools. Many purposes are identified, but the major purpose of self-review indicated in the literature is to develop and improve school and thus enhance student achievement. The literature indicates a strong link between self-review and school development/improvement. Self-review in schools could identify professional development needs, teaching performance and also the level of learning that takes place in the classroom. This chapter has also focused on the process of self-review detailing the advantages of self-review and some disadvantages. Self-review is closely linked to strategic planning and is a process that should underpin all areas of school operations.

This chapter has examined change and its links to self-review. When dealing with change management a strong focus was on effective leadership. The literature indicates that change is inevitable and it should be planned and managed properly for positive outcomes. The chapter details some of Kanter's (1988) reasons why people resist change and it will be interesting to see if any participants of this study mention these. Furthermore, this chapter has also identified links between teacher research and the self-review process. The following chapter describes the research methodology used to explore the research questions.

CHAPTER THREE

Research Methodology

Qualitative research is a set of interpretative activities, which explore a certain social phenomenon or experience holistically in a natural setting and discover how people make sense of their worlds.

(Cohen, Morris & Manion, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2001)

Introduction and Overview

In Chapters One and Two an overview of this study has been given and the current literature on the topic has been reviewed. As mentioned in Chapter One, a case study approach utilizing a qualitative method has been selected to investigate the self-review methods used in six New Zealand schools. This methodology chapter consists of two sections: the research design and the research process. The first section provides an overview of the research design that was used for this study. Participant involvement is justified and the data collection and interview process is explained. The process of data analysis is detailed and ethical considerations are discussed. The second section details the research process that was used in this study.

The paradigm selected for this study was qualitative as the study aimed to investigate how leaders view the processes and purposes of self-review and the roles that school leaders play in the process. The study also sought to identify the aspects of teachers' practice that impact on the school self-review process. The study explored the following research questions.

1. What are the processes and purposes of self-review in schools and what roles do leaders play in the process?
2. What aspects of teachers' practice have an impact on the self-review process?

Research Design

Qualitative Research – A Theoretical Framework

A qualitative approach is usually used in human and social sciences research (Creswell, 1994), which occurs in more natural and less controlled settings (Lauer, 2006). Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1987) believed that the intent of qualitative research is to understand a particular social event, procedure, role or interactions. Frankel and Devers (2000) characterised qualitative research as being a family where the goal is understanding the lived experiences of persons who share time, space and culture. Qualitative research can be regarded as a set of interpretative activities to discover how people make sense of their worlds (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Denzin & Lincoln, 2001). Similarly, Merriam (2002) suggested that qualitative researchers are interested in understanding what happens in a particular point of time and in a particular context. This research study was conducted in six different schools, to identify the participants' interpretation and lived experiences of the self-review processes used in their schools.

Qualitative methods are employed by researchers to examine the complex nature of people's actions, experiences and perceptions (Frankel & Devers, 2000). Self-review is seen as a process largely based on an investigative process which involves contrasting, comparing, replicating, cataloguing and classifying the objects of a study (Miles & Huberman, 1984), which accounts for the complexity of the process. To understand the complexity of the self-review process, a qualitative approach enabled me to gather detailed information from a range of research participants within each school by adopting semi-structured interviews as a data gathering tool for this study. This allowed me to develop a comprehensive description of the school self-review processes. It also helped to identify aspects of teachers' practice that influence the process of self-review in these six schools that were involved in the Great Expectations Project (the case for this study).

Using a qualitative approach provided flexibility in the research design. It allowed me as the researcher to respond to changing conditions (for example, decreasing the number of interviews due to unavailability) while the study was in progress. Flexibility favours an open and unstructured research strategy (Gibbs, 2002) rather than the design of the study being predetermined and structured. In this regard, the sample selection was small, nonrandom and theoretical (Merriam, 1998). As Creswell (1994), Merriam (1998), Mutch (2005) and Wiersma (1995) stated, the idea of qualitative research is to purposefully select the participants for the study, who will best answer the researcher's questions. Therefore, no attempt was made to randomly select participants for this study. The participant selection for this study was purposeful, to suit the purpose of the study, and therefore, I was able to approach people who understood the topic of this research. This was why the six schools of the Great Expectations Project were approached to participate in this study.

According to Creswell (1994), in qualitative research the design is open and emerging rather than the procedures being carefully worked out and fixed. It focuses on the interpretations including the problem, selecting the sample, collecting and analysing the data and writing up the findings (Merriam, 2002). A case study approach was selected as being the most suitable research design for this study. The reasons will be explained later in this section.

Rational for a Qualitative Methodology

This study employed Merriam's (1988) six assumptions as a framework for adopting a qualitative research methodology. These assumptions are detailed as follows.

1. As Merriam (1988) stated, qualitative researchers are concerned with the process rather than the outcomes or results and therefore, it is significant that the research process helps to explore the research questions of the study. This study details the stages of the interview process, the procedure for gathering the data, analysing

them, and ultimately produces a detailed description of the process and procedures of self-review used in the six schools. Being involved in these stages provided me with a more in-depth understanding of the self-review process. It also increased the validity of this research study.

2. Merriam (2002) and Druckman (2005) indicated that qualitative researchers are interested in the meaning, the participants' experiences, and their understanding of an issue, and this was what I was looking for in this study. Burns (2000) added that qualitative methods attempt to capture and understand individual definitions, descriptions and meanings of events. This study looked at individuals' perception and understanding of the self-review process. Participants' views, experiences and their understanding of the self-review process were compared to identify the similarities and differences in their perceptions. Furthermore, I was keen to explore the participants' experiences in the school self-review process.

3. According to Merriam (1998), the primary instrument for data collection and analysis should be the researcher. This view is supported by Bogdan and Biklen (1982). Researchers spend a significant amount of time in the field collecting data and getting to know the context of the natural setting. Merriam (1998) acknowledged that qualitative research is about inquiry where the participants are approached in their natural environment. She stated that: "Qualitative research is an umbrella concept covering several forms of inquiry that help us understand and explain the meaning of social phenomenon with as little disruption of the natural setting as possible" (p. 5).

The data collection, transcription of the interviews and analysis of the data were undertaken by myself as the researcher. The advantage is that I had the opportunity to be responsive at the time and clarify any doubts about the information that was gathered. I could also confirm confidentiality for participants as well as attain their trust.

4. Qualitative research involves fieldwork (Merriam, 1998). The researcher is physically present in all data collection stages to record or observe behaviour.

Marshall and Rossman (1989) suggested that the researcher enters into the world of the participant and through ongoing interactions seeks the participant's perspectives and meanings of the issue in question. This is one of the reasons why qualitative research was used as a framework for this study. In this research, I was present at each individual school with each participant to conduct the interviews. Being present in the field helped me to gain a better understanding of the school context, and the participants' attitudes and to clarify any questions that they had about the study.

5. Merriam's (1988) fifth assumption was that qualitative research studies were descriptive. Locke, Spirduso and Silverman (1993) also perceived qualitative research to be descriptive. The similarity of these writers' views confirmed that qualitative research was a process where the research was largely descriptive and was based on the views and understanding of participants of a certain phenomenon. This study is written as a single case study describing in detail how self-review was conducted in these six schools. The six schools of the Great Expectations Project form the case in this study.

6. Qualitative research is inductive, in the sense that the researcher builds concepts, hypothesises and draws conclusions based on the findings obtained from the study rather than from tests and existing theory (Merriam, 1988). This study used an inductive method and all conclusions were drawn from the data collected from participants and then linked back to the literature. Rather than confirming a predetermined social theory, qualitative research aims to discover and understand how people relate to their social surroundings (Creswell, 1994). According to Burns (2000), qualitative researchers do not search for data that will support or disprove their hypothesis. On the contrary, they build up theories and suggestions from the data they collect from the study (Burns, 2000).

To sum up, the goal of qualitative research is to elicit understanding and meaning, with the researcher acting as the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Qualitative research uses fieldwork, the analysis is inductive and the findings are

richly descriptive. Therefore, these assumptions were highly relevant and suitable for this research study.

Case Study Design – Defining the Case

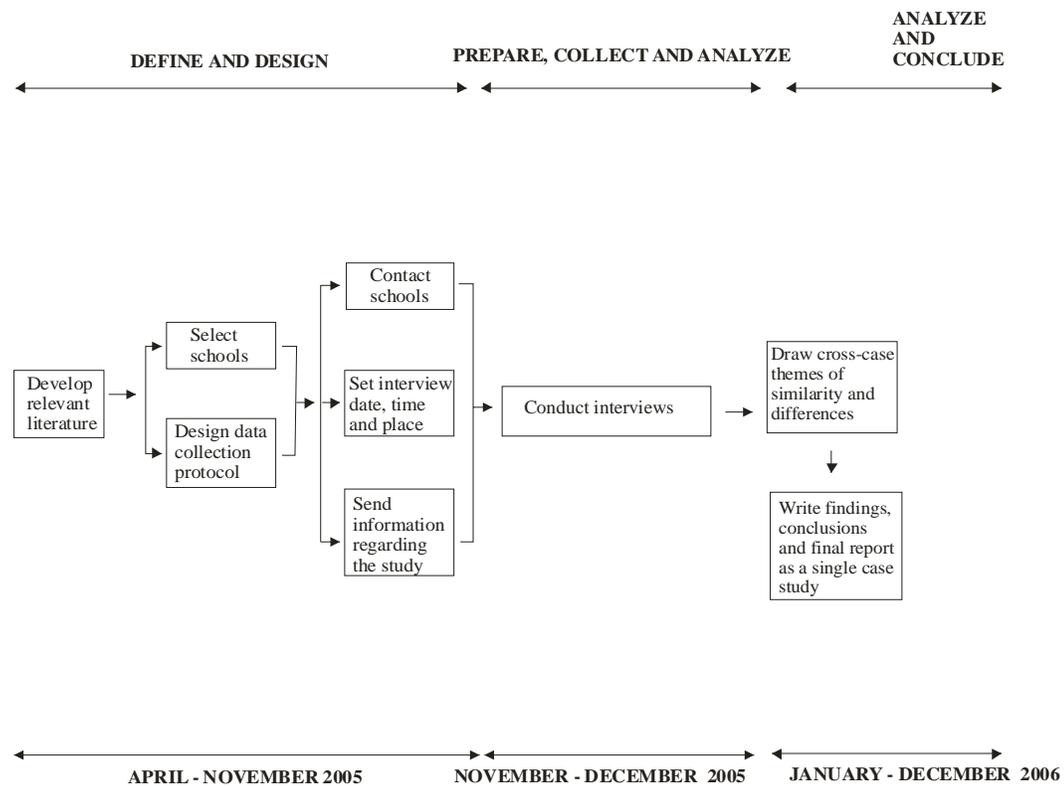
A case study design was employed in this research to allow the researcher to have a better understanding of the *case* – the six schools that participated in the Great Expectations Project. The case is a specific one (Stake, 2005). The process of conducting a case study begins with selecting a ‘case’ and this Merriam (2002) said is done purposefully. The case or the ‘unit’ studied might be a person, an institution or collection of institutions (Miles & Huberman, 1994; Pring, 2004). The case for this study was defined as the six schools which participated in the Great Expectations Project. According to Stake (2006), a definition of the case is not independent of interpretative paradigm or methods of inquiry. Similarly, Tolich and Davidson (1999) added that by focusing on the specific case it allows the researchers to collect rich data.

Yin (2003) stated that the design of a case study requires the researcher to think very carefully about the case which serves a specific purpose within the overall span of inquiry so as to either show (a) a literal replication (predicts similar outcomes) or (b) a theoretical replication (predicts contrasting outcomes but for predictable reasons). And therefore, theoretical framework later becomes the vehicle for generalizing to new cases. Figure 3 provides a case study design which was adapted from Yin (2003).

Pring (2004) identified three assumptions which underpin a case study. Firstly, it is often assumed that researchers come with an open mind and therefore let the data “speak for themselves” (Pring, 2004, p. 41). Secondly, because of such an intense study of particulars, it is not possible to make generalizations from the findings of these studies. Thirdly, questions emerge about the “objectivity of the research, the reality which is exposed and the truth of the claims being made” (p. 42). In this regard, Pring (2004) argued that a case study produces the distinctive features of a

particular situation without which it is impossible to fully understand the situation or the case.

Fig: 3. Case Study Design



Adapted from Yin (2003)

According to Stake (2005), a case study is not a practical choice but a choice of what is to be studied. He noted that researchers choose to study the *case* by whatever method possible. A case study design is employed to gain, “an in-depth understanding of the situation and meaning for those involved. The interest is in the process rather than the outcome, in context rather than a specific variable, in discovery rather than confirmation” (Merriam, 1998, p. 19).

Case studies possess many purposes. They are seen as very valuable as preliminaries to major investigations as they are “so intensive and generate rich subjective data as they may bring to light variables, phenomena, processes and

relationships that deserve more intensive investigations” (Burns, 1994, p. 318). Case studies, as they are unique (Burns, 1994), may be seen as valuable in their own right. They are a way of organising social data for the purpose of viewing social reality (Best & Kahn, 2006). They examine a social unit as a whole, in this case the six schools of the Great Expectations Project. A case study may be the best possible way of describing the phenomenon or problem. In addition, Stake (1995) noted that the purpose of the case study method is to probe deeply and to analyse intensely the many aspects of the life of the studied unit. The research questions in this study were ‘What’ questions, which Yin (2003) regarded as exploratory case studies. Hence, the purpose of this case study was to explore a situation using the participants’ knowledge and understanding for the use of the study.

Limitations of Case Studies

Qualitative case studies do present some issues. In this study, four issues are relevant: subjective bias, generalization, time and information overload, and validity (Burns, 2000). These are discussed separately below.

