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Principal Professional Learning in New Zealand: How does it happen?

Understanding the value of profound professional learning for experienced principals

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree of

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ABSTRACT

Profound professional learning for principals makes a difference to student achievement. While indirect, the impact of effective principal practice has a ripple effect throughout the community of learners of a school. The principal is, and should be, the lead learner of the school. Authenticity in this action brings credibility. This credibility establishes the principal as a significant role model.

This qualitative research provides some insight to the understanding and practices of experienced effective principals and their professional learning in a New Zealand context. The findings suggest that there are measures of effectiveness for New Zealand principals, however ascertaining what to measure is somewhat difficult. Knowledge of tools to support the identification of learning needs is limited and therefore not significant in the practice of these principals.

Drivers and barriers to professional learning are identifiable. Work/life balance is highlighted as both a measure of effectiveness and a filter for professional learning. This is one of many filters explored.

Recognition is given to the positioning of New Zealand principalship in a post-modern paradigm and the conflict that arises when measures of neo-liberal accountabilities are employed.

The significance of school context and culture are highlighted as conditions for profound professional learning. The culture of traditional learning through principal clusters is challenged. Recommendations and considerations are offered to both principal colleagues and the Ministry of Education as a result of these findings. These include the need for principal mentoring and secondment to external, national bodies as part of professional learning for all principals. The value of professional learning is highlighted.

More significantly principals are challenged to embrace and develop an authentic culture of professional learning.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iv
Table of Contents	vi
Chapter One – Introduction	
1.1 Positioning within the literature	2
1.2 Organisation of thesis	3
Chapter Two – Literature review	
Background	4
2.1 What is the core business of principalship?	5
2.2 Why do principals need professional learning?	6
2.3 Leadership descriptions	8
2.3.1 Paradigms	9
2.4 Types of leadership – leadership models	12
2.4.1 Distributed leadership	13
2.4.2 Authentic leadership	13
2.4.3 Instructional leadership	14
2.5 Can effective leadership practice be defined?	15
2.5.1 Qualities of effectiveness	15
2.5.2 Professional/Personal – an understanding needed for effective practice	19
2.6 Effective practice and the alignment with professional learning	20
2.6.1 Lead learner	21
2.7 Drivers of effective professional learning	24
2.8 Environment for effective professional learning	26
2.8.1 Context	27
2.8.2 The three C's – culture, climate and collaboration	27
2.8.3 Continuous learning	31
2.8.4 Ownership	31

2.8.5 Connectedness	32
2.8.6 Curriculum links	32
2.8.7 Purposeful – goal setting and planning	32
2.9 Determining needs	33
2.9.1 Feedback	34
2.9.2 Appraisal and performance management	34
2.9.3 Reflection	35
2.10 Types of professional learning	36
2.10.1 One day courses, conferences and seminars	37
2.10.2 On the job training	38
2.10.3 Coaching and being mentored	38
2.10.4 Learning conversations	39
2.11 Selecting professional learning	40
2.12 Barriers to professional learning	41
2.13 Outcomes and impacts	45
2.13.1 Accountability	46

Chapter Three – Research methodology

Introduction	50
3.1 What is educational research?	50
3.2 Educational research paradigms	51
3.3 Method	55
3.3.1 Interviews	55
3.3.2 Strengths and limitations	57
3.4 Sample selection	59
3.5 Data analysis	61
3.5.1 Grounded theory	61
3.5.2 Planning	62
3.5.3 Coding	66
3.5.4 Tensions	67
3.6 Validity and reliability	68
3.7 Ethical considerations and implications	70
3.8 Summary	73

Chapter Four – Findings

4.1 Understanding the role of the principal	76
4.1.1 Motivation and philosophy	76
4.1.2 Leadership and the role of the principal	78
4.1.3 Leadership and culture	80
4.1.4 Identifying the skills of effective principals	81
4.1.5 Leaders of learning	84
4.2 Determining needs	86
4.2.1 Interpersonal needs	87
4.2.2 Personalised learning	88
4.2.3 Tools and processes to identify needs	89
4.2.4 Goal setting	90
4.3 Filters, barriers, drivers and conditions	93
4.3.1 Filters	94
4.3.2 Barriers to effective professional learning	97
4.3.3 Culture of professional learning	100
4.3.4 Types of professional learning	101
4.3.5 Conditions for profound professional learning	102
4.4 Impact, accountabilities and alternatives	104
4.4.1 Impact of professional learning	104
4.4.2 Accountability	105
4.4.3 Options and alternatives	106
4.5 Summary	108

Chapter Five – Discussion

Introduction	109
5.1 Understanding the role of the principal	109
5.2 Determining needs	121
5.3 How professional learning decisions are made	126
5.3.1 Filters	126
5.3.2 Drivers	129
5.3.3 Barriers	129
5.3.4 Conditions	132
5.4 Impact of professional learning	134

5.4.1 Accountability and impact	134
5.4.2 Options and alternatives	136
5.5 Summary	139
Chapter Six – Conclusions	
6.1 Recommendations and possible actions	141
A. Experienced principals	141
B. Ministry of Education	142
6.2 Limitations of study	143
6.3 Suggestions for future research	144
6.4 Conclusions	144
References	146

CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

In New Zealand there are essentially only two requirements to become a principal – a qualification and registration as a teacher. There are no further compulsory qualifications, training or professional requirements to become a principal, neither prior to or post appointment. How then does the professional learning of principals happen in New Zealand?

Principals are many things to many people – to parents, to students, to the wider community and to the staff. It is a complex, yet pivotal role in any school community. Today this role is one of leadership and more specifically leading learning.

Principals have moved from administrators and managers to an era of being called the 'lead learner' or 'leader of learners'. Extensive research is available on the role the lead learner plays in influencing the professional learning of others, the impact that professional learning has on student achievement and the culture needed to achieve this. However, much less is available on understanding the professional learning of lead learners themselves.

This research focuses on understanding *Principal Professional Learning in New Zealand – how does it happen?* It explores how principals learn and how effectiveness and professional learning are intertwined. To be effective, the lead learner must learn. This calls for an exploration of how learning needs are identified, and then how and what professional learning is undertaken to support these.

This research investigates how principals select professional learning opportunities and the links between the professional learning choices of principals, school targets and student achievement. The place of context and culture in professional learning decisions requires investigation as does the impact of and accountability for professional learning.

There is limited research currently available in a New Zealand context that addresses how and why principals select particular professional learning opportunities. If the educational community had a greater understanding then perhaps providers could offer more tailored opportunities and principals could make more purposeful learning decisions.

The impact of such research has the potential to influence principal professional learning. It may encourage principals to critique their practice and gain a more insightful understanding of how and why professional learning decisions are made. The ripple effect of this is the impact it has on student learning.

1.1 Positioning within the literature

Initial searches of current research and data show much has been discussed about the importance of professional learning and the significant role that the principal has in the success of this for others. Literature supporting the role of the principal in leading and developing a culture for professional learning, determining the goals, targets and expectations is extensive. Descriptions of these perceived qualities of effective leaders are plentiful and lists of these are numerous and varied. It appears that much less is written about the professional learning needs of principals, their role as a learner and how their principal skill base is developed (Clarke, 2004).

Guskey (2003) suggests that while descriptions characteristics of effectiveness are plentiful, limited research based analysis exists analysing the impact of these and professional learning on student achievement. However, he does offer that professional learning is most effective if it is structured, purposeful and well-organised.

Argyris (1999) suggests that while leaders are able to collect data about operational issues and solve problems that arise from these, fitting well with the New Zealand setting of school review, charters, target setting and reporting, they are not good at reflecting on their actions or inactions and

the impact of these. This is a reiteration of his earlier work where Argyris (1992) suggested that leaders have become adept at 'identifying and correcting errors in the external environment' (p. 127) but little work has been done on the internal influences. Argyris (1999) hints that culture and reflective practice play a role in the ability to do this.

'A learning leader must assess the adequacy of his organization's culture, detect its dysfunctionality, and promote its transformation, first by making his own basic suppositions into "learning assumptions" and then by fostering such assumptions in the culture of his organization'. (Argyris, 1999, p. 5).

Robinson and Lai (2006), Senge, Scharmer, Jaworski and Flowers (2004), Southworth (2000), West-Burnham and Ireson (2004) provide some determination as to what effective leadership might look like and how it might be measured. Coupled with recent New Zealand references from the Ministry of Education (2008) in *Kiwi Leadership for Principals*, the OECD report (2007) into New Zealand educational leadership, the revision of the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2008) and the *Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration: School Leadership and Student Outcomes* (Robinson, Hohepa & Lloyd, 2009) provide interesting positions to determine the measures and accountabilities for principal professional learning in New Zealand.

1.2 Organisation of thesis

This work is organised into five further chapters following this introduction. Chapter two explores the literature in greater depth, providing a picture of the current position of principal professional learning. Chapter three provides an understanding of the research methods employed to investigate this theme. Chapter four summarises the findings from the semi-structured interviews. Chapter five draws links between these findings and the original literature investigations. It also speaks of the silences in each. Chapter six provides recommendations and possible outcomes as a result of this research.