Subjective Bias

Maxwell (2005) regarded subjective bias as one of the major threats to the validity of qualitative data. Subjective bias occurs when the personality of the researcher influences the findings and the conclusion of the study. To minimize subjective bias in this study, I sent the interview transcripts to the participants before they were analysed. This would mean that the data collected were consistent with the participants’ views. The interpretations of the data were also discussed with my supervisor.

Generalization

Burns (2000) and Yin (2003) highlighted the fact that case studies provide very little evidence of scientific generalization. However, the goal of this case study was

to expand the knowledge of theories and not to generalize. According to Stake (2006), generalization should not be emphasized in all research. Damage can occur when the commitment to generalize is so strong that the researcher's attention is drawn away from the features important for understanding the case itself.

Time and Information

The case study method can produce a massive amount of information and is very time consuming (Burns, 2000; Yin, 2003). So, Burns (2000) suggested that the solution lies in choosing a manageable focus, theme or topic and analysing the data as it comes rather than leaving it until the end. Therefore, this study focused on analysing the data as it was being collected to minimize overload. As the interviews were transcribed, the data was coded into major categories and then these categories were again divided up into themes.

Validity of the data

Any research conducted in an educational setting will exhibit its own strengths and weaknesses. The most significant part of choosing any methodology is to provide the researcher with tools to address the research questions and this results in research of a high quality. Validity of the data should be addressed in any research.

In essence, validity refers to how well a procedure or study measures what it is supposed to measure (Bell, 1993; Gray, 2004; Graziano & Raulin, 1989). According to Hammersley (1992), the data is valid, "if it represents accurately those features of the phenomena that it is intended to describe, explain or theorise" (p. 69). Similarly, Cohen et al. (2000) claimed that if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless and stressed that validity is an important key to effective research. These authors further claimed that validity can be addressed through honesty, depth, richness and the scope of data achieved. To assist with the validity of this research study, I have focused mainly on Merriams' (1998) two different approaches to enhance the internal validity: triangulation and member checking.

Internal validity seeks to demonstrate that the explanations of an event which is addressed by a piece of research can actually be sustained by the data (Cohen et al., 2000). The writers also commented that the findings must accurately describe the phenomena being investigated. Internal validity is also referred to the extent to which casual conclusions can be drawn (Bickman & Rog, 1998; Gray, 2004). Graziano and Raulin (1989) stated that internal validity is the accuracy of the research study in determining the independent and dependent variables. According to Hammersley (1992), internal validity requires attention to the kind and amount of evidence needed. Internal validity in qualitative research (i.e. interviews) requires attention to plausibility and credibility, the kinds and amount of evidence required, and the clarity of the kinds of claim made from the research (Cohen et al., 2000). The internal validity of a qualitative research study typically involves the issue of credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility is defined as the extent to which the data, data analysis, and findings are accurate and trustworthy (McMillan, 2006). One of the most common techniques used to enhance the credibility is triangulation.

Triangulation

Triangulation can help improve the validity of research findings (Merriam, 1998). Triangulation is the use of two or more methods of data collection in a study to increase the validity of the study. It is a powerful way of assisting internal validity particularly in qualitative research (Cohen et al., 2000; Hendricks, 2006; Miles & Huberman, 1984). By using triangulation, researchers attempt to balance the weaknesses and strengths of methods that they are using for the study under investigation (Mason, 1993). According to Stake (2005), a case study gains credibility by systematically triangulating the description and interpretations, and not just in a single step but continuously throughout the period of the study. Three specific types of triangulation mentioned by Denzin (1978, as cited in Janesick, 1994) have been used to increase the validity of this research study. These include, *time triangulation*, *space triangulation*, and *person triangulation*. The application of these three types of triangulation is explained in detail in the research process.

Member Checking

Member checking is another way of increasing the credibility of data. In this study, member checking was done by sending back the transcripts to participants and asking for additions, deletions or changes to be made to the transcripts if necessary. Lauer (2006) stated that this technique is a way to verify the accuracy and authenticity of the data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that member checking involved “verification, emendation, and extension of construction” developed by the researcher (p. 268). The data in this study were analysed only after member checks were completed.

Qualitative Interviewing

Qualitative interviews were used as a method of data gathering for this study. Interviews have played a central role in educational research throughout the twentieth century and they have many purposes (Tierney & Dilley, 2002). Interviewing is a method that is extensively used in qualitative research.

Interviewing as a Research Tool

According to Brenner, Brown and Canter (1995), qualitative interviews allow both parties – the interviewer and the interviewee - to explore the meaning of the questions and the answers involved and furthermore clarify any misunderstandings from both sides, which is not possible when questionnaires are being completed. In this regard, the questions in this study were designed to be semi-structured, which allowed the interviewee to respond and elaborate more on the subject rather than just giving yes or no answers (Denscombe, 2003). Moreover, there was more emphasis on the participant to detail points of relevance if the need arose. Thus, qualitative interviews were used to gather information on participants’ views and their understanding of self-reviews.

In order to elaborate, Cohen et al. (2000) advocated probing to obtain more complex data quickly. Furthermore, semi-structured interviews allow for clarification and limits non-response to questions (Burns, 1994). The researcher has the advantage of clarifying any doubts and to ask for any clarifications from the participants if the need arises. As Hughes (2002) pointed out, interviews enable participants to discuss and express how they feel and regard a situation from their own point of view. Interviews can provide information regarding an individual's experiences, knowledge, beliefs and opinions as well (Best & Kahn, 2006). In addition, Cohen et al. (2000) described interviews as a means of pure information transfer from the participants. Mutch (2005) further suggested that qualitative interviews are generally semi-structured or unstructured, of longer duration and conducted one to one. This is because the aim is to get an in-depth understanding of the topic from the participant's perspective. The time constraint can be regarded as a disadvantage as well. Participants could refuse to spend so much time with the researcher explaining the questions in detail as this can affect their time to do their own professional work.

Qualitative interviews focus on in-depth exploration of an issue. Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall (1994), Burns (1994), Hughes (2002), and Thorndike (1981) agreed that interviews can permit the in-depth exploration of issues which maybe too complex to investigate through quantitative methods. Interviews also serve the purpose of finding out what is in and on someone's mind (Hughes, 1996; Patton, 1990) and also those things that cannot directly be observed (Creswell, 1994; Denscombe, 2003). Due to the time constraints of this study, I chose not to observe the self-review process and the roles of principals and teachers. However, using interviews allowed me to gain an in-depth understanding and exploration of the self-review process in the six schools, which is the *case* for this study. The purpose of qualitative interviews Warren (2002) stated was to "derive interpretations, not facts or laws, from respondents talk" (p. 83). Emphasizing the fact that, indeed, interviews help to gain meaning from a situation.

Many researchers identify interviews as a possible means of establishing and maintaining rapport between the interviewer and the interviewee (Best & Kahn,

2006; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000; Fowler, 1984; Thorndike, 1981). Through semi-structured interviews, rapport can be established between myself and the participants and they can ask for any clarification while the interview is conducted. Denscombe (2003) further emphasised that with semi-structured interviews, there is a clear limit of issues for the researcher to discuss. Maintaining rapport with the participants should provide a very comfortable environment to be established between myself and the participants and therefore, allows the participants to freely express their views and express understanding.

However, because the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, interviewing was seen as an appropriate means of gathering detailed perspectives and experiences. They provided rich data for describing the actions taken by the principals and teachers during and after the self-review process. Therefore, qualitative interviews were the best method to collect information for this study.

The Role of the Researcher

Qualitative research is interpretative research. Therefore, the biases, values and judgments of the research are stated explicitly in the research report and researchers need to be aware of any personal biases and how they may influence the investigation (Creswell, 1994; Merriam, 1998). The researcher undertaking any type of research should exhibit certain characteristics and have certain values regarding the research process. Yin (2003) listed some commonly required skills of a case study researcher. The researcher should be able to pause and ask good questions and interpret the answers. They should also be able to create rich dialogue. The researcher should be a good listener and not be trapped by his or her beliefs or views. They should also have a firm grasp of the research topic (Yin, 2003). According to Yin (2003), the researcher should also be unbiased by preconceived notions and be sensitive and responsive to contradicting theories. Therefore, I used semi-structured interviews to understand the participants' beliefs and understanding of the self-review process. Using semi-structured interviews

allowed me to ask questions and to clarify issues as well as create rich dialogue between myself and the interviewees (Yin, 2003).

Merriam (1998) stated that researchers must have an enormous tolerance for ambiguity since there are no set procedures or guidelines to be followed when using case study designs. In order to gain more information, the researcher may need to make decisions on the spot whether to continue an interview session or be silent. Therefore, I used semi-structured interviews which allowed probing and pausing as was needed.

Data Analysis

Qualitative data analysis is the analysis of a distinctive form of data, language and texts (Gibbs, 2002). In this case, dealing with large interview transcripts. The process of data analysis is eclectic; there is no right way (Tesch, 1990). Data analysis is about describing details, incorporating quotes and making interpretations of the events (Creswell, 2002). Lauer (2006) described the data of qualitative research to be narrative descriptions and observations. Therefore, she suggested that organisation is the most important factor in the analysis of the qualitative data and vital if the researcher is to make sense of the data collected. In this study, the data gathered from the participants was organised into categories and themes for coding, as suggested by Lauer (2006).

Early Analysis of Data

Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended that early analysis of data to help the researcher cycle back and forth rethinking about the existing data and generating strategies for collecting new and often better data. They further advised interweaving data collection and data analysis. It was significant for me as the researcher to interweave these processes, otherwise data reduction and data coding for data analysis would have been complex. Creswell (2002) stressed that the organization of data is critical in qualitative research as there is an enormous

amount of information gathered during the study. To decrease the complexity of data analysis, it is recommended that early analysis of data is significant (Creswell, 2002).

Data Reduction

It is important that the researcher have a good understanding of the data as they are being collected. According to Hendricks (2006), repeated reading of data allows the generation of themes and categories. Data reduction refers to the process of “selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data” that appears in the transcripts (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 10). Similarly, Scott and Usher (1999) and Gibbs (2002) described the data reduction process as simplifying the data so that they are manageable by including what is relevant and excluding what is irrelevant. During the stage of data reduction codes can be listed in the margins of the transcripts and, according to Hendricks (2006), this significantly helps the initial process of data exploration. As data collection proceeds in the research study, Miles and Huberman (1994) recommended further data reduction. For instance, they suggested that themes could be teased out, summaries could be written and codes could be generated. This stage of data reduction in the data analysis process continues to repeat itself until the case study report is finally complete. Data reduction can therefore be regarded as a form of analysis that sorts, sharpens, focuses, removes and organises data in such a way that final conclusions can be drawn and verified.

Data Coding

Codes are tags or labels attached to groups or “chunks” of varying sized words, phrases or sentences (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 56) assigning meaning to the descriptive information gathered for the study. According to Burns (2000), data coding helps the researcher to focus on essential features of the study as they develop and look for patterns and themes (Mutch, 2005). It also helps the researcher to identify common themes and categories. Lauer (2006) stated that

coding is the process of organizing data and facilitating data reduction. Furthermore, Wiersma (1995) stated that “in essence, it is the process by which qualitative researchers see what they have in the data” (p. 217). One method of creating codes preferred by Miles and Huberman (1994) is to create provisional codes prior to data collection.

Ethical Considerations

High-quality education research studies follow established rules of research ethics (Lauer, 2006). Different procedures are used to avoid researcher bias. In order to protect the participants as well as the researcher, codes of ethics are drawn up to regulate the conduct of the research (Punch, 1986). Since, the objects of inquiry in interviewing are humans, extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to these individuals. Informed consent, and privacy and confidentiality are the major ethical considerations that were taken into account in this study. However, Punch (1994) noted that codes of ethics should be used as general guidelines prior to fieldwork but should not intrude on full participation.

Informed Consent

Warren (2002) stated that informed consent seeks to protect the privacy of participants, and protect against any breaches of confidentiality and distress which may occur by participating in a study. This is important from my point of view in relation to research ethics. It could be argued that truly informed consent is impossible in qualitative research studies because events in the field and the researcher’s actions cannot be anticipated (Miles & Huberman, 1994). According to Christians (2005), proper respect for human freedom generally includes two conditions. First, participants must voluntarily agree to participate in a study. Second, this agreement must be based on full and open information. This is supported by Bibby (1997). He added that in order to obtain informed consent, information given should include the nature and methods of research, its purpose, the consequences of publication and any other factors that might influence the

participant's willingness to participate. Bibby (1997) also stressed that "participants should be informed of any changes in these considerations which occur in the course of the research" (p. 117). Thus, in this study an information letter and a consent form were sent and discussed with the participants to address these issues.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Participants have the right to remain anonymous (Bibby, 1997). Confidentiality must be assured by the researcher as the primary safeguard against any unwanted exposure (Christians, 2005) and confidentiality and anonymity are usually promised. Miles and Huberman (1994) pointed out that if the privacy of the participants has been breached then the question of the report's impact when it is fed back to the respondents becomes central. Thus, they recommended the use of member checks to verify the interpretations and conclusions. According to Punch (1986), there is a strong agreement among researchers that the settings and participants should not be identified in any print, nor should they suffer any harm or exposure resulting from research studies. While these conditions are set to protect the privacy of individuals, Christians (2003) noted that pseudonyms and locations are sometimes recognized by insiders and therefore, "what researchers considers innocent is perceived by participants as misleading or even betrayal" (p. 218). Therefore, it is significant that the data is accurate and valid. To ensure this, a member check was conducted in this study. Also, the participants were given pseudonyms to protect their identity. Member checks were also carried out to verify interpretations and conclusions derived from the data.

Research Process

This part of the chapter provides an overview of the research process that was used for this study. The first section outlines the chronology of this research and then details a timeline that was followed during the research study. The second section describes how the participants were contacted and approached. The process of obtaining informed consent and how the interview sessions were conducted are detailed. The third section details the data analysis procedures and the processing of the information.

The Chronology of the Research

In April 2005, I had my initial discussions with my supervisor to identify a topic for my thesis and to develop appropriate questions to be researched. After a topic and questions were identified, I started reading relevant materials and developed a proposal which was submitted to the University of Waikato Ethics Committee. The University of Waikato Ethics Committee approved the study in late October 2005. The data gathering for this research study took place in November and December of 2005.

Initially all six schools were asked to provide at least two people for interview, to enhance the validity and depth of the research. However, because the last two months of the year are the busiest for all schools, one school ended up giving just one interview. The data collected were continuously analysed to view the themes that were emerging from the interviews. The participants were sent their individual transcripts at the beginning of 2006. Regular meetings and communication via e-mail took place between my supervisor and I while the chapters were drafted and completed.

Selecting and Approaching Participants

The participants selected from the six schools (the *case*) were the principal, the researcher for the Great Expectations Project, and a teacher who took part in the project. For schools A, B, and C the researcher for the Great Expectation Project was the principal of each school. The principal and the researcher from the Great Expectations Project were chosen because as the school leaders, they can describe the role that the school plays in the self-review process and detail their understanding of the process. Additionally, these leaders can describe the various activities that the school has used to review their different programmes. Furthermore, they would be able to identify any aspects of teachers' research as well as their own that have influenced the self-review process. The school leaders would also be able to comment if participating in the Great Expectations Project has changed their views on any school programmes or policies. Finally, a teacher was also selected so that he or she could describe their role in and understanding of the self-review process and also detail any aspects of teacher research which have influenced the review process.

Denscombe (2003) stated that a good case study requires the researcher to defend and argue why particular cases were suitable for the study. The six schools involved in the Great Expectations Project form the case for this study. The information about the schools and the participants selected for the study are given in Table 1. The reasons for selecting these six schools were:

1. Access to participants was easier as the school had already given their consent to participate in any study under the Great Expectations Project;
2. These schools were focusing on teacher research which was of importance to this study as well, as I was keen to find out if the schools saw the link between this research and the self-review process.
3. Schools were of different sizes and they were within a range of economic and socio-economic settings (there were schools from decile 1 to decile 10).

Table 1 details information on school and the number of participants from each school. Here, researcher refers to the person involved in the Great Expectations Project.

Table: 1. Information on Participating Schools

School	Decile	Roll	Participants
School A	2	547	Principal/Researcher and a teacher (Total: 2)
School B	1	125	Principal/Researcher and a teacher (Total: 2)
School C	1	351	Principal/Researcher and a teacher (Total: 2)
School D	5	360	Principal, and Researcher (Total: 2)
School E	10	621	Principal, Researcher and a teacher (Total: 3)
School F	3	612	Researcher (Total: 1)

Data Collection

The data collection procedure can be complex and difficult. I was mindful that if it was not done well, the entire case study could be jeopardized. The data collecting process began when the participants of the Great Expectations Project were contacted by e-mail (Appendix C) briefly outlining my research project. If they were willing to participate, they were also asked to provide contacts for the school principal and a teacher who were involved in the Great Expectations Project. The reason for having more than one person from each school was to enable person triangulation of the data. All participants were sent an information letter about the study (Appendix D) and a consent form (Appendix E).

The time and place for the interview session was selected by participants at their convenience. The participants were contacted by phone or e-mail to confirm the times for the interview sessions. For the purpose of this study, a semi-structured interview schedule was used. The advantage was that I could make the questions flexible but still keep to a set target. As Burns (2000) stated, this permits a greater flexibility than close-ended interviews and permits a more valid response from the participants. Each interview was tape recorded. Working with tapes and transcripts eliminates many problems faced by researchers with the unknown accuracy of field notes and with the limited public access to them (Peräkylä, 1997).

The consent forms were collected from the participants during the interview session. The semi-structured interview schedule gave me an opportunity to be flexible and probe for more information. After the completion of the interview sessions, I transcribed each interview. A copy of the transcript was sent to participants for them to change, delete or add information as they wished and to grant permission for me to analyse the raw data to be used in this study. A letter was sent with the transcript informing the participants of this (Appendix F).

Interviewing

Semi-structured interviews were used to gain in-depth information from the participants. Probes were included in the interview schedule (Appendix G) while others were formulated at the time of interviewing based on the information given by the interviewee. This helped me to delve deeper into their understanding and to gain more information from their responses. The interviews varied in length, from 20 to 45 minutes. A total of 12 interviews were conducted with participants from the six schools.

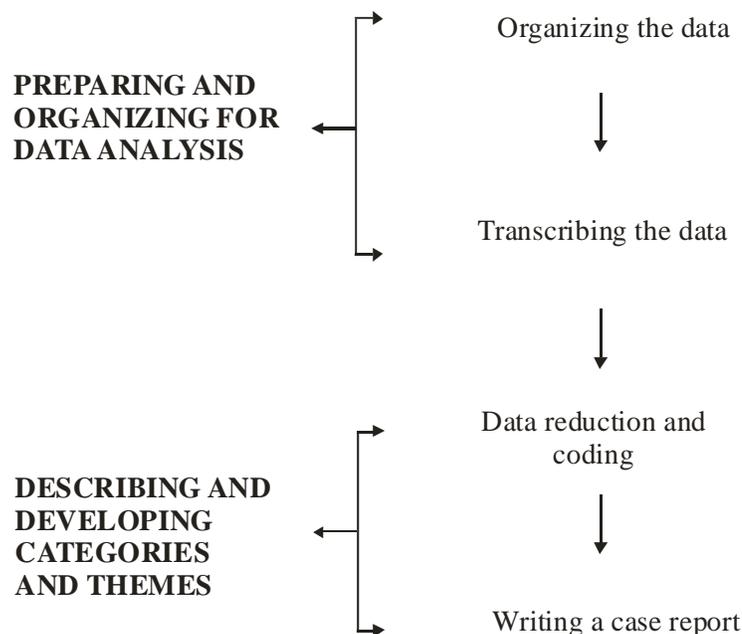
The raw data collected during this study was kept confidential at all times. My supervisor had access to them while the data analysis took place. All audio-tapes were kept with me in a secure place.

I used the three specific types of triangulation mentioned by Denzin (1978, as cited in Janesick, 1994), to increase the validity of this research study including *time triangulation*, where the data were collected over the same period of time on the same phenomenon. All schools were approached at the end of the year when the school was at the stage of rounding up any self-reviews they had conducted any during the year and also they would be planning what reviews to conduct the following year. This meant that the data would show consistency. Therefore, I attained different perspectives of self-review from the participants from the same school. This increased the triangulation of the data collected from the same school.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for the study was done simultaneously with data collection and data interpretation. Figure 4 shows the procedure that I used for data analysis in this study.

Fig: 4. Procedure for Data Analysis



Adapted from Creswell (2004)

Preparing for and Organising Data Analysis

Organising Data

The initial preparation for analysing the data required organising the information gathered and transferring them to text form so that they could be analysed. I used Burns' (2000) method for keeping field notes. My diary consisted of three parts:

Personal file: This file was used for reflections and descriptions of the setting of the interview sessions. All my thoughts and the impressions obtained from interviewing the participants were written in a very frank manner. Part of this file is shown in Appendix H.

Transcripts file: All copies of transcripts were attached to this file. There were large margins on both the right and left of the transcript (Appendix I). The left margin was used to record the tape reading to locate the conversation on tape and the right margin was used to write codes for analysing the data and to write down themes that emerged from the data.

Analytic File: This file was used to jot down the categories and themes which emerged from the interviews and from the analysis of the data (Appendix J).

Transcribing the Data

The interviews were transcribed so that the text could be analysed later. Hendricks (2006) stated that qualitative data needs to be converted to text form before it can be searched for themes or categories. At the beginning of each interview transcript, the participant's pseudonym and the interviewer name was given. Also included in the beginning was the date, time, place and other relevant information about the interview. An example of a transcript is in Appendix I.

Describing and Developing Themes

Data reduction

While the interviews were being transcribed they were repeatedly read so that categorization of themes and topics was made possible and for me to obtain a general sense of the information. At this stage of reading through the transcripts notes were made in the right-hand margin of the transcript. This helped in the initial process of exploring the data. The data collected were colour coded so that each participant had a different colour. These were then cut and pasted according to the main categories at the time (Appendix K). Table 2 shows the pseudonyms used for each participant from each school, the date interviews were conducted and the colour codes for each participant. All these were included in the analytic file as mentioned above.

Table: 2. Interview Dates, Pseudonyms and Colour Codes

School	Date	Pseudonyms	Colour for transcript
School A	18/11/05	Peter Rose	Blue Green
School B	24/11/05	Julia Tania	Dark Red Pink
School C	20/12/05	Sharon Emily	Orange Brown
School D	25/11/05	John Marina	Lavender Red
School E	02/12/05	Michelle Mary Beth	Aqua Dark Blue Lime
School F	22/12/05	Jack	Violet

The themes were looked into in detail to identify the similarities and differences mentioned by the participants. These were compared with the relevant literature from Chapter Two and a report was then created in the form of a case study outlining the significant themes which are reported in the next chapter.

Coding

During coding, data reduction took place and codes were also attached to the themes, which started to emerge as a result of thorough reading of transcripts. The first focus was on developing a list of categories and assigning a short name for each category. For example, the category, time consuming was given the code TC.

The coding stage also took place while the data was being collected. This early coding helped me to focus on essential features of the study as they developed. Furthermore, this was helpful in identifying the common themes and categories that emerged as the data was collected. The objective was to reduce the codes so that the data was manageable. This process was repeated once more to see whether any further themes came out of the data.

When the transcripts were finally coded a case study report was written based on the findings from the six schools. As this was a qualitative case study, the findings were reported in the form of a descriptive text to illustrate the self-review processes and procedures used by the six schools. The report also focused on the roles that the leaders played in the self-review process. It further highlighted the aspects of teacher research that influenced the self-review process in the schools.

Ethics

This research study followed strict codes of ethics to protect the researcher and the participants from any harm. The School of Education Ethics Committee (University of Waikato) approved my application to conduct the research on 1st November 2005 (Appendix L).

All participants received written information about the project (Appendix D) and consent forms (Appendix E) to participate in this particular study. Confidentiality of information and privacy of each and every participant was respected throughout the interview and the research process. All data gathered were stored carefully with me and the analysed transcripts were only accessed by me, and by my supervisor after pseudonyms were given to each participant. The identity of participants and schools remained confidential and pseudonyms were used to address the participants and schools in the study and in any written information.

The participants in this study had already signed consent forms to be part of the Great Expectations Project. However, they were still able to withdraw from this study at any time up until the completion of data gathering in December 2005. Participants were asked to send a letter to me stating that they were withdrawing before the completion of the data gathering in December 2005. All participants were informed of this and this was acknowledged in their consent. Additionally, all participants had the right to decline from the study and they were informed of this in their consent as well (Appendix E). A letter was sent when the transcripts were returned to participants informing them about the return of the transcript (Appendix F).

Summary

In this chapter the research design has been detailed, including the research process. The section on research design has detailed the research questions that were used as the basis of the study and the research design that was used to gather data to answer these questions. A brief section of the chapter has outlined the underlying assumptions of qualitative methodology and the reasons out why such a methodology was used in this study. The case study design which was used has been described in detail and the issues relating to case study methods have been addressed as well. Here the emphasis was on the case which was the Great

Expectation Project's six schools. The purpose of a case study is to represent the case and not anything else.

This chapter has also detailed the methods of data gathering, explaining the procedure used to access participants and to gain informed consent. This section concluded with a discussion on the data analysis procedure that was used in this study. A description of the research process followed, which outlined the process of the study. The procedure of selecting participants and approaching them has been discussed. The data collection procedure and the conducting of face-to-face interviews with the participants have been detailed. The procedures for data analysis have also been described. The next chapter presents the findings of the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

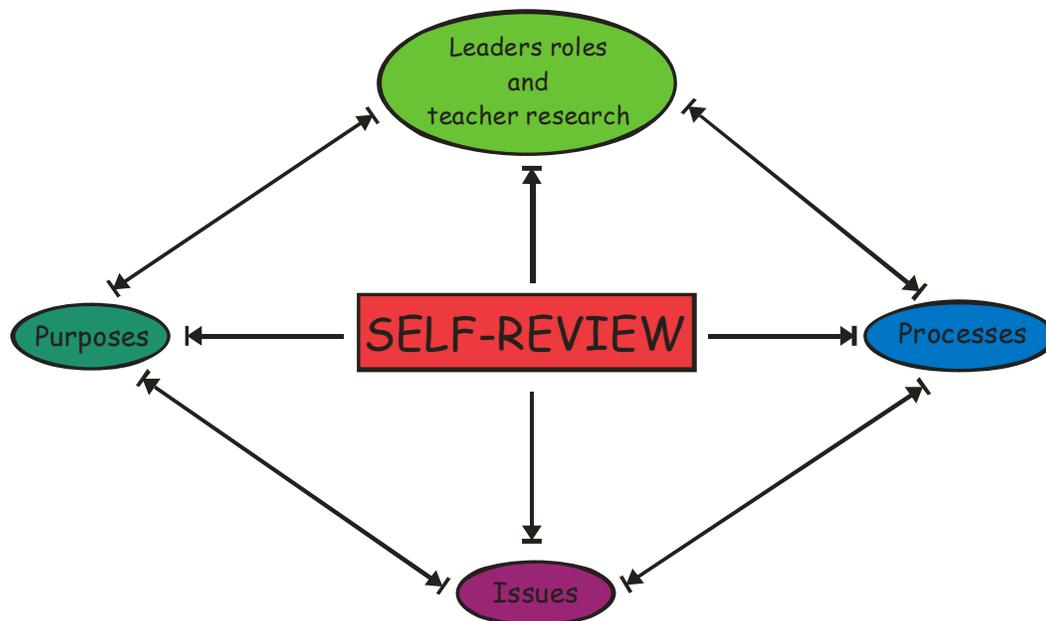
In a changing world, not to change means to get behind the times and to fail to hit the mark.