CHAPTER TWO – REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Background

In 2001 the Ministry of Education commissioned a stock take of professional learning undertaken by New Zealand principals. Whilst significant and challenging trends were identified and released in 2002, reiterated in the OECD report of 2007, it appears that little has been done to either acknowledge or act upon these. Significant outcomes were:

- The approach to principal professional development in New Zealand was unstructured and ad hoc
- The professional development available did not always have sufficient depth or practical relevance to meet principals' needs
- The timing of available professional development did not always match well to the needs of principals
- The availability of some forms of leadership development varied by region and locality
- Individual principals did not always access the leadership professional development that would make the most difference to their effectiveness and were not always aware of what development might be most beneficial
- Boards and principals could not always get sound information on the range of professional development options available
- Participation in all current initiatives is voluntary

(OECD, 2007, p. 62)

This chapter reviews the available literature focusing on how principal professional learning needs are identified and met. This is not limited to a New Zealand setting although this is the major focus. In exploring this, an understanding of the role of the principal is needed. Paradigms of leadership, measures of effectiveness, types of professional learning and factors that support and inhibit the selection and understanding of professional learning are considered. These are identified as significant

factors in understanding both effective leadership and effective professional learning.

Before exploration of these concepts can be presented, acknowledgement must be given to the complexity of the position of the school principal. Clegg and Billington (1997) describe principalship not only as complex, but 'demanding and difficult' (p. 3). Understanding this complexity is a difficult task in itself (Argyris, 1991; Clegg & Billington, 1997; Kirby, Paradise, & King, 1992).

2.1 What is the core business of principalship?

While as complex, invigorating, exciting and challenging as any other leadership role, the position of school principal is set apart through its purpose and function. Church (2005) challenges principals to move from the 'tasks' of their role to greater focus on this purpose: 'what are schools for and who are they for' (p. 85)? Barth (2001) offers a response to this. 'Schools exist to promote learning in all their inhabitants. Whether we are called teachers, principals, professors, or parents, our primary responsibility is to promote learning in others and in ourselves. That's what it means to be an educator' (p.12). This sets principal leaders apart from other contexts and focuses on education.

Barth (2001) emphasises learning, as opposed to the art of teaching. This could be seen as 'semantics'. However this is deliberate and supported. Whatever we choose to do, 'we must abandon the long-standing assumption that the central activity is teaching and reorient all policy making and activities around a new benchmark: student learning' (Du Four, Eaker & Du Four, 2005, p. 253).

In education today, emphasis is placed on positioning student learning at the centre of decision making. Achievement and underachievement, with accountability for this action and inaction, is placed at the hands of educators, and ultimately, more specifically, the principal. 'A major reason so many students are at risk as learners in our schools is that they are

surrounded by so many at-risk educators' (Barth, 2001, p. 24). This may be direct; however this is the crux of why effective professional learning is not only desirable, but essential. Whilst increasing effectiveness may sound simple, there are greater complexities.

2.2 Why do principals need professional learning?

Principal leadership impacts on student achievement (Hattie, 2009; Robinson, 2007). In New Zealand, educational achievement discusses at risk learners as a 'tail' of underachievement. In the United States this is shared as leaving no child behind. This concern for achievement for all learners has become the focus and vision of education internationally. Goodson & Hargreaves (2005) reframe this into the context of professional learning, 'leaving no child behind means leaving no teacher or leader behind either' (p. xi). Professional learning has a significant part to play in achieving this.

The impact of teacher development on student achievement seems an easier concept to grasp. What place is there then for principal professional learning?

'Education reformers seem convinced that quality leadership by principals and other key educators is absolutely essential to improve school performance... not matched by a similar clarity of thinking about how leaders secure the desired results... leadership is presented as a critical factor in high performance schools' (Mitchell, 1990, p. 1).

This is supported by Leithwood, Day, Sammons Harris and Hopkins (2006) in that 'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning' (p. 3). Sergiovanni (2001) emphasises that 'leaders and leadership make the difference in establishing and maintaining successful schools' (p. 133). Robinson (2007) questions the 'difference' that school leaders can make, and answers this with 'international research that examines the relationship between qualities of school leadership and student outcomes shows that the leadership of schools where students perform above expected levels looks very different

from that, *in otherwise similar schools*, where students perform below expected levels' (Robinson, 2007, p. 2).

There are both direct and indirect influences on student achievement. The teacher has direct influence, where the principal's leadership is indirect. Hall and George (1999) support Robinson (2007) in that 'the formal leader makes a significant difference. No matter what the leader does (and does not do), the effects are detectable throughout the organization' (p. 165). Mulford and Silins (2005) emphasise this indirect influence, 'both positional (head teacher) and distributed (leadership team and teacher learners) leadership are only *indirectly* related to student outcomes' (p. 147).

With both student and teacher achievement identified as the responsibility of the principal, the ability to create and develop an environment conducive to this becomes of even greater importance. This is the culture of the school. The principal leads, develops and influences this culture. This takes skill and knowledge. The key to developing such skill and knowledge is professional learning. 'Leadership development and succession planning have never been more important' (NCSL, 2007, p.4). 'Just as teachers need to be effective in their classroom, so leaders need preparation for their specialist roles' (Bush, 2003, p. x).

Stacey (1992) suggests with the complexities and evolution of the role of principalship come a change in learning needs, a focus on professional learning and further development of a skill base. Stacey (1992) offers that this is 'non-linear and dynamically complex. It calls for new understandings of control, appropriate uses of power, the establishment of self-organising learning teams, development of multiple cultures, taking risks, improving group learning skills' (p. 188).

Leaders are needed 'who understand the full potential of high-quality professional development' (Richardson, 2007, p. 13), for self and others. This value of professional learning has strong links with leadership.

'How one learns is closely related to how one leads' (Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007, p. x). Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) in the *Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES): Student Leadership and Student Outcomes: What Works and Why*, overwhelmingly emphasise that promoting and participating in teacher learning and development is the greatest action of leadership. This one action is seen to impact most significantly, of all leadership actions, on student achievement. Before an understanding of learning can take place, some exploration of leadership is needed.

2.3 Leadership descriptions

Robinson (2007) suggests that leadership in schools making a difference to student achievement is different. The effective leader demonstrates qualities that set them apart from the 'average' leader. The question is, can the effective leader be defined or even described? What then is effective leadership and what does this leadership look like?

Senge (1990a) offers a traditional image of leadership to begin this exploration.

'Our traditional views of leaders – as special people who set the direction, make key decision and energize the troops – are deeply rooted in an individualistic and non-systematic world view. Especially in the West, leaders are *heroes* – great men (and occasionally women) who 'rise to the fore' in time of crises. Our prevailing leadership myths are still captured by the image of the captain of the cavalry leading the charge to rescue the settlers from attacking Indians. So long as such myths prevail, they reinforce a focus on short-term events and charismatic heroes rather than on systemic forces and collective learning. At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master the forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders' (p. 340).

Whilst Senge (1990a) is somewhat descriptive, his ideas are reinforced by Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) who take their understanding one step further.

‘The myth of the hero-innovator: the idea that you can produce, by training, a knight in shining armour who, loins girded with new technology and beliefs, will assault his organisational fortress and institute changes both in himself and others at a stroke. Such a view is ingenuous. The fact of the matter is that organisations such as schools will, like dragons, eat hero-innovators for breakfast’ (p. 134).

Georgiades and Phillimore (1975) and Senge (1990b) challenge traditional perceptions of the leader. However leaders are defined, ‘the principal is generally considered the foremost school leader in every New Zealand school’ (OECD, 2007, p. 20). Though Lambert (1998) highlights ‘leadership is not a trait theory; leadership and leader are not the same’ (p. 89).

2.3.1 Paradigms

Just as the tools of management were required in leading New Zealand schools over the political time of decentralisation in education of the 1990’s Tomorrow’s Schools era, the evolution of leadership styles reflect a relationship with political and industrial focuses of today. The transactional, neo-liberalism of the 1980’s and 1990’s is giving way to the post-modern and organic leadership paradigms of today.

An understanding of leadership paradigms provides ‘a platform for subsequently highlighting broad differences in behaviours, beliefs, power, processes and applications of leadership’ (Avery, 2004, p. 20). Boyd (1992) explains what is meant by paradigm as ‘a model or theory, with models or theories often guiding, consciously or sub-consciously, our thinking about such things as organizations, leadership and policy’ (p. 506).

Avery (2004) presents two paradigms, aligning with neo-liberalism and post-modern, however titles these as 'Newtonian/Mechanistic' and 'New Science' (p. 20). Neo-liberalism and Newtonian/Mechanistic paradigms explain leadership as predictable, controlling, monitoring, outcomes focused with technical regulation, accountability and process driven. This thinking is identified as more formal and efficiency focused, goal dominated, systematised and structured. Vertical communication patterns are predominant and a hierarchy more evident. Power resides in the apex of this hierarchical pyramid. Heads and principals possess authority by virtue of their positions as the appointed leaders of their institutions (Bush, 2003, p. 58). While efficient, challenges to leadership within this paradigm can arise as focus is generally on the organization as an entity and the value of the contribution of individuals can be under-estimated. The behaviour of individuals is based on organizational position rather than the skills, qualities and experiences an individual may bring (Bush, 2003).