(Tania, School B, 24/11/2005)

Introduction and Overview

This chapter presents the findings of this study. There were four major categories that emerged. These include the purpose of self-review in schools, the process of self-review, the leader's role and impact of teacher research on self-review process, and issues related to self-review. Figure 5 illustrates an overview of the main categories of the findings. The findings showed that all these four areas were strongly linked and for a successful self-review, schools should have a strong emphasis on each and every area of self-review.

Fig: 5. Summary of the Categories of Findings



Relevant themes emerged from these categories, which are also presented in this chapter. This study reveals its findings in the form of a case study. All participants in this study are referred to by their given pseudonyms (Table 2).

Purpose of Self-Review in Schools

This study found that participants identified self-review as an important aspect of the school. All participants mentioned that self-review is used to improve school systems and all participants emphasized that its purpose was to enhance student achievement. From the findings of the study, three major themes emerged. The purposes of self-reviews were to:

Theme 1: Focus on and enhance student achievement,

Theme 2: Enhance school development through reviewing school systems and programmes,

Theme 3: To ensure accountability and to inform student progress.

Theme 1: Focus on and enhance student achievement

All six schools that participated in this study revealed that one of the main purposes of doing self-review was to enhance student achievement. School development and improvement can only happen if student achievements are enhanced. Participants viewed self-review as a way of informing practice and gathering information to find out where the school needs to be. They believed that self-review identified whether school programmes were successful and whether this information was shared with the school board. The following response by Peter supported this:

Self-review is really informing practice, you know and without self-review we can't be sure that what we believe is happening is actually happening...you have a perception that everything is going along well or that children are learning, and that

programmes are successful, but unless you actually review that...you are never sure.

(Peter, 18/11/2005)

Participants also saw school self-review as an ongoing process to inform practice to review all areas of the school to enhance student achievement. Participants in this study claimed that self-review should focus on making continual progress.

Self-review is an ongoing process in which we review the workings of the school – the policies and procedures that govern how things are done around here, the effectiveness and appropriateness of the teaching, the curriculum and of course, the outcomes – in terms of student achievement.

(Julia, 24/11/2005)

Self-review was also viewed as a process of looking at all school policies and practices, and constantly reviewing them. The following statement supports this:

The purpose of self-review is to improve student learning. Any self-review has got to have that at the centre of their focus.

(Jack, 22/12/2005)

Similarly, one other participant indicated that, “it’s where the school looks at what it’s doing, what programmes its running and where it needs to make improvement” (*Rose, 18/11/2005*). In the participants view self-review was done to lift teacher performances in order to enhance student achievement.

Participants agreed that the main purpose of self-review was to ensure that students were learning and no group is being disadvantaged. They further stressed that self-review was conducted to ensure that reviews were done on all areas that were relevant and related to student achievement. This is supported by Tania’s statement:

... reflect on the school's progress especially student achievements. To look at results and review any students at risk of not achieving in reading, writing and mathematics. To come up with a plan to help the students who are not achieving.

(Tania, 24/11/2005)

Likewise, some participants saw self-review as a tool that makes things better. These things included student achievement, school operations and teacher development. Participants of this case study viewed school improvement as a technique to improve student achievement.

There was a strong emphasis on reviewing school programmes and thinking of ways to improve things. Participants confirmed a need to find how these programmes impacted on student learning by making sure that the data collected were used to alter and change programmes. Every school therefore, mentioned that the main purpose of doing self-review was to identify areas that needed improving and to concentrate more on these areas to enhance student achievement. The participants of these schools also saw a link between self-review and school development, which is discussed next.

Theme 2: Enhance school development through reviewing school systems and programmes

All participants, except for one, suggested that schools that undertook self-review had a better chance of improving their school. Just one participant, said that she did not know if they would have a better chance of improving their school if they did self-review. She did not elaborate any further. However, there were many reasons suggested, by the participants, as to why schools would definitely improve and develop if self-reviews were conducted.

Participants viewed that sharing the knowledge from self-reviews and making it visible to staff members would lift their morale and therefore, influence the way they behaved and taught. They suggested that the whole school should work

together in collaboration to achieve that goal, highlighting the involvement of all staff when conducting reviews. The information from self-reviews impacted on the school system and participants also revealed that it was shared with the Board of Trustees to assist in decision-making for areas of need and development.

Furthermore, participants commented that teachers got excited about seeing the change and being part of an effective school. This way, participants realised that they were in fact doing an effective job. A significant focus was on reflecting on practice, which participants agreed would impact on their ways of thinking to change the way they do things in school. On this point one participant indicated that:

Self-review encourages reflection, and if you can reflect on your practice, you will be a better teacher, and therefore if you are a better teacher that's going to impact on your colleagues who then also want to be...human beings that don't want to be left behind, ... when they see the buzz that somebody's getting out of self-review, because they can see that it's making a difference to their class ... so schools that self-review are effective schools.

(Peter, 18/11/2005)

One other aspect participants discussed was that, if teachers in the school realise that self-reviews are making a positive difference then they will get involved as well. Otherwise, "you don't know if you've got it right or wrong" (*Sharon, 20/12/2005*). Similarly, some participants suggested that you could only make a difference if you are reviewing what you are doing, otherwise, it is not possible to know if the programmes are succeeding or not in terms of improving student achievement. This emphasized the need for involvement and sharing of knowledge. Participants claimed that it was necessary to conduct reviews for school development as schools always get a number of new entrants with varying abilities every year. By conducting self-reviews, these schools actually found out where they were at and what kind of programmes were suitable for students who were at different levels.

Another angle that was explored by participants was the fact that sometimes assumptions were made about what was actually happening, when in fact, the assumptions were totally wrong. Therefore, it was recommended that there needed to be evidence as to why the schools programmes were failing and suggested that self-review would provide this information. One participant stated, “self-review systems are quite robust, it then becomes more evidence-driven in terms of what this information is really telling us and what we need to do about this information” (John, 25/11/2005). Likewise, another commented on the need for evidence-based data. Participants described that schools needs to back up what they are doing and why they are doing it. This was because they are liable for how they spent their funding and they are also answerable to parents as well as other stakeholders.

Participants affirmed that by doing self-reviews school leaders and teachers became very focused on the areas that needed to be improved and it became a school-wide goal. This study showed that self-review was strongly linked to school development and school improvement. Through self-review, schools can identify the strengths and weaknesses of programmes that they are conducting. There were also other purposes that were linked to self-review, such as conducting self-reviews to ensure accountability purposes, which will be discussed next.

Theme 3: To ensure accountability and to inform student progress

The six schools highlighted different procedures and ways of informing the school community and its stakeholders about the process of self-review. Since schools are responsible for their students’ learning, the schools are also accountable to the parents and other stakeholders on how school funding is being used, and schools must inform them about this. Therefore, it is vital that schools report back to their boards and stakeholders. To do this, self-reviews need to be conducted to ensure that all resources are utilized to benefit the needs of the students and the school staff.

Participants agreed that self-reviews were done to ensure that school policies, curriculum documentations and procedures were in line with the actual practice that

took place in school and vice versa. This could be regarded as reviewing for accountability purposes. It was also done to make sure that all of this was in alignment with the vision of school.

Participants confirmed that the school board decides if actions were needed after they receive all the necessary information from self-reviews.

...they present the results of those reviews back to the board meeting with recommendations and the board decides whether further actions are required in order to improve the quality of what we are doing.

(John, 25/11/2005)

The importance of communicating with the wider community and keeping them informed of what was happening in the school was also discussed by participants. Their argument was that parents and other community members have a right to access this information as their children are part of the school.

School community must be consulted about student achievements and be kept informed about this too. Their input is vital alongside all other members of the school.

(Julia, 24/11/2005)

This statement shows the significance of making information available for consultation by the school stakeholders and the wider community. Perhaps the most effective way to obtain the information needed is by conducting self-reviews. However, it should be noted at this stage that all these link to student achievement. Therefore, it was worth investigating the different ways in which self-review was conducted in the six schools that participated in this study. The next section details the findings of the second category mentioned at the beginning of this chapter – the process of self-review.

The Process of Self-Review

This study found that some schools had a well-developed system of self-review whereas other schools had just started to implement the process. However, it was clear from the findings that all six schools conducted self-review with the main aim of enhancing student achievement. The study further revealed that the involvement of the whole school staff in the process was significant. Likewise, reviewing all school programmes was also important for the six schools. However, school leaders commented that specific areas should be reviewed in a fixed period of time, rather than doing everything at the same time. The findings also suggested that self-review process needs to be well-planned and organised for it to be effective. The process of self-review was seen to be influenced by teacher research and professional development activities. The following three themes emerged from the findings in this category:

Theme 1: It is a cyclic and continual process that involves the whole school staff,

Theme 2: Systematically planned self-review programmes are most effective and beneficial, and

Theme 3: Effective communication results in change and positive outcomes.

Theme 1: It is a cyclic and continual process that involves the whole school staff

All participants emphasized that self-review should be a whole school approach and highlighted the cyclic nature of the process. Different schools looked at different review processes. Two schools acknowledged three different levels of review.

The first one for this school is carrying out summative reviews...the other level of school review is also using formative assessment in classrooms...the other level...is Board of Trustees governance reviews.

(John, 25/11/2005)

In summative reviews, the focus was on student achievement and was carried out in different areas, whereas the formative reviews dealt with the information from tests and other records. The Board of Trustees governance reviews operated on a three year cycle, investigating how effective the school had been, what documentations they had and what practices they used. Participants concluded that the results of all these reviews were presented to the board and they decided what future actions were required to improve the quality of the work done by the school leaders.

In contrast, three other schools highlighted two types of self-reviews. One of these reviews was to do with the Board of Trustees, as mentioned before, and the other one was to do with the teaching and learning within the school. The Board of Trustees mainly dealt with the procedures and the policy that surrounded a particular area and they may have looked to see if their financial processes were being followed properly. Teaching and learning reviews looked at strategic plans and annual plans of the school, the latter of which stemmed out from the former.

Another type of review mentioned by participants looked at “policies and procedures, cyclic review of curriculum areas, regular review of property maintenance matters, the regular collection and review of achievement data” (*Julia, 24/11/2005*). She also stated that:

informal discussion about student achievement, effective teaching, current educational thinking, that takes place in staff meetings, after school between teachers or at senior management meetings, or even as we pass each other around school

(Julia, 24/11/2005).

Participants commented that these were common among schools although they may not perceive this as a type of review. Some participants believed that this type of review had more effect on school activities that more immediate change could be seen as a result. It was the job of the principal or school leader to ensure that formal self-reviews took place in the school. However, participants stressed that all teachers need to see it as their role to reflect and raise questions about the process

and provide feedback. Participants further acknowledged that it was a whole school responsibility to meet the needs of all students and not just the responsibility of school leaders.

For one school the self-review process was relatively new but they too took a whole school approach towards the self-review process involving all staff. One of the principals revealed, “It’s at the beginning of the process in terms of getting the information that we need” (*Michelle*, 02/12/2005). In support of whole school involvement, one participant stated, “We’ve got the maths curriculum team, and neither of those teachers are in management positions, but they are leading the process” (*Michelle*, 02/12/2005). Supporting this claim, another participant stated that “It’s probably right across the school...everyone at some point will have input into self-review process” (*Mary*, 02/12/2005). Participants further added the concept of the school community being a learning community and the need to reflect on their practice to enhance improvement. This was seen as significant by the participants.

Self-review is constant and ongoing especially as we are working towards developing a professional learning community where we are all learners, which does entail reflection and evaluation.

(*Mary*, 02/12/2005)

Self-review was described by the participants as being cyclic. It was clear that the BOTs were involved in reviewing policies, and curriculum teams were involved in curriculum reviews. For some schools, after each major review, the staff involved had a meeting where the advantages, disadvantages and other interests were discussed. This was important because every year schools had new staff and new students joining them, which also meant new ideas coming in. Self-review therefore, was ongoing and was about development.

One advantage of self-review was that it allowed school leaders and teachers to continually respond to “needs and new ideas as identified by the staff and in educational literature on a day-to-day basis” (*Julia*, 24/11/2005). This fed into the

formal process through the annual plan and these formal cycles ensured that “the documentation is reviewed and updated on a regular basis – so areas that have been neglected will come up through the regular cycle of self-review” (Julia, 24/11/2005). Through these reviews schools can identify areas that need improvement, stressing that the self-review process helped to review and update documentation on a regular basis.

There was an agreement that one concept should be reviewed at a time instead of looking at everything at once. It was also recommended that schools have planned self-reviews that take place each year with supervision from the senior management team. Participants further mentioned that schools were required by law to set some targets and to inform the Ministry of Education of what these were.

The major points that came from this section of findings was that although different schools adopted different ways or processes of self-review, they all tended to be cyclic. In other words, after analysing a certain area under investigation and after making suggestions for improvement they tend to again collect data and review the process again. The other aspect pointed out by the participants was that self-review was only effective when the whole school staff were involved. For this to happen, it is necessary that self-reviews are planned and implemented properly.