Alternatively post-modern or new science paradigms suggest more complexity, unpredictability and uncertainty. Figure 1 provides a table understanding of this.

Post-modern, collegial models emphasise that 'power and decision making should be shared among some or all members of the organization' (Bush, 2003, p. 64) calling for different leadership styles and a different skill base. Consensus, shared power, shared understanding and personal skill are more obvious in institutions working within this paradigm.

Collegial models emphasize the authority of expertise rather than official authority (Bush, 2003, p. 76).

Post-modern leadership concerns itself more with emotion rather than reason (Bush, 2003, p. 128) and is more ideological. While operating in an environment of collegiality and consensus, there is focus on the individual, their vision, diversity and interpretations. Frameworks are less clear. 'Post-modern is the label for our now' (Hodgkinson, 2001, p. 300).

Fig 1:

	Newtonian/Mechanistic		New Science	
Leadership characteristics	Classical	Transactional	Visionary	Organic
Major era	Antiquity-1970's	1970's-mid '80's	1980's-2000	Beyond 2000
Basis of leadership	Leader dominance through respect and/or power to command and control	Interpersonal influence over and consideration of followers. Creating appropriate management environments	Emotion – leader inspires followers	Multiple sense-making within group. Leaders may emerge rather than being formally appointed
Source of follower commitment	Fear or respect of leader obtaining rewards or avoiding punishments	Negotiated rewards, agreements and expectations	Sharing the vision; leader charisma may be involved, individualised consideration	Buy-in to the group's shared values and processes; self-determination
Vision	Leader's visions is unnecessary for follower compliance	Vision is not necessary and may not ever be articulated	Vision is central. Followers may contribute to the leader's vision	Vision emerges from the group; vision is a strong cultural element

(Avery, 2004, p. 19)

The paradigm of 'organic leadership' with 'multiple networks with multiple leaders and those in leadership roles acting more like facilitators than directors' (Avery, 2004, p. 28), requires for some a radical change in thinking about principalship. The control, order and hierarchy are replaced with continual change, chaos and diversity. Self-managing is replaced with self-leading and newly termed 'leaderful' organizations (Avery, 2004).

'Leaders are likely to exhibit preferences for a particular paradigm. Rather than fitting one of the paradigms perfectly, they may well use elements of several paradigms. The choice of paradigm is likely to depend on the situation or reflect individual leader's personal preferences' (Avery, 2004, p. 31). This acknowledges and encourages the diversity of leadership in schools.

However in professional learning it is 'people's mindsets and beliefs' that can 'hinder or facilitate the adoption of new paradigms' (Avery, 2004, p. 31). The organisational culture will also be a significant contributor to this.

An understanding of leadership paradigms, models and styles allows for discussion of effectiveness and perhaps the identification of professional learning needs to achieve this.

2.4 Types of leadership – leadership models

Personal preferences determine the paradigm leaders find themselves within (Avery, 2004). There are as many types of leadership styles as there are 'disparate voices on the leadership stage' (Riley & Louis, 2000, p.8). However as educational leaders are challenged to emerge from a more structured, neo-liberal paradigm to one with post-modern flavour, Barth (2001) is less subtle in suggesting this transition: 'The days of the principal riding in on the white horse to rescue are over' (p. 84).

Discussions of leadership models or explanations within a post-modern paradigm are extensive. Hattie (2009) and Kirby et al. (1992) discuss the transformational leader; Scarborough (2008) speaks of informed leadership; Emery (1994) refers to the introspection and contextual awareness needed for intuitive leadership, which Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), Stewart and Prebble (1993) and Villiani (2008) refer to as reflective leadership.

More depth is given in this discussion to the exploration of three distinctly post-modern leadership models – distributed, authentic and instructional.

These are identified as models aligned more with educational organisations of today.

2.4.1. Distributed leadership

Dyer and Carothers (2000), Moos (2003) and Villiani (2008) coin distributed leadership as the building of leadership capacity, leaders leading with others as opposed to leading other people, establishing a community of leaders. Bryk and Schneider (2002) discuss the importance of building relational and contractual trust as the foundation for success in adopting a distributed leadership model.

Evidence suggests there is a greater effectiveness of principals working within a distributed leadership model. They 'don't work harder than less effective principals, they work smarter by encouraging and enlisting leadership in others' (Barth, 2001, p. 84).

2.4.2 Authentic leadership

Villiani (2008) presents authentic leadership as a model in the post-modern paradigm. This builds on the establishment of a culture of trust, where there is the right to express outrage, to tell truths, based on a collective understanding of values, norms and respectful relationships. Leaders within this model are expected to 'walk the talk', work from and express their belief and passions, and operate within a frame of trust, legitimacy and credibility (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Martinez, 2005; Villiani, 2008). In this frame, leaders are challenged to have less differentiation between personal and professional self. 'The person and the professional are authentic. I don't think you can be an authentic leader without being an authentic person' (Participant, in Robertson & Murrphy, 2006, p. 8).

Authentic leadership calls for greater alignment of the moral and spiritual beliefs of the leader with their actions. The open articulation of these creates the closer alignment of espoused theories and theories in action (Robertson & Murrphy, 2006, p. 17), developing greater authenticity as both a leader and as a person.

2.4.3 Instructional leadership

If principals are being called to give priority to learning and achievement of students, then addressing the skill base of those instructing, facilitating and engaging learners is surely needed. To do this, a level of expertise and currency would be needed in the principal. Hence the call for instructional leadership (Cotton, 2003; Gaziel, 1995; O'Neill, 2008).

Gaziel (1995) found principals of high performing schools expend generous amounts of time in 'instructional leadership activities, student relationships, teachers professional development and parent-principal contact' average principals 'spend nearly all their time on organizational maintenance and pupil control activities' (pp. 179-180).

Instructional leadership places the need for professional learning centrally within education. Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) define instructional leadership as that which 'typically assumes that the critical focus for attention by leaders is the behaviour of teachers as they engage in activities directly affecting the growth of students' (p. 8). Whilst Southworth (2002) suggests 'instructional leadership is strongly concerned with teaching and learning, including the professional learning of teachers as well as student growth' (p. 79). This calls for leaders to be knowledgeable about both 'content knowledge and teaching strategies' (Martinez, 2005; Stewart & Prebble, 1993).

Challenges to the model of instructional leadership are equally prevalent. The greatest challenge stems from a changing emphasis in schools, 'shifting our collective focus from teaching to learning' (Du Four, 2002, p. 3). Du Four (2002), supported by Leithwood (1994), expands on this in that 'educators are gradually redefining the role of the principal from instructional leader with a focus on teaching to leader of a professional community with a focus on learning' (p. 4).

2.5 Can effective leadership practice be defined?

Timperley and Parr (2004) talk of 'effective leaders', West-Burnham (2009) presents 'outstanding leaders' in an English context and Stott and Lee (2005) share 'extra-ordinary leaders'. Whatever descriptors are used it is universally recognised that 'good leadership is more than generating good scores' (Barth, 1986, p. 156). As discussed previously, leadership is both simple and complex (NCSL, 2007). Effective leaders are needed if schools are to have effective teachers and high levels of student achievement (Timperley & Parr, 2004).

However the measure of best practice, effectiveness and outstanding leadership is contentious, casual and often over-used. Effectiveness becomes misleading through its frequency of use and over-simplification in defining this (Bush, 2003).

2.5.1 Qualities of effectiveness

Sparks (2005) suggests the quality of leadership impacts significantly on achieving success with staff and students. Some countries have established a national systemic approach to leadership development in an endeavour to achieve quality. New Zealand, however, offers no formal preparation for school leadership and has 'no single formal regulatory framework for leadership development or mechanisms and criteria to assess and assure the quality of school leadership preparation programmes' (OECD, 2007, p. 64). This challenges the quality and the measure of effectiveness of New Zealand Principals. The introduction of *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (KLP) (Ministry of Education, 2008) goes some way to offering an overview to New Zealand leadership in education, as does the recent release of the *Professional Leadership Plan* as part of this in May 2009. The system is still some way from delivering a cohesive national model. This could be more difficult to achieve given the extent of decentralisation and independent governance in New Zealand schools.

Whatever the setting, in describing qualities of effectiveness, there are limitations when presenting leaders with behavioural descriptors to describe their leadership styles and to measure effectiveness (Hall, 1996).

Clegg and Billington (1997) offer the immeasurable qualities of strength, determination, stamina, confidence and self-belief (pp. 108-9). Kotter (1999), from outside an educational setting offers: understanding management of and processes for change; interpersonal relationships; developing knowledge of leadership, people, generational understandings and needs; knowledge of self and then others. Phillips (2006) offers a range of skills or *imperatives* as do Bainbridge and Thomas (2006) calling these *personal and technical competencies* (pp. 6-7). Bennis and Goldsmith (2003) and Marx (2006) provide a list of skills to checklist based on inclusiveness, connectedness and enthusiasm for the future, suggesting effective leaders enjoy the complexity of the position.

Dyer and Carothers (2000) list both observable and other less tangible qualities: not paralysed by timing; do not wait for permission to act; understands the importance of shared values; recognises the value of a culture of trust; is visionary; believe that sharing leadership expands capacity; willingly collaborates with others both like and unlike themselves; and balances personal and positional power with the political context. 'The leader just knows the right thing to do' (Dyer & Carothers, 2000, p.2).

Villiani (2008) discusses vision. Vision is a commonality, however somewhat difficult to measure. The OECD (2007) report reiterates the importance of vision, though places emphasis on building community relationships, striving for excellence and self-efficacy. *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (Ministry of Education, 2008) lists traits of expectation as do the *Professional Standards for Principals* (NZEI, 2008) in a New Zealand setting. These could be seen as ideals or minimum standards and are open to interpretation. As measures of 'extraordinary' they would have to be questioned.

Emmerson, Paterson, Southworth and West-Burnham (2006), Glanz (2006) and Robinson (2007) build on striving for excellence within a frame of setting high-expectations and self-improvement. In both discussions emphasis is on 'doing as I do' in leadership, recognising the impact of modelling and authenticity.

In discussing such intangibles, Goldberg (2001) lists the five such qualities: social conscience, situational mastery, seriousness of purpose, bedrock belief and the courage to swim upstream as absolute measures of effective leadership. Theodore Roosevelt, 26th President of the United States (1858-1919) models Goldberg's qualities in his description of his leadership: 'There is nothing brilliant or outstanding in my record, except perhaps this one thing. I do the things I believe ought be done... and when I make up my mind to do a thing, I act. Personal conviction or social conscience, and putting theory into practice as seriousness of purpose are modelled here.

West-Burnham (2009) offers a further application of Goldberg's qualities:

'one of the great intangibles in studying leadership is that individuals with good academic qualifications, wide-ranging experience and exemplary professional profiles do not always make the most effective school leaders. Equally, the person with a wide portfolio of professional development does not always have the ability to translate this into successful professional practice. There is the person who has read Goleman (1995) on emotional intelligence, watched the video and been on the course yet who remains unable to engage with people' (p. 1).

Perhaps West-Burnham is suggesting that effectiveness is not necessarily measured by the professional learning one does or the experiences had. Rather effectiveness is observed and seen by the action that results.

A common measure is the ability of the leader to personalise their leadership to address the needs of the community, the teachers and the learners for whom they are responsible (Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007; Marx,

2006; Phillips, 2006). Goldberg (2001) described this as situational mastery. Glanz's (2006) discussion frames this as 'context expertise'.

In all cases there is little evidence to suggest absolutes or to even give priority to one quality or skill over the other. Is the establishment of such 'criteria' as complex as the position of educational leader itself? Phillips (2006) states 'there is no single way to prepare leaders' (p. 4) so perhaps there is no single way to measure effective leadership either. Questioning why, suggests that effectiveness is in fact context specific. Contextual specificity is explored later in this review.

Whilst a list of qualities provides some focus and direction for skill development, educational leadership in Singapore offers a position to negate this. They found giving focus to developing a set of skills through a national development centre, resulted in producing competent school principals. The challenge was that in highlighting 'best practice and benchmarking' as models this resulted in imitating the best practice of others, and following someone else's lead. 'Many training strategies [were used]... based in deficit models, where the intention was to diagnose leadership deficiencies and then attempt to bring the performance up to some predetermined standard' (Stott & Lee, 2005, p. 99). This was seen to achieve a line of mediocrity. Singapore was challenging leaders to move beyond this (Stott & Lee, 2005). This has been achieved in part by undertaking an analysis of the principal's skill base, with focus on both personal and professional self, capitalising on the strengths identified and maximising these.

The overall intention was one of national vision - *Singapore 'Thinking Schools, Learning Nation'*. Renown for focus in learning it became apparent that 'sheer hard work, discipline and the ability to prepare students for examinations would not be enough. In the new environment, the ability to innovate and to think creatively through the emerging complex problems and issues would become more prominent on the

agenda'... 'Leaders themselves would have to be different' (Stott & Lee, 2005, pp. 96-97).

2.5.2 Professional/personal – an understanding needed for effective practice

One skill or trait given increasing recognition as a measure of effective leadership is that of understanding self, both professionally and personally. It is suggested that this is needed and is perhaps an indicator of an area of focus for principal professional learning. West-Burnham (2009) supports this in that:

'outstanding school leaders... have a very clear, robust and realistic sense of self. They know who they are and they are confident and comfortable in that knowledge and possess a high level of emotional intelligence. They invest in personal growth and development... have a strong sense of vocation and a very clear personal and professional ethical code' (p. 13).

To understand effective practice the literature emphasises the understanding of aligning professional self with personal self. Bell and Gilbert (1996), Robertson and Murrphy (2006) identify an interrelationship between personal and professional, suggesting that development in both domains is important. One impacts inextricably on the other. Stott and Lee (2005) extend this identifying 'extra-ordinary leaders as leading from the soul. This means they understand themselves at deep levels; and leading from spirit means they position their own efforts in a much wider scheme of things' (p. 101).

Personal development recognises for change to take place, individual beliefs need to be challenged, renegotiated and reconstructed (Bell & Gilbert, 1996). From personal development comes an increased self-awareness, self-management, self-acceptance and self-responsibility, personal and professional insight (Bell & Gilbert, 1996; Duignan, 2004; Leithwood, 1990; Schein, 1996; Wendel, Hoke & Joekel, 1996). Whilst the

ability to measure this is questionable, this sense of self allows the leader to lead their way (Villiani, 2008).

This understanding of self has long been known in the wider leadership realm. Kotter (1999) discusses knowing what 'an effective working relationship requires, then, that you know your needs, strengths and weaknesses and personal style' (Kotter, 1999, p. 131). He goes on to recognise the impact of this as a leader becomes 'aware of what it is that impedes or facilitates the fulfilment of the role 'effectively' and with awareness, take action' (p. 131).

'The starting point of what's worth fighting for is not system change, not change in others around us, but change in ourselves' (p. 59). Schein (1996) and Davies, Davies and Ellison, (2005) support this in recognising the impact of personal insight on the growth and development of the wider organisation. Knowing self forms a foundation for ethical and authentic leadership (Begley & Wong, 2001).

Personal development is an element of effective leadership – 'if you want to be a leader, you have to be a real human being. You must recognize the true meaning of life before you can become a great leader. You must understand yourself first' (Senge, et al., 2004, p. 186). This cultivation of 'becoming a real human being, really is the primary leadership issue of our time, but on a scale never required before' (Senge et al., 2004, p. 192).

'The effective development of people is complex and multi-dimensional' (Robertson & Murrphy, 2006, p.29). Perhaps development in the emotional and personal domains is too complex or challenging to address, therefore it is easier to overlook.

'The dominant criteria for appointing school leaders remain qualifications and experience – when we know that personal qualities and behaviours are more significant determinants of leadership success' (West-Burnham, 2009, p. 1).

2.6 Effective practice and the alignment with professional learning

With an understanding of effective practice, focus is given to professional learning and the explicit links between the two. Effective practice is inseparable from professional learning.

An understanding of leadership, of self and of extraordinary leadership is only useful where there is willingness to not only ascertain personal and professional strengths, but to act upon these, to learn, to develop and to grow. According to Fullan (1999) 'a principal and school trying to improve must think of professional development as a cornerstone strategy' (p. 5). Cotton (2003) supports this suggesting with 'high-performing principals – the largest amount of time was spent on professional development' (p. 36).

2.6.1 Lead learner

An effective leader is being the lead learner, leading in learning. It has been acknowledged that to be an effective leader, professional development is an essential element. In recognising and acting upon this, the principal then has the opportunity to reposition themselves as the lead learner, leading learning. The 'lead learner' title is at the centre of recent educational leadership literature. In a New Zealand setting, supported internationally, the 'changing needs call for principals to move 'from organizational manager to leader of learning' (OECD, 2007). Ako: being a learner is emphasised by the Ministry of Education (2008) in its document: *KLP*, identifying this as a key trait of leadership in New Zealand schools today. Understanding changing leadership needs is pivotal.

'Principals who had the skills to manage an organisation were highly sought after. More recently, school leaders have been conceptualised as professional leaders developing their schools into reflective learning communities. Some have expressed concern that school leaders recruited for their management skills, and still responsible for school management, have been challenged

by the strengthened expectations around leadership of learning and achievement' (OECD, 2007, p. 22).

Scott-Nelson and Sassi (2005) are explicit in that 'no longer would it be adequate for principals to be absorbed by such managerial tasks as school governance, personnel management, finance or building management' (p. 3).

Sergiovanni (2001), in identifying eight principles for leadership provides a broad, though piercing understanding of professional learning. The last, 'continue to learn' is explained as learning 'means more than seeking new degrees or certifications for job advancement or staff development. It means that leaders must strive to be model learners. ...Learning is truly a lifelong experience and cannot be thought of simply as a destination' (p. 133).

This change in focus requires principals to overcome what has been a prevalent perception in many schools, learning is for students and teaching is for adults. Is the role of principal one of leading instruction or leading learning? As discussed earlier, rethinking in schools is focused beyond instructional leadership to being centred on learning. 'Teachers and students benefit when principals function as *leading learners* rather than *instructional leaders*' (Du Four, 2002, p. 2; Du Four, Eaker, Du Four, 2005). Barth (2001) is so bold as to suggest that 'in many learning institutions two distinct classes of citizens exist - adults who are learned and operate in a transmitting mode to the second class of citizens composed of 'learners'' (p. 25).