Theme 2: Systematically planned self-review programmes are most effective and beneficial.

Programmes that are thought out and planned before being implemented have a better chance of success. Participants mentioned that self-reviews were carefully planned to allocate team leaders to lead the reviews. Teachers were informed of the process so that the results were valid and reliable, and most of all, consistent. One participant outlined the self-review process in his school in the following way:

... we conduct those reviews, the data is collected and collated and then it's graphed up. It's then taken on board by the team. Their team leaders analyse the data. They then take the analysis back to

the staff meeting and in that meeting, staff can continue to analyse the data by having further input. What falls out of that then, staff make further recommendations around what steps are next.

(John, 25/11/2005)

This indicated that a well-planned self-review system was in place. Likewise, self-review was also viewed as collecting information for improvement and the emphasis was on it being a planned procedure that helped lift student achievements.

It always is a practice of the school to get information to improve what it's doing...you've got planned times that you do this. And it could be things like lifting student achievement data.

(Marina, 25/11/2005)

The schools have used self-review for a long time now, but over time they have strengthened the system of reviewing.

Rather than trying to be a scatter effect where we try and self-review everything, we now plan and target what we're going to self-review so that we get better quality.

(Peter, 18/11/2005)

Self-reviews in schools have become more methodical and systematic in the last few years. Participants believed that self-reviews had strengthened over the last four to five years. Schools now have organised ways of analysing the data in terms of what they are looking for and interpreting the analysis to draw up relevant action plans.

Whatever the schools have been doing in the past has now been fortified to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. The focus for the schools now is to review a few aspects at a time. Quotes like the following support this.

“There was self-review already happening and we’ve built on that” (*Marina*, 25/11/2005).

“There has always been some sort of self-review but not to the extent that we do now because I don’t think we ever had the type of strategic plan we have in place now” (*Mary*, 02/12/2005).

The main aim of systematically planning the reviews was to ensure that all systems were well linked in that the school goals were related to the review process and that this would contribute to children’s learning as well as staff development. Making self-review processes stronger in schools will definitely result in some sort of change in the schools. To make these changes happen effective communication is vital between school leaders and the rest of the school community. This next part presents the findings for this theme.

Theme 3: Effective communication results in change and positive outcomes

This study found that self-review produced positive outcomes. Self-review made it possible to find out things that teachers would not usually be willing to share. Participants claimed that each year a new area can be concentrated on for review and development. One participant identified measurement as an area of improvement through the self-review process. Teachers were involved in research into how successful the measurement unit was. The review identified that students were not performing well in this unit because of the lack of measurement tools in the school. Since then an effort has been made to buy as much equipment as possible to enhance and improve this strand. These students now have a more hands on experience and the results have improved dramatically. Therefore, participants agreed that effective communication through the self-review process can lead to improvement.

The advantage is that we improve things. We find out things that teachers might not ordinarily tell you...it’s a great idea that we do

it every year, but different areas...we reviewed measurement ...and we found that we didn't have enough equipment for children to measure with. And our results show that they struggle in that area of measurement and that we needed to buy, purchase more measuring gear, which we have done.

(Sharon, 20/12/2005)

This example shows how a simple self-review activity has hugely affected student achievement and helped to enhance and develop strategies to improve student learning.

One participant revealed how they have changed the way that they do professional development in their school due to their self-review process. They now bring someone into their school to do a professional development course instead of sending one teacher off to a course. This way more teachers were exposed to the facilitator and therefore more opportunities for staff arose in this particular school.

Sharing of information gathered from self-reviews has proven to be very important. It ensures that effective communication happens in schools and also to shows that schools are doing what ever they can to help improve their students. All schools, except for one, said that they share the outcomes of self-review with parents. One school said that they do not share the outcomes with parents but they do share the results of the self-review with their staff members. However, this school also shared student achievement results with the parents especially towards the end of the year. Schools identified several ways of informing the outcomes to the wider community. Some schools have a *hui* to inform their Maori community about the student achievement results and progress of these students. They also have displays placed in the school foyers so that everyone can have a look at the information gathered through these reviews. There were several other methods employed to relate the results back to the school staff and the relevant committees of the school board.

The study showed that the six schools communicated the findings of their self-reviews to the wider community in different ways. However, all schools saw that it was significant that the results were relayed to the community. The six schools also saw that they had to change their way of conducting some learning programmes due to the results of self-reviews. For some school staff this is an issue and the next sections detail the findings of the issues related to self-review.

Leaders Role and Impact of Teacher Research on the Self-Review Process

Participants of this study indicated that teachers need to be appraised as part of the each school's policy. They should be appraised and recognized for the hard work that they do. Some participants indicated that staff appraisal was part of the self-review process and confirmed that they considered teacher performance against the needs of the school/students and against the school's goals. They further commented that appraisal systems were used to meet the outcomes of teacher performance through the self-review process. In relation to this, two of the participants stated that action research, peer coaching and other forms of teacher research identified professional development needs through the process of self-review.

Since self-review was to reflect on practice there was always a need to review teachers' practices and their performance. Many participants involved in this study suggested that peer coaching was one way to ensure that professional development happened in the school as part of self-review, claiming that this was one way to bring about change.

The school principals that were involved in this study considered this to be an example of self-review informing them, as the school principal, of what was going on in their school. It was clear that in some schools, teachers reviewed themselves as part of the self-review process. Some participants acknowledged that this was done by filling out a form. One participant confirmed that her school had recently

participated in a research project (Great Expectations Project) where everyone focused on a certain way of teaching for a whole year. The participants indicated that this project was a success as they could already see that students' results had actually gone up since the project began. They claimed that self-reviews indicated this, but teacher research helped to achieve this.

School leaders stated that they were able to identify teachers who were effective in particular areas because of these reviews. The schools then used the information from these teachers to help others to improve. Therefore, it was suggested that these teachers could aid others to work towards improving their practice without having to be involved in other courses run by professionals (not in the field of teaching). Likewise, another suggestion was that teachers were "leading the process" (*Michelle*, 02/12/2005) indicating that they were involved in doing the research, by collecting information and analysing it.

Participants emphasized the importance of doing research to back up what they were doing in schools. Therefore, suggesting the need for teachers to be involved in research on areas that need development. It was commented that teachers need to do their homework really well before implementing anything which is new and before any further steps are taken. School leaders also recommended that teachers and school leaders need to determine if implementing these programmes is going to meet the needs of the learners in their school, before they put them into practice. Here, the focus is on doing research to become aware of student needs to enhance their achievement.

One participant explained that since teachers collect the data from the students they should also be involved in analysing them. Therefore, the teacher's role was seen as significant in the self-review process. Furthermore, participants agreed that it was no good to just pass the data, after collection, to another person. It was better for teachers to know for themselves what the data meant. Participants also agreed that the senior management team played a significant role in all reviews since the information sat with them "and they have to be able to utilize it to make a difference" (*John*, 25/11/2005). Another important aspect stressed by the

participants was that since all teachers have an input to the analysis and recommendations, the school believed that there was very much a shared ownership of responsibility and of the data. Detailing the process a bit further in this, it was suggested that after the data was collected it was then put into an electronic assessment programme and a management team member was designated the role of collating and analysing the data and also presenting the facts. One deputy principal described her role to be part of the system and to look at the data and reflect on student achievement and also act as a support role.

One participant considered self-review to be similar to action research. She said that action research involved constantly renewing school procedures and planning and reviewing again, which she suggested was the same when self-reviews were conducted.

I see it more or less...as a ...almost like action research or action research cycle, where you are constantly renewing the systems, planning and then reviewing again.

(Mary, 02/12/2005)

Participants stressed that there was a need to go back and forth to identify gaps in areas and this proves the cyclic nature of the process.

Issues Relating to Self-Reviews

While there were some participants who did not identify any disadvantages or issues related to self-reviews, the majority of them did identify some significant issues in the process of self-review that need to be addressed. Three major themes were developed from the findings. They were:

Theme 1: Lack of time

Theme 2: Skills and competence level of school staff

Theme 3: Attitude towards change

Theme 1: Lack of time

The issue of a lack of time to conduct self-reviews was common among all six schools. Except for one, all participants agreed that this was a significant issue that needs to be addressed when conducting self-reviews. Since so much informal self-review takes place in some schools it is very easy to do a lot of talking and never actually do anything at all. Moreover, this was considered a waste of time, which does not really contribute to school development/improvement.

In addition to this, some participants that self-reviews take a lot of time and put a lot of pressure on staff. Teachers already have a lot of work to do, such as assessing students' performances, dealing with discipline problems as well as facing parents and other stakeholders. Moreover, a bigger issue is that if the self-review does not have any validity or reliability then it would be a complete waste of staff time and resources. Therefore, self-reviews should be well-planned for school staff to gain the most from them and sometimes staff members find it rather inconvenient to be pressured to conduct self-reviews in such cases.

Another issue mentioned by the participants was that self-review is an additional work load for staff members and they further emphasized that it consumes a lot of teachers as well school leaders time. However, since the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, the process was not seen by some as a waste of time. It only becomes a waste of time when nothing is done and no action or changes are made as a result of all the information gathered.

Theme 2: Skills and competence levels of school staff

The participants suggested that sometimes staff members felt that self-reviews were conducted to find faults with their teaching methods and practices. Sometimes staff members fear the thought of being judged. This could be due to old defensiveness about their own performances. Unless there is consistency in terms of the way the review is conducted, the results are not valid. In other words, staff need to have the skill and ability to conduct these reviews so that they can be accepted as valid and

consistent. In addition, the self-review process is required to be valid and reliable and therefore the staff need to be aware of and sure about the procedures that are used for assessments, otherwise, validity and reliability would not be achieved. Different people can interpret data differently or incorrectly and therefore make assumptions that are not relevant. This is why the skill and competence level of school staff is really significant in the self-review process.

If staff were involved in professional development to benefit their teaching profession and increase their competence level then they can actually have an impact on the self-review process. The responsibility of meeting the needs of all students is a joint responsibility of all stakeholders and not just the responsibility of the school leaders. One principal stated that as a school leader it is their responsibility to be aware of the latest educational research and of opportunities such as the *Great Expectations Project* and to take full advantage of these to develop staff skills and competencies. If this is the case then, staff have a good understanding of processes such as self-review and can definitely help to improve them.

Participants also talked about the complexity of the process. Reviewing one system usually results in a ripple effect which means that other areas are affected as well. For this reason, if staff members do not understand the process or if they have trouble working through the analysis of the data, this could prove to be a major area of difficulty. Therefore, the issue of staff competence level is significant if schools are to work through the process of self-review. Furthermore, schools need to have strong and committed leaders as well as staff members who are willing to go through the process realising that it is hard work and time consuming.

One main issue faced by schools when conducting self-review is that some staff do not want any kind of change to be implemented in their school. In other words, their way is the only way and it is the right way. This is a reason why some members of the staff have a negative attitude towards change.

Theme 3: Attitude towards change

The participants identified several reasons why staff had a negative attitude towards change. Sometimes staff were resistant to change and had a fear of being judged, despite the fact that the information is collected in order to view how the school operates as a whole and not to criticize the teachers. This suggests that self-reviews could negatively affect staff performance.

The emphasis of reviews should be on improving the way each child's learning needs are met, whether it is by changing or improving the teaching styles. One principal stated that:

In a rapidly changing world not to change means to get left behind
the time and to fail to hit the mark

(Julia, 24/11/2005)

This statement suggests that if change is not implemented, schools may not be able to develop as far as school improvement is concerned. The school might be stuck in an era of time. This may not be perhaps the best situation for the students in the school. The same principal also linked self-review and change in the following statement.

Change is essential and self-review process ensures the change is
considered change and not just a shot in the dark.

(Julia, 24/11/2005)

For some, the down side of this process was that staff members did not welcome change because they wanted things their way and that was seen as the right way for some of them. The findings of this study reveal a positive attitude towards change from the participants of this study. However, the participants also pointed out that there were some staff members in their school communities who opposed change. The participants revealed that it makes it a lot harder for school leaders to implement programmes when there are opposing forces.

Summary

This chapter on research findings was divided into four major categories. Figure 5 illustrates this and shows that each category is linked to one another. Category one focused on the purposes of self-review identified by the participants of this study. The main purpose agreed by all participants was that self-review enhanced student achievement. The other purposes include developing schools programmes and systems, and also using these reviews as a way of informing student achievement information to parents and other stakeholders. Category two discussed the processes of self-review. It was evident that the process of self-review was ongoing, cyclic and planned. Also the participants identified that through effective communication the process of self-review results in change to enhance student achievement. Category three discussed the role of schools leaders in this process. Participants also identified that teacher research was linked to the self-review process. Finally category four identified some issues related to self-review which was identified by the participants of this study. The next chapter will provide a discussion of these findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion and Conclusion

School improvement/development can only happen if we make our ultimate goal to be improving student achievement.

Introduction and Overview

There were two main objectives of this research study. The first was to find out the purposes and processes that a particular group of schools used for their self-review process. The second was to identify the ways in which teacher research had an impact on the self-review process in the six schools that participated in this study. The research study involved 12 participants from the six schools that took part in the Great Expectations Project, as explained in Chapter One. The research was conducted using semi-structured interviews. Three main categories emerged from the findings. Based on these findings a concept map was created to view the process of self-review and the forces that drive these reviews. Limitations of this research study and recommendations for further research are suggested in this chapter.