Bredeson and Johansson (2000), Crow (2008), Timperley and Parr (2004), Peterson (2002) and Zmuda, Kuklis and Kline (2004) express the repositioning of learning as the central focus for all within an educational environment. Everyone in the school is to be viewed as a learner and in doing so, 'the principal *must* be the lead learner in the school' (Lindstrom

& Speck, 2004, p. 123; Clegg & Billington, 1997; Crow, 2008; Fullan, 2002; O'Neill, 2008; Scott-Nelson & Sassi, 2005).

Stott and Lee (2005) give emphasis to the lead learner as a role-model, in an authentic leadership frame. Expectation of students begins with expectation of self. 'If pupils are to become more sophisticated learners, then so must school leaders' (Stott & Lee, 2005, p. 124). Barth encourages principals to cast aside the notion of principals as the authority and 'knower' and to become learners alongside the teachers and students (Barth, 1990/2001). He goes on to suggest, the most honourable, fitting title any educator can assume is that of 'leading learning' or 'head learner' (Barth, 2001, p. 26) and the responsibilities that go with it.

The reality check comes in considering Barth's (2001) succinct, though challenging statement of authenticity: 'You can't lead where you won't go' (p. 27). Is this evident in the messages principals convey, in their role modelling of both action and inaction? Consider the example of when the principal attends the staff development day with an external provider to start things off, and then trots back to the office to do 'more important stuff'. Barth (2001) suggests in this situation the message is 'learning is for unimportant people' important people don't need to learn' (p. 26).

Bennis and Nanus (1985) interviewed a diverse group of seemingly highly effective leaders and were struck by the fact that 'above all, they talked about learning' – their own and the learning of their students with learning identified as 'the essential fuel for the leader, the source of high-octane energy that keeps up the momentum of continually sparking new understanding, new ideas and new challenges'... 'very simply, those who do not learn do not survive as leaders' (p. 188).

The entire school community needs the principal to be on top of his or her game in all aspects of leadership. Professional learning is the key to leading learning communities (Du Four, Eaker, Du Four, 2005; Dyer, 2008). Timperley and Parr (2004) suggest that not only is the action of

professional learning important for effectiveness, the content of professional learning needs careful consideration. They challenge credibility, after all how can the lead learner support others and challenge practice if there are questions over their currency and knowledge?

Stott and Lee (2005) while positioning themselves as advocates of professional learning, challenge the place of professional learning as a mandatory, prescriptive and rigidly-defined practice for leadership development. After all, 'if we want pupils to become increasingly self-directed as learners' (Stott & Lee, 2005, p. 124) leaders in schools must be afforded this opportunity too. So what then drives professional learning?

2.7 Drivers of effective professional learning

Being professional is good reason in itself for professional learning. Palmer (2008) discusses the ethical and professional obligation the principal has in undertaking professional learning. This obligation however is not enough. Dyer (2008) centres attention back on the learner suggesting that principals '...cannot hope to sustain momentum in doing all that is required to reach high levels of student achievement if they give little attention to their own professional growth' (p. 7). Barth (2001) paints a more graphic picture, whilst presenting a similar message. 'Tragically schools are full of 'corpses' who faithfully, persistently, heroically each day place oxygen masks on youngsters' faces, while they themselves are anoxic' (p. 25). While dramatic, the reality is, in many schools, leaders preach learning, however fail to engage in meaningful, challenging, rigorous and engaging learning themselves, bringing into question their authenticity in action as leaders.

This allows a further exploration of significance of role modelling. Beyond the action of role-modelling as the lead learner is the responsibility to do so. Barth (1986), Pickens (1997), Sparks and Hirsh (1997) present this thinking as the 'public learner'.

The responsibility of being a public learner creates challenges in itself. For some, learning in high visibility creates an expectation. Some would perceive this as a cause of anxiety, while others would have negative perceptions or a sense of being 'flawed' if the suggestion to engage in professional learning was made (Barth, 1986, 2001; Pickens, 1997). The question arises as to whether the principal is then an appropriate role model to follow? The choices principals make in their professional learning, if ineffective, lacking in purpose or depth, with limited evidence of change or development, could be modelled as appropriate when in fact they are not. The face of authentic leadership and place of culture and reflective practice is brought to the fore.

Authentic leadership is the reality of espoused theories in action. It can be an external driver towards professional learning and links closely with the behaviour of role-modelling. Put simply it is the 'do as I do', linking theory with practice. 'One may espouse a commitment to collaboration, but one's actions may belie such a stance. Faculty will listen respectfully to you articulate your vision of collaborative leadership, but they will postpone judgement until they see you in action' (Glanz, 2006, p. xxi). Too often there is a gap between words and action (Argyris, 1991; Barth, 1986; Church, 2005; Hattie, 2009; Lueder, 2006; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000; Schmoker, 2005; Zmuda et al., 2004).

Schmoker (2005) provides a different perspective from a more practical base. He suggests that 'the problem is not that we do not know enough – it is that we do not do what we already know' (p. 148). While professional learning is seen as a key element of principal effectiveness, and professional learning may be readily undertaken, 'learning means action – if you learn something you have to do something about it' (Barth, 1986). Learning is one part of it, actioning new learning is the authenticity. Zmuda et al. (2004) are less subtle in their alignment of theory with action: 'if we know better, why don't we do better' (p. 5)?

In the frame of espoused theory and authenticity, consideration should be given as to the conditions needed for effective professional learning and how leaders determine their learning needs.

2.8 Environment for effective professional learning

The literature draws strong parallels between effective leadership and effective professional learning (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Clarke, 2004; Du Four, 1999; Elmore, 1996; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hattie, 2009; Law, 1999; Rhodes, Stokes, & Hampton, 2004; Richardson, 2007; Schein, 1998; Schmoker, 2005; Spanniet & Ford, 2008; Sparks, 2005; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Sugrue, 2002; Timperley & Parr, 2004; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998; Wideen & Andrews, 1987; Zmuda et al., 2004).

Alvarado (1998) moves beyond this believing that 'professional learning is the job'. Wideen and Andrews (1987) emphasise professional development as professional growth. For growth to occur, learning by leaders needs to occur. The literature on this is extensive over time and from a variety of seminal and new sources (Argyris, 1990, 1992, 1993, 1999; Argyris & Schon, 1992; Bell & Harrison, 1998; Bennis & Goldsmith, 2003; Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Brubaker, 2006; Clarke, 2004; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Du Four, 1999, 2002; Elmore, 1996; Fullan 1993; Fullan & Stielgelbauer, 1991; Hattie, 2009; Johnston & Caldwell, 2001; Lambert, 1998; Law, 1999; Lueder, 2006; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Ministry of Education, 2008; Mohr & Dichter, 2001; O'Sullivan, 1997; Rhodes et al., 2004; Richardson, 2007; Schein, 1998; Schmoker, 2005). Lambert (1998) draws leadership and learning together as one: 'leadership is about learning' (p. 89).

Hattie (2009) acknowledges learning as a deliberate, planned intervention, while Stewart and Prebble (1993) suggest learning is constructed through meanings and knowledge evolving from reflecting upon experience.

Profound professional learning occurs when a range of conditions are aligned. Bredeson and Johansson (2000), Thompson and Zeuli (1999), Timperley et al. (2007), and Walker and Dimmock (2005) list conditions for achieving this. Timperley et al. (1999) take a collaborative, group learning approach, where Thompson and Zeuli (1999) provide indicators that would apply both individually and to a group setting. Commonalities lie in providing focus and purpose for learning, contextually specific, creating a high level of disturbance to current thinking and practice, providing an environment allowing time and support to think, reflect and learn and interaction with others.

2.8.1 Context

Argyris (1991), Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007), Griffin (1987), Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Law (1999), Marx (2006), Rhodes et al. (2004) and Villiani (2008) argue the paramount indicator of effective principal professional learning is the contextual relevance it has for the leader. NCSL (2007) and Kotter (1999) state that 'context matters' (p. 4) and Church (2005) shares, 'to state the obvious, every school is different. Therefore the structures and processes that will be effective in one context may not be as helpful in another' (p. 17).

Professional learning has the likelihood of profound impact when it is situational and contextualised. While some skills may be transferable 'success in a particular setting or at a point in time does not guarantee success in a different setting or time' (Walker & Dimmock, 2005, p.88). They go further to identify that too often 'the crucial factor commonly missing from principal professional development is the relating of practice to context' (Walker & Dimmock, 2005, p. 88).

2.8.2 The three C's – culture, climate and collaboration

Argyris (1990,1991), Bredeson and Johansson (2000), Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007), Crow (2008a), Gray and Streshly (2008), Hattie (2009), Law (1999), Lueder (2006), Martin-Kneip (2004), Osterman and Kottkamp (1993), Palmer (2008) Peterson and Cosner (2005), Rhodes et al. (2004)

Robertson (2005), Schmoker (2005), Stewart and Prebble (1993) and Zmuda et al. (2004) discuss the impact of the climate or culture of the learning environment on professional learning and change.

Whilst climate and culture could be argued as different, in this setting, there seems little value in differentiating between the two. For this purpose, climate and culture are interchangeable.