The data indicated that all participating schools followed a planned self-review process and, except for one school, they have all been carrying out self-review for at least the past five years. All participants linked self-review to student achievement and confirmed that the main purpose of self-review was to improve student achievement. The findings also revealed many issues and difficulties that schools face during the process of self-review. One major drawback of doing self-reviews mentioned by the participants was that the process takes a lot of time, and they confirmed that if the results of the reviews were not made use of, then the

reviewing process was a waste of time. The following case study details the findings and aims to answer the research questions detailed in Chapter Three.

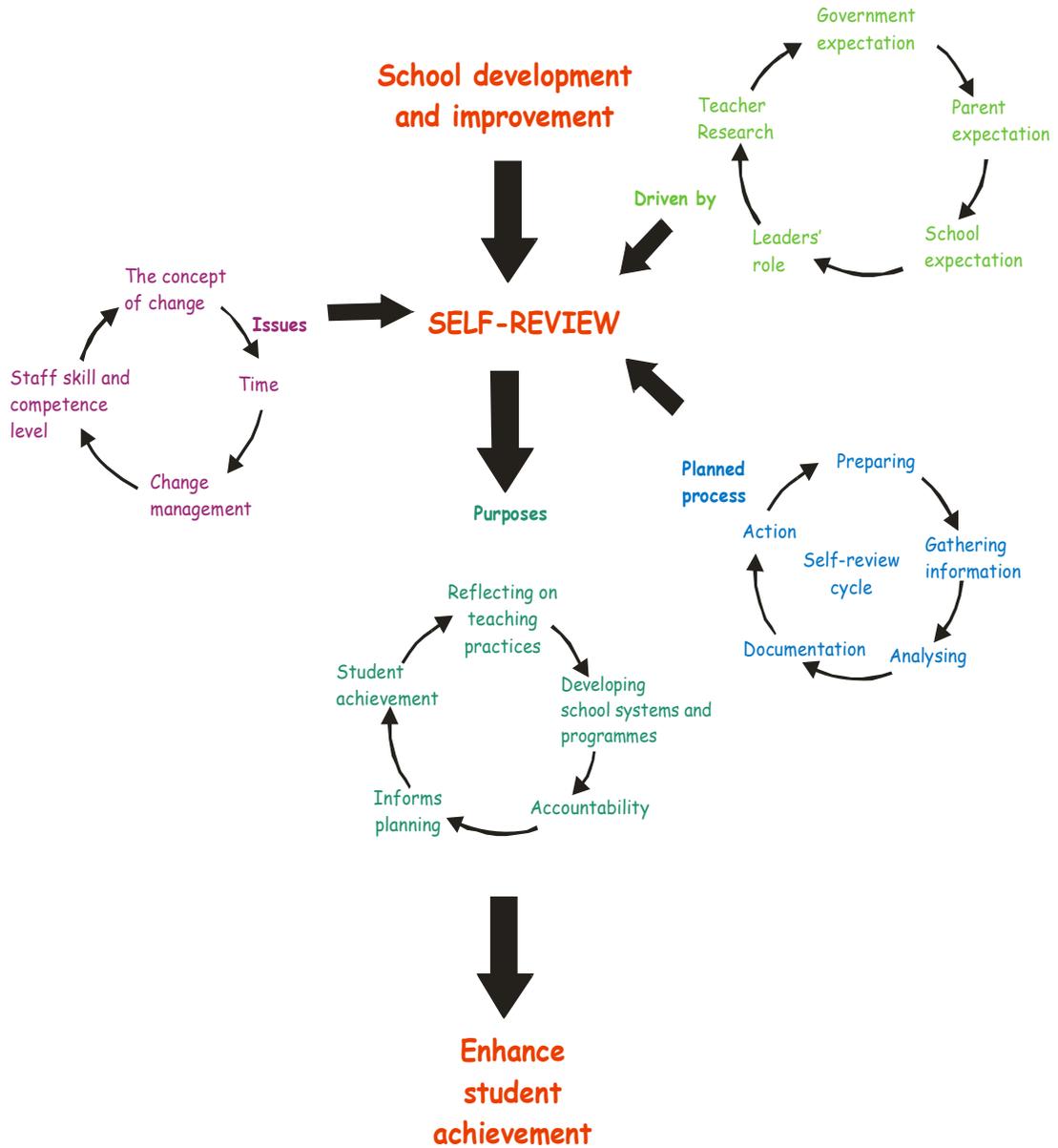
Discussion of the Findings

The findings of this research study are presented as a model (Figure 6) of self-review in schools. The discussion is divided into the four main areas: the purpose of self-review; the process of self-review; the role of school leaders and the impact of teacher research on the self-review process; and the issues relating to the self-review process.

The model also signals that we should also be looking at the forces that drive the self-review process. In this case, the findings show that it is driven by government expectations and parental expectations as well as school expectations. From the model it is clear that for school development and improvement to happen self-review of a school's systems, policies, goals and teaching programmes are essential. The model also outlines the process of self-review and highlights the major issues that were identified by the participants.

The model of self-review details the most common purposes of the process as identified by the participants. All the purposes are interlinked, which means that each area is as important as the others and also that they have an effect on each other. The ultimate purpose of self-review, however, is to enhance student achievement and all the other purposes need to be achieved in order to enhance student achievement.

Fig: 6. A Model of Self-Review



Self-Review - The Purpose

As is evident from the literature, the main aim and purpose of self-review should be enhancing student achievement and finding strategies to improve teaching practices which will lead to greater student achievement. In fact, the Education Review Office (1994) stated that school improvement could happen if the learning and teaching strategies are improved through self-review. All participants accepted this claim and confirmed that whatever the outcomes are of self-review, the aim is to improve and strengthen student achievements.

In my experience, we as teachers and school leaders should always work towards improving student achievement. School improvement/development can only happen if we make improving student achievement our ultimate goal. And what better way to do it than by collecting and working thorough evidence, which is what self-review is all about.

McRae (2001) highlighted that a significant advantage of self-review is that it is designed to improve teaching and learning programmes. This came up often in the analysis of the data. The six schools confirmed that the self-review process is where the school looks at what it is doing, what programmes it is running and where it needs to make improvement. Hence, this links to the Ministry of Education (1997) definition, where they emphasized that self-reviews enable schools to critically examine their present situation and provide the foundation for developing strategies for school improvement. In my opinion, and based on this study, self-review can help, analyse and then strengthen the learning and teaching programmes and hence can determine whether these programmes are beneficial to the students and their achievements.

The findings of this study revealed that one other purpose of self-review was to look at all school policies and practices to find out where improvement was needed. All major findings of these reviews were revealed to the Board of Trustees who decides whether actions were needed in certain areas of school operations. This was

emphasized by the Education Review Office (1994) where they stated that the self-review process helps schools to monitor policies and practices so that it can assist the school board in their decision making. The Ministry of Education's (1997a) document also stressed that school boards had to ensure that schools, students and communities achieve the objectives stated in the school charter. However, none of the participants in this study mentioned about the school charters. This was supported by McRae (2001) as well.

Self-Review – The Process

Although self-review has only recently become mandatory in New Zealand, the schools that participated in this study have been using this process for a long time, some for as long as 14 years. This showed that the schools were working towards improving student achievement. All schools stated that they had undertaken some sort of self-review in the past to inform and evaluate their practices and this stated in the ERO's (1994) document. However, all but one school stated that they have strengthened their self-review process and are now focusing on particular areas each year. In previous years, they focused on a lot of areas and therefore, were not very successful in their self-reviews. It was evident from the findings that one concept at a time should be reviewed.

This study's findings link self-review to action research and also confirm that it is a planned process whereby certain school operations are reviewed regularly. The study also showed that self-review is strongly linked to school development/improvement. As Hopkins et al. (1994) indicated, school improvement enhances student achievement as well as increasing school development. Carter (1998) also implied that the ultimate aim of school improvement is to improve student achievement and development, which is what the participants stated in this study. The literature indicates a link between school development/improvement and student achievement, which is also supported by the findings of this study.

The school leaders confirmed that the results of self-reviews are presented to the school boards with recommendations and that the board then decides whether further actions are required in order to improve the quality of what the schools are doing. The above statement links very well with the definition of school development identified by Stewart and Prebble (1985). They stated that institutions develop the capacity to work together to gather data and change their structural programmes. McRae (2001) also suggested that self-review provides information for school boards to enhance student learning as well as school development. The case for this study confirms that the results of these self-reviews are presented to the school board where they develop strategies to enhance student achievement.

The Education Review Office (1994) claimed that schools have conducted some sort of self-review in the past. This is supported by all six schools and they further added that now their reviews are much more meaningful since they have strengthened the process over time. Every school should at some stage review their programmes. This could be through tests or teacher appraisals. It is now the school's role to strengthen these programmes and make them more systematic. Schools could also get involved in research studies such as the Great Expectations Project, to gain further skills and knowledge that will lead to student improvement.

School Leaders' Role and Impact of Teacher Research on Self-Review

The school leader's role was identified as significant in the self-review process. Fullan (2001) suggested that school leaders face different challenges about how to bring about change. He also claimed that the process was messy, but that the experience did indeed lead to fruitful solutions. The participants of this study seemed to agree with him. From the findings it is clear that even though some schools are faced with challenges when dealing with change, these schools do appreciate the outcomes of process. Hence, school leaders and teachers, I believe, have a huge impact on the process of self-review.

Since the school leaders in this study were involved in other research such as Great Expectations Project with the University of Waikato, they created opportunities for other members of their staff to gain exposure to different methods of improving teaching and learning practice, such as peer coaching, teacher research and appraising each other. In fact, participants believed that supporting each other to improve their own practice was a fantastic way to improve student learning. In fact, Carter and Halsall (1998) viewed teacher research to be a powerful strategy for school improvement and thus enhance student achievement. Harris and Lambert (2003) also argued that teacher development and school development are linked together and stated that this is an essential part of school improvement. For me, this is certainly a great way of improving our knowledge and understanding of our teaching and learning programmes. This is also acknowledged by Stenhouse (1975). He stated that if teachers are involved in conducting research then they are more likely to see the need for change. I would strongly recommend that schools take advantage of such opportunities to widen their staff's skills and improve their competency levels, as this study found that these programmes help to enhance student achievement as well.

Taking part in action research is one way to improve the professional development of teachers and school leaders. Action research as mentioned by several authors in the literature review identified professional needs for teachers (Calhoun, 1994; Mills, 2003; Robertson, 2005). It could be said that teachers being involved in action research projects is very similar to conducting their own research in classrooms. The findings suggest that teacher research has a significant effect on the way that self-reviews are conducted in schools. It has made self-review more meaningful to teachers. My belief is that, the self-review process has been improved from what schools were doing before and has become more relevant because of teacher research and their involvement in professional development.

Participants in one school believed that due to one of their school leaders involvement in her own research study, they were able to change the way the school did their assessments. For change to occur effective leadership is necessary.

Riley and MacBeath (2003) viewed effective leadership as being able to make the right choices and decisions, and being willing to learn and to change. My view is that when research studies are conducted in schools or when teachers participate in their own research, this would most likely provide recommendations to improve student achievement and improve teaching and learning practices. This is also supported by the findings of this study. When school leaders and teachers are involved in the process of self-review they become more determined to find ways to improve their practice and to influence student learning and behaviour in a positive way. This also reveals the idea of proper communication between school leaders and staff. This is supported by Fullan (2001). He stated that school leaders need to maintain effective relationships with staff to create collaborative working environments needed for student learning to happen. DiPoala (2003) characterized this as a key to effective leadership. Therefore, the process becomes more focused and more meaningful to those who are conducting the reviews.

As suggested by MacGilchrist (2000) effective change can only happen if schools take charge of their own improvement and this is what these schools are working. Through self-review programmes in different areas, whether it is school property management or evaluation of academic programmes, schools can have a significant effect on their own improvement which is supported by the findings of this study.

The participants of this study indicated that self-review leads to more work and therefore requires more time. This is one of the reasons why people resist change that Kanter (1988) suggested. This could be because teachers are so involved in school activities that they do not have enough time to reflect on their own practices to improve quality and other teaching strategies. Another issue identified by participants was that teachers did not want to change their way of teaching and they felt threatened by the concept of change. This is also a reason identified by Kantar (1988). Whatever the reason for resistance to change may be, it is necessary for school leaders to find ways to convince their staff that change needs to happen and that it is not a threat but it is a must in this rapidly changing world. Therefore, effective leadership is essential in a time of change.

Teacher research is used for improving teaching and the quality of classroom activities (Hopkins, 1985). The findings of this study showed that teachers were involved in the development of curriculum areas to find out why students are not achieving in a particular area of the curriculum. This was done through simple research activities. Through these research activities teachers and school leaders were able to identify where the gap was in the particular learning area and thus they were able to work on this particular area to improve the student learning and their achievement. This links very well with Carter and Halsall's (1998) statement which confirmed that the teacher as a researcher is a powerful strategy for school development/improvement. In their view, teacher research clarifies aspects of an activity to bring about the necessary changes to improve student achievement.

School leaders play a significant role in the process of self-review. In some schools the school leader led the reviews, while in others it was the teaching staff. My view is that unless someone, such as a school leader, is involved in the process and oversees it, the self-review would not be successful and this is supported by this study. Of course, all staff should be involved, and perhaps staff from relevant areas should be more involved in these reviews. For example, if the school is reviewing a physical education department, the staff from that department should be involved as well as other leaders from the school.

Issues Relating to Self-Reviews

Three major issues were identified from the findings of this study. All six schools commented that the lack of time to conduct the self-review was a significant disadvantage. If results of the self-reviews are not used and acted upon by the school, then the self-review becomes a total waste of time and money. However, the literature reviewed, did not indicate that this was an issue.