The school's culture dictates 'the way we do things around here'. 'Ultimately, a school's culture has far more influence on life and learning in the schoolhouse than the state department of education, the superintendent, the school board, or even the principal can ever have' (Barth, 2001, p. 7). Every school has a culture and while 'the most powerful means of developing leadership is to create an organisational culture which values the sorts of learning most likely to enhance the capacity of individuals to lead' (West-Burnham, 2004, p. 197), some cultures are hospitable, while others are toxic (Barth, 2001). Sergiovanni (2001) suggests that in 'forgetting the importance of culture and the importance of creating new norms leads to changes that resemble the proverbial 'rearranging the chairs on the deck of the *Titanic*' (p. 119).

Perhaps, if a culture of learning is not obvious and the expectation of the principal as lead learner is not accepted then profound professional learning is less likely to occur.

'School culture enhances or hinders professional learning. Culture enhances professional learning when teachers believe professional development is seen as important and valued. 'Negative cultures can seriously impair staff development... reforms can fail' (Peterson, 2002, p. 12-13).

Just as the teacher establishes the climate for the classroom, the school principal plays the significant role in establishing the climate for the school (Hall & George, 1999; Peterson, 2002). To change a school's culture

requires courage, skill and modelling to others expectation and process. While some are comfortable in achieving this, many principals are not. Hence this identifies a possibility for professional learning (Barth, 2001; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998; Fullan, 2002).

Barth (2001) checklists what culture should look like with effective leadership. This culture is one of 'expectation, entrusting and empowering others, inclusiveness, protectiveness, shared responsibility for failure, where success is recognised, control can be relinquished – an environment of integrated learning, reflection on practice, ownership of learning, risk taking, collegiality, authenticity' (Barth, 2001, p. 110-159). Much of this is reiterated by Argyris (1991) where he shares that while the culture of the workplace might produce good results, the environment required for excellence is different.

Creating an environment or culture where it is 'safe' to question, work collaboratively, where there is receptiveness to questioning and self-improvement is at the centre of Argyris' (1991) discussion. Collins (2001) acknowledges the place of ownership of the culture in raising effectiveness. This is supported by Rhodes et al. (2004) who suggest that the emotional climate is a significant determinant of success. Barth (2001) promotes a culture where the 'non-discussables' become discussable and Argyris (1991) and Lencioni (2005), suggest a culture where 'the act of questioning is not a sign of mistrust or an invasion of privacy but as a valuable opportunity for learning' (p. 15).

Such a level of engagement and interaction comes when the culture supports learning (Spannueet & Ford, 2008), continuous improvement is valued (Griffin, 1987; Wendel et al.1996; Zmuda et al., 2004) and is embodied with trust, reflection and opportunity (Barth, 1986). To develop this is somewhat overwhelming. 'People have no real comprehension of the type of commitment it requires to building such an organization. Learning organizations demand a new view of leadership.' (Lueder, 2006, p. 27). So then, in what direction could or should the leadership take?

In organic or authentic learning, emphasis is placed on the development of a truly collaborative learning environment. The challenge to leadership is to relinquish control and powerbase, and 'recognize that one person cannot accomplish the expected results. The lone ranger no longer exists in this environment' (Dyer, 2006, p. 131).

A collaborative, reflective culture is recognised as the single most important factor in successful professional learning (Martin-Kneip, 2004). However, collaboration is often an espoused theory: one that is talked about but not taught or practiced in action. It seems that whilst there is discussion around collaboration, few leaders have deliberately gained a real understanding of it themselves (Hopkins, Higham & Ahtaridou, 2009).

'Collaboration is one of the most misunderstood concepts in the change business. It is not automatically a good thing; it does not mean consensus; it does not mean that major disagreements are verboten; it does not mean that the individual should go along with the crowd' (Fullan, 1993, p. 82). Whilst disagreements are part of collaboration, they are depersonalised and focus on the core or genuine area of disagreement. It is the culture in which collaboration operates that enables its success.

To achieve this culture, one must return to professional learning and the development of an effective leadership skill base. 'Collaborative learning is powerful ... however many schools and teachers do not have the social or personal skills which would allow them to work in effective collaborative relationship' (Robertson & Murrphy, 2006, p. 16; Clerkin, 2007; Lencioni, 2005). Given schools are charged with teaching such skills, a knowledge of collaboration could be deemed essential.

A culture of collaboration requires purpose, trust and strength in relationships. Carter and Sharpe (2006) and Lencioni (2005) reiterate this, profiling trust as the essential feature of the climate, coupled with communication skills, reflective questioning and collaboration.

Beyond culture, climate and collaboration, further conditions are needed for effective professional learning.

2.8.3 Continuous learning

Wendel et al. (1996) found that those successful in the role of principal prioritised continuous professional learning. Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007), Gray and Streshly (2008), Griffin (1987), Lindstrom and Speck (2004), Timperley, Phillips and Wiseman (2003) emphasise that profound professional learning comes over time in a sustained and continuous, reflective and analytic mode. It permeates the professional learning community culture. Overlooked by others, Griffin (1987) adds, like leadership, that professional learning is very much context sensitive.

In such an environment self-responsibility and ownership become more important. These are derived from a sense of purpose, understanding and belief.

2.8.4 Ownership

'A critical element of learning is ownership' (Barth, 1986, p. 157; 2001; Clegg & Billington, 1997). Hall (1996) and Stewart (2002) suggest that greater learning comes as a result. When there is ownership, there is commitment and a behavioural change (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993).

'When principals pose and address the important issues about which they want and need to know more, they come alive as learners. For when they are responsible for their own learning, principals frequently design activities that they really care about and enjoy.... and they design activities that work' (Barth, 2001, p. 148-149).

In being active in the design of their own learning, the learning is then personalised and allows the learner to construct their own insights (Peterson & Cosner, 2005; Rhodes, Stokes & Hampton, 2004).

Timperley, Phillips and Wiseman (2003) acknowledge the importance of this, 'the same professional development may not have the same impact on all participants' (p. 7).

With ownership comes a willingness to participate and receptiveness to new learning, essential for profound learning (Bradley, 1987; Rhodes et al., 2004). Learning then becomes purposeful, focused and meaningful (Bradley, 1987; Fullan, 1993; Griffin, 1987; Kemmis, 1987; Lueder, 2006; Marx, 2006; Senge, 1990a; Wideen & Andrews, 1987). Barth (2001) terms this legitimate learning.

2.8.5 Connectedness

Connectedness links with purpose (Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007; Marx, 2006). 'According to Michael Fullan, one of the most critical problems our schools face is not the resistance to innovation, but the fragmentation, overload and incoherence resulting from the uncritical and uncoordinated acceptance of too many different innovations.' (Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991, p. 197). While there may be a willingness to undertake professional learning, without purpose and connectedness learning may in fact become confusing and a negative experience.

2.8.6 Curriculum links

Through personalisation, authentic leadership and becoming the lead learner are given emphasis. To achieve this, perhaps direction for professional learning in leadership should be partially aligned with school-based curriculum development (Bradley, 1987; Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Clegg & Billington, 1997; Gaziel, 1995; Griffin, 1987; Kemmis, 1987; Law, 1999; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Peterson & Cosner, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2004; Wendel et al., 1996; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998; Wideen & Andrews, 1987)?

2.8.7 Purposeful – goal setting and planning

Connectedness is closely aligned with purpose. Purpose is aligned with goal-setting (Church, 2005; Peterson & Cosner, 2005; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998). Goal-setting defines the destination and moves from a generic programme to a more personalised focus (Barth, 1986; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Clegg and Billington (1997), Sparks and Hirsh (1997), Timperley and Parr (2004), West-Burnham and O'Sullivan (1998) advocate both goal-setting and planning as components of effective professional learning. Walker and Dimmock (2005) believe planning, driven by context and purpose is a formal design process that should be undertaken by all leaders. Barth (2001) and Bell (1991) discuss goal setting and the benefits of a personal learning plan. This can only be achieved when there is an understanding of what the principal's learning needs are.

2.9 Determining needs

In determining next learning steps for teachers and students, evidence based decision making is given significant emphasis (Grady, 2004; Hall, 1996; OECD, 2007; Timperley & Parr, 2004). This is encouraged from a range of sources, in the form of feedback, student achievement data, community consultation, through reflection, goal setting, local and national foci. Each has an element of analysis, planning and evaluation. What part do these processes play in determining the professional learning activities for principals?

Evidence beyond educational leadership supports the importance of analysing and determining need before undertaking new learning. Kotter (1999) suggests 'individuals, too, get in their own way by failing to assess their developmental needs realistically and to proactively seek means of meeting those needs' (p. 4). Applying this to the school setting, Glickman (2002) and Kotter (1999) align, stating if one cannot clearly specify what the missing element is, then by adding more change demands and more leadership will achieve very little.

Dyer and Carothers (2000) suggest that intuition is one technique employed in determining needs. While acknowledging determining needs is important, (Grady, 2004; Schein, 1998; Schmoker, 2005; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998) perhaps more robust professional processes could be employed.

Clegg and Billington (1997) acknowledge the complexity of this process. The argument often presented is 'how do we know what we don't know'? Without undertaking some form of analysis, principals are not always 'fully cognisant of the values and reasons behind their policies, actions and behaviours' (Walker & Dimmock, 2005, p. 87). This can lead to 'subsequent professional learning being trivialised and piecemeal, focused on superficial, narrowly based skills, knowledge and values' (Walker & Dimmock, 2005, p. 87). West-Burnham and O'Sullivan (1998) suggest needs analysis increases the clarity leaders seek in determining their next learning steps.

Professional learning is not only about determining what to do, but the process of diagnosing the support needed, determining the best plan of action and where to seek help. *Content* is important but the *process* of determining areas is just as significant (Schein, 1998).

Where then can this evidence come from?

2.9.1 Feedback

Barth (1986), Hall (1996), Rhodes et al. (2004), Stewart and Prebble (1993) place emphasis on feedback. Barth (1986) is more specific in the importance of sustained feedback. Shaver (2004) discusses the correlation between student feedback and staff needs, in order to increase student achievement. Church (2005) challenges principals to seek feedback on their performance and next learning steps, not only from staff and employees, but from the wider community, parents and the students themselves. Whether this is independent of the appraisal cycle or part of it, Hall (1996) acknowledges the barrier that perceived hierarchy can create which means colleagues may be less forthcoming with feedback.

2.9.2 Appraisal and performance management

Questions are raised in what part appraisals play in determining professional learning needs.

West-Burnham and O'Sullivan (1998) suggest that professional learning is intended to be developmental. When linked with accountability and measures such as appraisals, professional learning can become a strained task of compliance. Timperley and Parr (2004) reiterate this, likening appraisal to testing and assessment processes in some schools. The critique questions whether appraisal is a process or something of purpose, and then for what purpose? 'I used to think after finishing the February assessments, 'now I've done the testing, I can get on with the teaching'...'now I realise I can use the testing to help my teaching' (Timperley & Parr, 2004, p. 141). Perhaps this should parallel with the process of principal appraisal and the use of evidence to determine learning needs.

Rhodes et al. (2004) reiterate the importance of purpose and authenticity where 'performance management systems link with [professional] learning, not as a performance arena or a 'bolt on' activity (p. 4). McMullen (1991) places emphasis on the culture, levels of collaboration and trust in the appraisal process. The higher the level of performance in these domains, the more likely performance management will be a process conducive to development and learning, building upon strengths, rather than a measure on how well or poorly the leader is achieving (Timperley & Parr, 2004, pp. 142-146). While appraisals could be a source of determining need, perhaps the process requires a greater level of authenticity and ownership for it to be of value in this sense. Perhaps the reflective element of this process is of greater value?

2.9.3 Reflection

'Exemplary leadership can not be sustained unless there are periods set aside for reflection, renewal, and relaxation' (Dyer, 2006, p. 101).

The evaluative process of reflection, designed to identify both strengths and next learning, is an expectation for many students (Stott & Lee, 2005). With the benefits of this structured, guided, formalised process with

students well-evidenced there is no surprise of the alignment found with the benefits in determining learning needs for school leaders (Argyris, 1991; Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002; Barth, 1986; Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007; Dewey, 1933; Dyer, 2006; Gimmet, Rostad, & Ford, 1991; Griffin, 1987; Hall, 1996; Hallowell, 1997; Kemmis, 1987; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Peterson & Cosner, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2004; Smyth, 1989; Stewart & Prebble, 1993; Villani, 2008).

Achieving focus and determining learning needs through reflection, is a complex and difficult process. Changing leaders' behaviours and enabling them to become reflective practitioners is difficult. 'Critical reflection cannot be achieved by reading about it' (Robertson, 2005, p. 59). Once again, espoused theory is challenged to become an action. Reflection needs to be accompanied by focus and purpose, with time and process well established.

Osterman and Kottkamp (1993) clarify the impact of reflection. 'Through the process of observation and reflection, individuals become more sensitive to and more aware of their habitual patterns of behaviour, the assumptions that shape their behaviour, and the impact of their actions' (p. 16).

Reflection is not only a tool that supports the determining of needs, but one of professional learning. This is explored further in the context of coaching and mentoring as a form of professional learning.

2.10 Types of professional learning

It has already been established that continuous learning appears to be of greater worth (Fullan, 1993). From a neo-liberal perspective, Senge (1990a) offers that 'ultimately a learning organization is judged by results' (p. 44).

Much of what challenges the type and accessibility of professional learning stems from the divide that has appeared between theory and practice

(Walker & Dimmock, 2005). There is a need for both. 'What is desperately needed in deliberations about the reform of our nation's schools is a continual conversation between social science research and craft knowledge' (Barth, 2001, p. 63). Craft knowledge is more than telling war stories and is a source of learning that is undervalued. If 'accompanied by an intentional analysis of practice' (Barth, 2001, p. 57) the story can move from 'let me tell you...' to 'and here's what I learned from it' offering a significant source of material for others to learn from.

Beyond craft knowledge (West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998) provide an extensive array of professional learning opportunities and an analysis of each.

2.10.1 One day courses, conferences and seminars

The direct benefit in the popular choice of courses, conferences and seminars is seen as one of raising of awareness, stimulating interest and generating motivation in recipients. Bell (1991) suggests that courses, conferences and seminars can allow the learner to make choices about future learning, provide an opportunity for reflection and can increase knowledge.

Conversely, there is an enormous inconsistency in relevance and applicability to the specific context of the learner. Martin-Kneip (2004) suggests little is gained from one day courses, conferences and seminars. Questions are raised over the support and resources available to the learner at the conclusion of the programme (West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998), the power of influence that one learner can have over a whole group or school on return to the work place, and in the transference of skills from an external setting to the school learning environment (Bell, 1991). 'It is generally accepted that listening to inspiring speakers or attending one-off workshops rarely changes teacher practice sufficiently to impact on student outcomes' (Timperley, Wilson, Barrar & Fung, 2007, p. xxv)

2.10.2 On the job training

This is seen as the most powerful learning for some. This means, 'training on the job, training by being in it, experiencing the failures, successes and experiences' (Hall, 1996, p. 113). The depth of learning through this comes with reflection on the role or convictions underpinning each of these. Du Four, et al., (2005) describes this as 'job-embedded development'. Without the support of another, a process of reflection or the engagement in professional learning conversation with others, the limitations of job-embedded development are recognised. With only the individual reflection and knowledge base to draw from, learning is dependant on the initial skill-base of the learner.

2.10.3 Coaching and being mentored

Coaching or being mentored as professional learning, is identified as having a significant and positive impact on the effectiveness of the leader (Allen, 2008; Barth, 1986; Braun & Vigneau Carson, 2008; Peterson & Cosner, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2004; Robertson, 2005; Stewart & Prebble, 1993).

Coaching is a process that works at a personal level as well as with the development of professional expertise. It is a process that recognises that teachers [leaders] are 'people' as well as professionals (Robertson & Murrphy, 2006, p. 27).

While coaching as a formal professional learning process has taken hold more recently, it is far from a new concept. Over one hundred years ago, Dewey (1933) recognised the value of reflection in education.

The direct outcome of coaching and reflection is evident.

'They are not just solving problems but developing a far deeper and more textured understanding of their role as members of the organisation. They are laying the groundwork for continuous

improvement that is truly continuous. They are learning how to learn' (Argyris, 1991, p. 15).

Supervision (coaching/mentoring) challenges learners to 'reflect on what they are doing, why they are doing it, how successful they are, whether it is worth doing, whether there might not be better alternatives' (Stewart & Prebble, 1993, p. 24).

Success in mentoring requires conditions beyond just being appointed to the position of principal. 'Not all principals have the skills to communicate their ideas and experientially based knowledge – being a good principal does not necessarily equate to being a good teacher, mentor, coach or programme designer (Walker & Dimmock, 2005, p. 86). Effective mentoring is beyond simply putting principals together and asking them to form mentoring relationships. Some strategy is required to ensure success.

To provide a New Zealand context, the First Time Principals programme appoints mentors to all registered beginning principals. On evaluation of this it was found that 'the online component had little impact on principals' learning and behaviour, but the residential and mentoring components contributed more to principals' understandings of the importance of pedagogical leadership and the commitment to ensuring and improving the learning outcomes for all students in their school' (Cameron, Lovett, Baker, & Waiti, 2004, in OECD, 2007, p. 67).

2.10.4 Learning conversations

Rich learning comes through learning conversation. While this is a key feature of coaching and mentoring, in a collaborative environment learning conversations become a professional learning process in their own right. Timperley and Parr (2004) call them structured conversations. In an American setting, Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007) call them collaborative inquiry leadership seminars. Braun and Vigneau Carson (2008) and Clerkin (2007) talk of learning networks. More commonly in New Zealand

they would be referred to as clusters or quality learning circles (Stewart & Prebble, 1993). Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) is a more familiar international term (Braun & Vigneau Carson, 2008; Brubaker, 2006; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Du Four, 1999; Lueder, 2006; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Schmoker, 2005; Senge, 1990a; Spannueit & Ford, 2008; Sparks, 2005; Stewart & Prebble, 1993; Zmuda et al., 2004).

Timperley and Parr (2004) draw attention to a distinction in the purpose and authenticity of professional learning communities.