The other issue which emerged from the findings was that the skills and competence level of staff affected the self-review process. The findings of this

study clearly showed that some teachers found this process threatening and viewed self-review as a means of finding faults with their teaching process. McRae (2001) and Kanter (1988) both focused on this point, and McRae (2001) added that self-review is perceived as a threatening process especially in schools where student achievements are low due to socio-economic factors. This need not be the case. School leaders should identify ways of working and informing their staff that self-review is not a threatening process. Self-review must not be imposed (Sutton, 1994) and it must be voluntary. Perhaps schools should invite discussions from staff members as to how the self-reviews should be conducted and maybe ask the staff to identify ways in which they would be more receptive to the process. To eliminate the threatening aspect of these reviews, I believe that schools should make this process more voluntary and more open to staff opinions and views.

From the findings of this study, it is clear that the advantages of self-review outweigh the disadvantages. It is evident that self-reviews affect the school development and improvement by enhancing student achievement. Numerous advantages were identified in this study. However, this could only happen if the self-reviews are planned properly and discussed with the school staff, which would also help to reduce the disadvantages (Ministry of Education, 1997). The findings of self-reviews need to be made available to school staff and the wider community. Action need to follow the reviews. Only then will the participants and the school staff perceive self-review as significant.

Self-reviews can also be strengthened and developed if teachers and school leaders are involved in teacher research or professional development. School leaders and teachers need to be aware of recent research studies which are aimed at improving student achievement. They could perhaps conduct similar studies to identify if their teaching programmes are working or not. These could be school-wide action research programmes, as suggested by Calhoun (1994), or teacher research, as suggested by Kincheloe (2003). Alternatively, school leaders and teachers can get together and work on ways of improving their programmes so that student achievement is enhanced, which is what Myers (1985) suggested.

Limitations of the Research

This study has several limitations. Only six schools were approached to take part in this study. I am aware that different schools would have different approaches towards this process. These schools were already involved in an action research project (Great Expectations Project) which meant that the participants had a fair idea about the self-review process. Therefore, I believe that these schools were already conducting self-reviews to find out if the project was successful or not.

Secondly, one school offered only one participant which meant that not enough information was collected from that school to increase the validity of the study. I was fully aware of this issue throughout the whole study and therefore each participant had to do a member check to increase the validity of the data.

Thirdly, due to the time limit of this study, interviews were the only research tool used. This could affect the validity of the study, however, I overcame this issue by triangulating the data as discussed in Chapter Three. The issue of generalization was another aspect which was of concern. However, since this study was a qualitative case study there was no need to generalize the findings to any other similar studies. Different cases will produce different results.

At this point, I would like to stress that there was little literature available on self-reviews in New Zealand schools. The major two documents that were used in the literature review were published by the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office. These two documents however, cannot be regarded as academic literature, since they would necessarily promote self-review in schools as it is a mandatory requirement.

Recommendations

The following recommendations have been made based on the findings of this study. Self-review should not be viewed as a stand-alone process. The research findings indicated that self-review is successful if whole staff input is achieved. It is a whole school process which can only be effective if everyone participates and provides input into the process. This could happen in different ways. Staff could be involved in different committees and work in particular areas. There is no need for all staff to participate in every aspect of the school culture. The study showed that staff should be involved in areas which they find interesting and feel comfortable working in. However, I believe that all staff members should have a fair idea of what is happening in the school as a whole and what the school expects of them.

This study showed that strong leadership skills such as managing staff, involving all staff, being organised and well-planned, should be exhibited by school leaders for the school staff to be involved in the self-review process and to make change possible. Principals need to support their staff and integrate them in the self-review process. This can only happen if school leaders have strong leadership qualities such as organizational and management skills, good communication skills and good persuasive skills, and if they are willing to make a difference to enhance school development. School leaders must be willing to make changes and have a positive attitude towards change and change management. The process of change may not be welcomed by each and every person on the school staff. However, if the staff can sense that the school leaders are committed and they are making an effort to make a difference then staff attitude is also likely to change.

This study also showed that the information gathered through self-reviews should be communicated to relevant parties and should be made available to all stakeholders if necessary. These could be done in several ways depending on the culture and the need of the school. If there are Maori and Pacifica students in these schools then perhaps a *hui* could be held to present the information to the parents and the community. Alternative ways could be through newsletters, parent

interview sessions and information evenings and even through phone conversations.

Another significant aspect of the research findings was that actions should follow after self-reviews. Otherwise, the process itself would be a waste of participants' time, effort and even money. Participants should realise that actions occur because of their hard work, and these actions are taken to improve student achievement. This actually would prove that self-reviews have found areas that need improvement and thus the process is working.

This study showed that when conducting self-review a focus should be selected each year. If self-review is conducted on everything that happens in schools then a lot of information is collected and a lot of data is wasted or no analysis is done on them at all. Therefore, it is suggested that a focus should be selected for self-review, for example measurement in mathematics, and a thorough review should be done to determine whether the procedures and equipment used to teach this area are sufficient. Furthermore, schools can also analyse assessment procedures to find out if they are relevant to the level and achieving what they are supposed to achieve.

Further Research

This case study found several strengths of the self-review process used in New Zealand schools. However, since there were only six schools who participated in this study there were some limitations. It would be interesting to collect information from a larger number of schools and see if the findings are similar.

A further research area relating to self-reviews could be to find out if different decile schools undertake self-reviews differently. Due to the limitations of my research study I did not approach a variety of decile schools. However, it will be interesting to see if schools with lower decile numbers perform their self-reviews more effectively and place additional effort into these reviews to actually

strengthen and enhance student achievements. A comparative study of schools may perhaps address the above mentioned issue.

In addition to this, another area of research could be to find the effectiveness of a particular self-review. To do this, the researcher may need to be involved in the self-review process throughout the year and then follow the actions and recommendations of the process after the outcomes of the process have been discussed with the staff and other stakeholders of the school.

This research study found several issues, such as lack of time and the concept of change, relating to conducting self-reviews in schools. Further research study could be conducted to work out how to eliminate or diminish these issues and make the process more meaningful for the whole school staff.

Conclusion

The schools in this study emphasized the importance and significance of conducting self-reviews, as well as focusing on the positive results that are obtained from doing such reviews. The information gathered from reviews was used in planning for the following year. Schools used this information to develop strategies for improving areas which they thought needed improvement and change. Individual schools set their focus and planned their reviews according to their own particular needs. Self-review should be seen as a process that underpins all areas of a school's operations. The schools that participated in this study identified student achievement information as a useful means to evaluate their teaching and learning programmes.

The role of leaders was also seen as significant. Without the input of school leaders the process would have been unsuccessful. This study also found that there was a need for teacher research to improve the self-review process. Teacher research actually identified areas that could be improved and therefore, schools were able to start improving these areas significantly without any delays. However, schools

were also concerned about teachers' attitudes towards change, their skill and competence level; as well as their willingness to spend a significant amount of time conducting self-reviews like these.

Finally, the findings suggested that there were several aspects of teachers' practice which impacted on the self-review process such as, teacher research, professional development as well as teacher appraisals. Furthermore, there were several issues, such as lack of time and the fear of change, which were identified from the findings of this study. Schools should be more vigilant about these issues and work to minimize them as much as possible.

Self-reviews have now become mandatory for schools in New Zealand and although the schools felt that there was a government expectation to conduct these reviews, school leaders also found these reviews useful and worthwhile for their school development. This is why all six schools confirmed that they have strengthened the process of self-review and are more involved in the process than ever before. Schools have confirmed that they are identifying more areas of strength and weakness through these self-review programmes and they are changing their strategies to enhance their student achievements to develop and improve their school.

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Appendix: A

The National Administration Guidelines (NAGs)

NAG 1

Each Board of Trustees is required to foster student achievement by providing teaching and learning programmes which incorporate the New Zealand Curriculum (essential learning areas, essential skills and attitudes and values) as expressed in National Curriculum Statements.

Each Board, through the principal and staff, is required to:

- (i) develop and implement teaching and learning programmes:
 - (a) to provide all students in years 1-10 with opportunities to achieve for success in all the essential learning and skill areas of the New Zealand curriculum;
 - (b) giving priority to student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-4;
 - (c) giving priority to regular quality physical activity that develops movement skills for all students, especially in years 1-6;

- (ii) through a range of assessment practices, gather information that is sufficiently comprehensive to enable the progress and achievement of students to be evaluated; giving priority first to:
 - (a) student achievement in literacy and numeracy, especially in years 1-4; and then to:
 - (b) breadth and depth of learning related to the needs, abilities and interests of students, the nature of the school's

curriculum, and the scope of the New Zealand curriculum (as expressed in the National Curriculum Statements);

- (iii) on the basis of good quality assessment information, identify students and groups of students;
 - (a) who are not achieving;
 - (b) who are at risk of not achieving;
 - (c) who have special needs, including gifted and talented students; and
 - (d) aspects of the curriculum which require particular attention;
- (iv) develop and implement teaching and learning strategies to address the needs of students and aspects of the curriculum identified in (iii) above;
- (v) in consultation with the school's Maori community, develop and make known to the school's community policies, plans and targets for improving the achievement of Maori students;
- (vi) provide appropriate career education and guidance for all students in year 7 and above, with a particular emphasis on specific career guidance for those students who have been identified by the school as being at risk of leaving school unprepared for the transition to the workplace or further education/training.

NAG 2

Each Board of Trustees, with the principal and teaching staff, is required to:

- (i) develop a strategic plan which documents how they are giving effect to the National Education Guidelines through their policies, plans and

programmes, including those for curriculum, assessment and staff professional development;

- (ii) maintain an on-going programme of self-review in relation to the above policies, plans and programmes, including evaluation of information on student achievement;
- (iii) report to students and their parents on the achievement of individual students, and to the school's community on the achievement of students as a whole and of groups (identified through 1(iii) above) including the achievement of Maori students against the plans and targets referred to in 1(v) above.

NAG 3

According to the legislation on employment and personnel matters, each Board of Trustees is required in particular to:

- (i) develop and implement personnel and industrial policies, within policy and procedural frameworks set by the Government from time to time, which promote high levels of staff performance, use educational resources effectively and recognise the needs of students;
- (ii) be a good employer as defined in the State Sector Act 1988 and comply with the conditions contained in employment contracts applying to teaching and non-teaching staff.

NAG 4

According to legislation on financial and property matters, each Board of Trustees is also required in particular to:

- (i) allocate funds to reflect the school's priorities as stated in the charter;
- (ii) monitor and control school expenditure, and ensure that annual accounts are prepared and audited as required by the Public Finance Act 1989 and the Education Act 1989;
- (iii) comply with the negotiated conditions of any current asset management agreement, and implement a maintenance programme to ensure that the school's buildings and facilities provide a safe, healthy learning environment for students.

NAG 5

Each Board of Trustees is also required to:

- (i) provide a safe physical and emotional environment for students;
- (ii) comply in full with any legislation currently in force or that may be developed to ensure the safety of students and employees.

NAG 6

Each Board of Trustees is also expected to comply with all general legislation concerning requirements such as attendance, the length of the school day, and the length of the school year.

Adapted from Ministry of Education (2006a)

Appendix: B

National Education Guidelines

The National Education Guidelines are defined by Sections 60A of the Education Act 1989

The National Education Guidelines have four components:

1. National Education Goals, which are

- (i) statements of desirable achievements by the school system, or by an element of the school system; and
- (ii) statements of government policy objectives for the school system.

2. Foundation curriculum policy statements, which are statements of policy concerning teaching, learning, and assessment that are made for the purposes of underpinning and giving direction to

- (i) The way in which curriculum and assessment responsibilities are to be managed in schools: and
- (ii) National curriculum statements and locally developed curriculum.

3. National curriculum statements (that is to say statements of -

- (i) The areas of knowledge and understanding to be covered by students;
- (ii) The skills to be developed by students; and
- (iii) Desirable levels of knowledge, understanding, and skill, to be achieved by students, during the years of schooling).

4. National Administration Guidelines (NAGs), which are guidelines relating to school administration and which may (without limitation) -

- (i) set out statements of desirable codes or principles of conduct or administration for specified kinds or descriptions of person or body, including guidelines for the purposes of section 61;
- (ii) set out requirements relating to planning and reporting including;
- (iii) communicate the Government's policy objectives; and
- (iv) set out transitional provisions for the purposes of national administration guidelines.

The National Education Guidelines given effect by three parts of the Education Act

- section 61 (2) which states:

The purpose of a school charter is to establish the mission, aims, objectives, directions, and targets of the Board that will give effect to the Government's national education guidelines and the Board's priorities.

- section 61 (4) (b):

A school charter must include the Board's aims, objectives, directions, priorities, and targets in the following categories:

... (b) the Board's activities aimed at meeting both general government policy objectives for all schools, being policy objectives set out or referred to in national education guidelines, and specific policy objectives applying to that school:

- and section 62 (2) which states:

A school charter must be prepared and updated in accordance with national administration guidelines.

Adapted from Ministry of Education (2006b)

Appendix: C

E-mail to the School Principals

Dear Principal,

I am conducting a study under the umbrella of the Great Expectations project on the topic of self-review in schools. My supervisor is Associate Professor Jan Robertson. I have received ethical approval from the University of Waikato ethics committee to conduct this study.

I would greatly appreciate if you could send me the names of the researcher who is involved in this project and also another teacher who will be willing to participate in this study. I will be sending the information letter and the consent forms addressed to these participants when I receive a reply from you.

If you have any questions regarding this mail, please let me know as soon as possible.

Regards

Afeefa Shakeela

Graduate Student
School of Education
University of Waikato

Appendix: D

Information Letter to Participants

Date:

Address:

Dear _____,

I am a post graduate student at the University of Waikato, enrolled in a Master of Educational Leadership degree in the School of Education. I ask for your help in fulfilling the requirements of research for a three-paper thesis, which forms a significant part of this degree.

This thesis aims to find out the purposes and processes of self-review in schools and the roles that school leaders play in the process. Furthermore, the research study aims to find out aspects of teachers' practice that impact on the self-review process in your school.

This study takes place under the umbrella of the Great Expectations research project, which has already received ethical approval from the University of Waikato and of which you are a part.

I wish to interview participants from the six schools that are involved in the Great Expectations project. The school leader and the researcher for the project will be interviewed as well as one more teacher from each of the six schools, 15 participants in total.

The interviews will last for about 30 minutes and will take place at each school. The interview is semi-structured, which will allow for a more informal discussion between us. The interview session will be tape recorded.

I will send you a transcript of the taped interview. You will have the opportunity to delete any information that you do not wish to reveal and make any amendments. The transcripts will only be accessed by me and my supervisor, Associate Professor Jan Robertson, after pseudonyms have been allocated.

If you need more clarification on the topic or more information on this research study, please contact me on (07) 824 1757 (work), (07) 856 1012 (evenings) or e-mail me at as110@waikato.ac.nz.

For your information, I have attached a consent form with this letter which details about the right to decline and withdraw from the study. If you wish to withdraw from the study please send me a letter stating this before the completion of the data gathering process in November. I will contact your school to arrange a time to meet with you to discuss the research and seek your approval for participation.

I look forward to meeting and discussing this further with you.

Regards

Afeefa Shakeela

Graduate student
School of Education
University of Waikato

Appendix: E

Consent Form

I, _____ (please state your name and position), agree to take part in the research study conducted by Afeefa Shakeela exploring the processes and purposes of self-review in schools.

I have received information about the study and I am also aware that this study comes under the umbrella of the Great Expectations project, which has already received ethical approval.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study at any time up until the completion of data gathering in November. I understand that if I decline to participate or withdraw from the study, it will not affect the study. I understand that to withdraw from the study I will have to send a letter to Afeefa Shakeela and inform her of this before the completion of the data gathering process in November.

I understand that the interview will be audio-taped and the transcriptions will be returned to me for any amendments before it is analysed.

I understand that I will be given pseudonyms to protect my identity and to maintain confidentiality. Nothing I say will be discussed with other participants in this study.

I understand that all information given will be confidential and will only be used for the research study. I understand that the findings of this study will be published in Afeefa's thesis.

Full Name:
(First name) (Last name)

School name:

Position:

Signature:

Date:

Appendix: F

Letter to Accompany Transcript

Date:

Address:

Dear _____,

I have enclosed a copy of the transcript for the interview that was conducted on _____. The transcript has been seen by me only.

The transcript contains raw data, which will be analysed later in the research study. If you wish to alter any part of the transcript by adding or deleting information, please feel free to do so on the transcript itself.

If you would like to discuss the transcript or any part of it, or make any changes, please feel free to contact me on (07) 824 1757 (work), (07) 856 1012 or e-mail me at as110@waikato.ac.nz. If you have made any changes, please return the transcript to:

Afeefa Shakeela
127C Knighton Road,
Hillcrest, Hamilton.

If no changes are made to the transcript, please inform me of this by sending me a confirmation letter, or e-mail me at as110@waikato.ac.nz before _____. If no response is received by _____, I will be contacting you to confirm whether I could use the data in my study.

I look forward to receiving your response.

Regards

Afeefa Shakeela
Graduate student
School of Education
University of Waikato

Appendix: G

Interview Schedule

1. What do you consider school self-review to be?

Probes

- What is your understanding of the process?
- What are the purposes of self-review?

2. Tell me about the self-review process that is used in this school?

Probe

- Could you detail the procedure that your school has gone through in setting up your school for self-review?

3. Tell me about the advantages and disadvantages of self-review for this school?

Probe

- Any issues related to the process?

4. Who are involved in the process of self-review and what roles do they carry out?

Probe

- Principals, teachers, BOT's

5. Tell me about your roles in the school self-review process?

6. Have you always undertaken self-review in this school?

Probes

- When did you start the process?
- Was it imposed on you?

7. What were the outcomes of the self-review process? And how was it informed to the wider community?

Probe

- What actions followed?

8. Did school self-review identify any area in which improvement was needed?

Probe

- Professional development areas, curriculum development, school improvement, etc.

9. What aspects of teachers' practices in this school influence the self-review process?

Probe

- Teacher research, teacher appraisals, teacher self-reviews, etc.

10. Do you feel that school's self-review process could be improved?

Probe

- Does any part need to be changed, added or removed completely?

11. Do you think that that schools that undertake self-reviews have a better chance of improving their school than schools that do not undertake the process?

Probe

- Why?

Appendix: H

Part of Personal File

School Name

(10) The meeting was scheduled at _____ on _____
the _____

I arrived a bit early for the interview and I waited in the waiting area. The principal, _____, was with another person at that time so I had to wait a little longer. The office seemed to be busy with students + the holidays coming up.

_____ came out and introduced herself. She was ^a very nice ^{lady} and she. She handed me ~~the review~~ a copy of the review process that was used in her school.

There was a window open, and it was raining so there was a lot of noise in the room.

The interviews started at 9:30 am

The interviews finished at 9:50 am.

_____ then took me to _____ who was the Deputy Principal of the school.

I collect the consent form before leaving _____ office. _____ also agreed for me to post the transcript to her home address, since the school holidays were coming up.

Appendix: I

An Example of a Transcript

Participant:
Interviewer:
Date:
Topic: Self-review in schools
Place and time:
Other relevant information:

A note:

[inaudible] transcribe	Unable to transcribe
(())	Other details
...	Pause
_____	Missing word

000 **1. What do you consider school self-review to be?**

School self review is really basically....the schools looking at themselves and finding out what they're doing, how well they're doing it and what they need to do next and where they need to go next, because if we don't, if we don't self review then we can't make informed decisions about whereto next, what courses to buy or what programmes to put in place.

Um, so umm, what's the purpose of self review for you...what's your understanding?

Self review is really to inform practice, you know, that without self review um, we can't be sure that um....what we believe is happening is actually happening....you know, and I think it's _____ thing that says you don't know what you don't know, um, and it's a bit like that with schools, that you have a perception that everything is going along well or that children are learning, and that programmes are successful, but unless you actually review that, unless you actually look at what you're doing and how well

you're doing it, then you're never sure, then it becomes....then you're making uninformed decisions and so the idea is that we can make an informed decision, and that then that information can be shared with the Board of Trustees um, because it may impact on financial um, decisions and resourcing sort of, things like that.

046 **2. Tell me about the self-review process that is used in this school?**

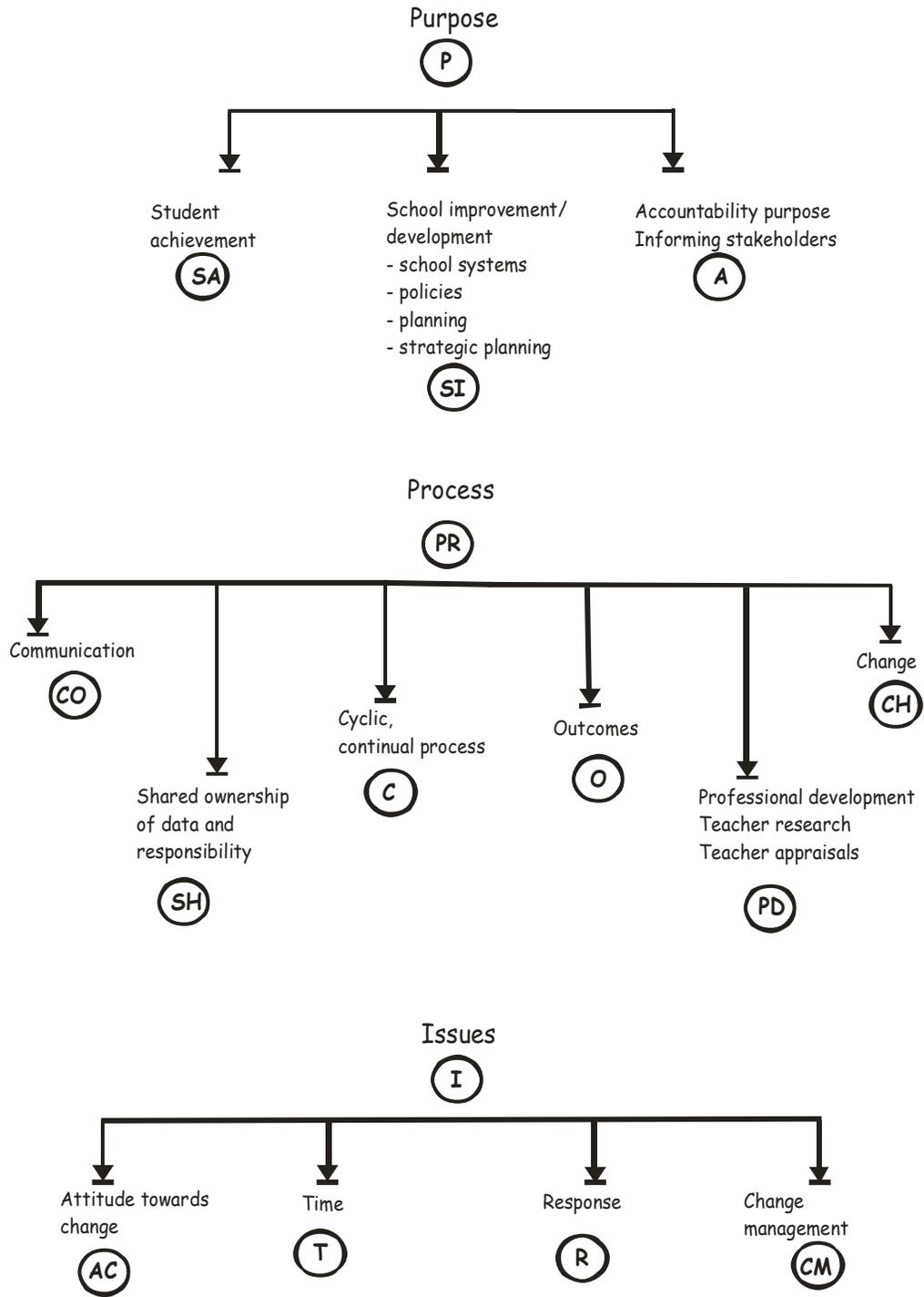
OK, we have....we have a number of self review processes, and one of the self review processes is to do with the Board of Trustees. Because the Board of Trustees need to know what's happening and to be assured that what is in place is safe and secure and all of those things and so, one of the things that happens in our school is that the um, every term the board has aa series of areas that they look at.

For each term?

Yeah, so it might be that they look at um.....truancy....or they look at um....safety in the workplace or using machinery safely, or financial procedures.....or things like that, because it's their responsibility to make sure that this school functions as a ...as a Crown entity, and also that it's a safe and secure environment for the employees within the school and so, so that review is carried out by board members, and the board members usually....that self reviewing proves them coming along through to talk to me or it might be the caretaker they have to talk to or it might be the finance person, talking to the people who are charged with putting in place the procedures that are there. Um, so they look at procedures. They also at that same time, they look at the policy that surrounds that, so if it's for instance in the finance area, they may look to see if their financial processes are all being followed and that.....effective handling of the funds and....

Appendix: J

Examples of Codes



Appendix: K

Categorising Data

Absolutely.
Can you give me a reason?
You need to look at what you are doing. You don't know if you've got it right or wrong. [xxxx] ✓

I don't know. You have to measure that with other schools.

Absolutely because it's very easy to make assumptions around what's actually happening and in fact we sometimes do make assumptions and then when we tested the assumptions out, we were quite wrong with our assumptions. So by having a self-review system that's quite robust it then becomes a lot more evidence driven in terms of what is this information really telling us and what we need to do about this information. The schools that are reflective by using self-review particularly are really robust school.

Definitely I think sometimes your gut feeling can be right. You could have a gut feeling approach where you improve things based on that. But I don't think it advances you as much as a school that is actually using hard data, whether it is qualitative or quantitative to assess feedback from the wider community. ✓

It involves more voices and review process. No, I don't think how that could be, because it would just have to be all feeding back to the Board or the principal's vision on how things should be done. And the team around maybe dis combined and doing what they are directed to do.

So the best way to know how well you are doing is actually to have to give it in... to consider in that process along with some gut feeling. I don't think they are totally inappropriate but you can't rely on them. I just don't see how schools can ever improve without getting that information.

No question about it. It's not only an activity, it's um... a way of thinking. About how you operate. It's thinking that oh, we can get better - there's information here that we can use. And not seeing self review as a I suppose it's like formative feedback ourselves, instead of a judgement, it's continuing thinking. Which is quite, it's a reasonably.....difficult thing to instill in people who are not used to it. I think people worry that they're going to be judged, or that if their class gets clear information because of the old defensiveness about performance....

not knowing if you are doing the right thing ✓

assumption being wrong

- more evident information

S.R to improve things in school.

- S.R to find out how well you are doing.

- without S.R - no improvement

S.R - a way of thinking about how you operate.

- its continual thinking

- Fear of S.R
Fear of being judged.

Appendix: L

Ethics Approval

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

MEMORANDUM

To: Afeefa Shakeela
Cc: Jan Robertson: Supervisor
Beverley Bell: Committee Representative

From: Sue Bradley: Administrator
For the School of Education Ethics Committee

Date: 1 November 2005

Subject: Ethical Approval

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

"The purposes and processes of self-review in schools"

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

The Committee wishes you all the best with your research.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ted Giynn'.

Ted Giynn
Chairperson
School of Education Ethics Committee