'There is a distinction between professional communities and professional learning communities – professional communities are where participants are supportive, share ideas and work together collegially, but there is little spill over benefit to student achievement levels where professional learning communities too are supportive and there is the sharing of ideas, but interactions are focused on raising student achievement' (p. 115).

As Du Four, Eaker and Du Four (2005) state learning in a professional learning community is more than adopting the title of learning community, mission statements and launching strategic plans. It is about developing a culture conducive to and focused upon learning. This highlights the importance of the purpose of conversation as a 'learning conversation' in an environment of mutual respect and an understanding of challenge, not just listening and questioning; maximising valid information and developing an attitude of inquiry. Promoting learning, not blame, prevails (Timperley & Parr, 2004).

2.11 Selecting professional learning

'Practitioners in schools have always been able to make choices about their own professional development. These choices have been both constrained and informed by the context within which they have had to be made and by the perspectives that practitioners have adopted in making them' (Bell, 1991, p. 20).

This professional autonomy is prioritised by Clegg and Billington, (1997) and is held dear by many education leaders. In making these selections there are multiple filters. Some are driven by evidence and some by desire and interest. Hall (1996) suggests a focus on outcomes in making this decision, considering 'what benefits they would bring the school and how they would improve their ability to do the job' (p.113). Schein (1998) offers a blended process, looking at the external needs (those of the school) and internal needs (those of the leader).

Martin-Kneip (2004), Richardson (2007), Sparks (2005) and Wendel et al. (1996) suggest quality should be a critique or filter in evaluating professional learning programmes. The necessity of 'high quality' is emphasised to improve capacity and effectiveness. Critique is needed to ascertain quality, contextual relevance and the ability of the development to meet identified needs. What education suffers from is not so much an inadequate supply of programmes as from a lack of demand for quality (Elmore, 1996; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991).

2.12 Barriers to professional learning

Argyris (1990), Bradley (1987) and Schon (1989) acknowledge that with professional learning there are risks. With risks come measures and filters. Principals use these to consider whether to participate in the new activity or not, and their level of engagement. Many principals are reluctant learners for a variety of reasons. 'Principals will become learners only when these barriers are directly acknowledged and addressed' (Barth, 2001, p. 144).

Whilst the barriers to professional learning can be principals themselves (Argyris, 1990; Barth, 2001), Kotter (1999) suggests that some diagnosis and understanding of this resistance and reluctance is needed.

An array of defences can be presented, beginning with the complexity and multiple demands of the position of principalship (OECD, 2007; Paterson & West-Burnham, 2005) which can create anxieties, isolation and a sense

of being over-whelmed. Argyris (1990) suggests others: the fault lies in others, organizational inertia; budget games; defensive reasoning; misunderstanding and mistrust; a lack of awareness of the unintended consequences of action or inactions. These and others need further discussion.

When barriers are created or the drive lost, the level of commitment lessens and actions like professional learning become a burden, undertaken out of expectation (Hall, 1996; Lueder, 2006; Spannueit & Ford, 2008; Wendel et al., 1996). Church (2005) and Dyer (2008) talk of the negative perception of professional learning by some. It can be seen as another task to complete. Martin-Kneip (2004) reiterates this when professional learning is seen as 'compliance rather than curiosity' (p. 71; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998). Or is it simply complacency? 'Complacency is the enemy of curiosity' (Handy, 1994, p. 62).

Is it the fatigue and 'dailyness' of the job? Is it the alienation and isolation? (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002; Church, 2005; Griffin, 1987; Lortie, 1975; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Robertson, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2001). 'Sustaining a sense of purpose and enjoyment for the job is definitely a challenge' (Church, 2005, p. 88). Bradley (1987) and Phillips (2006) share that a negative attitude or unwillingness to accept responsibility for professional learning can be a significant barrier. This could be as a direct result of fatigue.

Fatigue is genuine. Already the complexity of principalship has been discussed. Robertson & Murrphy's (2006) research states fatigue is evident and a reality. Most commonly this is so for those in their late forties and fifties and then again for those nearing retirement. While not restricted to these ages, it is most prevalent in those advanced in years of service and age (Robertson & Murrphy, 2006). Experiencing overload is a reality. Perhaps professional learning is what is needed, learning about alternative leadership structures and styles. It is identified by Church

(2005) as an issue beyond school leaders developing better time management skills. Is it lack of commitment or one of exhaustion?

Because of the missionary and giving nature of the position, the complexity and consuming undertakings, perhaps time for reflection and professional learning is the most significant barrier? There is a genuine sense of time deficiency and fatigue in principalship (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002; Church, 2005; Robertson & Murrphy, 2006).

With waning commitment can come the lack of acknowledgement of the need to learn (Vandiver, 1997). This aligns closely with self-doubt and the place of feedback. As Marx (2006) states 'I was happier not knowing' (p. 30). If feedback is not sought, then the leader is in a position of not knowing and therefore the need to change is not necessarily acknowledged.

For some to acknowledge the need to learn is sending a message to others that indeed one is not perfect. 'To be a learner is to admit imperfection' (Barth, 2001, p. 146). To do this can be a difficult task. 'Kaizen' the act of continuous improvement, is offered by Handy (1994) in that 'there is not a perfect answer to a changing world' (p. 62). Kotter (1999) appeals to the level of intelligence of the leader in hoping to open minds to professional learning: 'intelligent people who care for their enterprises can surely do better' (Kotter, 1999. p. 19).

Some leaders present service to others as a barrier to professional learning. In serving and prioritising the needs of others the principal's professional learning comes second. This is presented almost as a personal sacrifice to allow others to participate (Argyris, 1990; Crow, 2008a; Dyer, 2008; Olson, 1997; Sparks, 2005) and plays on the emotion of guilt. Self-deprivation and self-sacrifice are seen as right for some, as 'my job is to serve others' (Barth, 2001, p. 145). Or is it that if the focus is on others there is no need to learn? 'Constantly turning the focus away

from their own behaviour to that of others brings learning to a grinding halt' (Argyris, 1991, p. 9).

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) speak out against this:

'Principals must make their own professional learning a priority, otherwise they fail to model the importance of learning as a professional. Too often, we have seen principals who fail to be continuous learners and condemn their schools to the past as well as their leadership (p. 125).

Lindstrom and Speck (2004) go further to suggest it socially responsible to undertake professional learning.

Other barriers are negative professional learning experiences of the past (Barth, 1986/2001; Dyer, 2008), an absence of confidence (Dyer & Carothers, 2000) and the emotions of fear, guilt and embarrassment (Argyris, 1990).

Perhaps, the greatest of barriers is that of time (Argyris, 1990; Church, 2005; Dyer, 2008). The lack of time to give effort to professional learning and then the time and effort required to implement learning. After all, for the cocooned, there is a perception that there is 'no downside for me not spending time on my own learning; nothing bad happens' (Barth, 2001, p. 144). Barth (2001) also suggests that 'the reward for learning is extra work' (p. 145) which is a mindset that could be perceived as a barrier to learning.

Each of the barriers presented, brings this discussion full circle. The challenges and barriers discussed come back to the climate, environment and culture leaders are asked to work within. If trust is missing then confidence and honesty are lost (Robertson & Murrphy, 2006; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998).

Trust is critical to collaboration in learning networks – 'simply put, trust means confidence' (Covey, 2006, p. 5). From trust comes confidence,

reliability, risk, competence, honesty, openness, interdependence. Low trust creates a feeling of vulnerability. Low trust can mean low responsibility and low effectiveness (Clerkin, 2007; Covey, 2006; Lencioni, 2005).

Trust coupled with good intention 'moderates the sense of uncertainty and vulnerability that individuals feel' (Bryk & Schneider, 2002, p. 33). West-Burnham (2004) summarises this:

'Trust is like the 'social glue' of organisational life. Organisations that are high trust tend to out perform those that are not. Trust is the basis of personal and organisational effectiveness. Developing personal potential, securing commitment and engagement, maximising learning are products of trust' (p. 1).

2.13 Outcomes and impacts

Professional learning impacts on the individual, the staff, the wider school community and most importantly student achievement. Developing the individual creates a ripple effect (Barth, 1986; Childs, 2005; Hall, 1996; Kemmis, 1987; Phillips, 2006; Rhodes et al. 2004; Scarborough, 2008; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). It suggests there is interconnectedness in learning (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997) across systems, leadership, learning opportunities and student achievement.

Professional growth is observable and measurable when professional learning has been effective (Cotton, 2003; Crow, 2008; Grady, 2004; Griffin, 1987; Scarborough, 2008; Spanniet & Ford, 2008; Wendel et al., 1996). There is a confidence in leadership, not in content alone, but rippled through relationships and experiences. It allows for an understanding of the wider map of leadership and provides for greater understanding of the elusive and intangible factors that influence leadership. 'Principals reported that learning to reflect helped them to do their jobs more effectively, challenged their conventional ways of thinking and acting, helped them to be more proactive, and forced them to set

more realistic and worthwhile goals for their schools' (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002, pp. 54-55). These impacts are a measure of accountability.

2.13.1 Accountability

The literature focusing on accountability in education is extensive, however almost exclusively in a neo-liberal paradigm (Bradley, 1987; Crow, 2008a; Rhodes et al., 2004; Spannuet & Ford, 2008; Zmuda et al., 2004). Kogan (1986) suggests that given public funds are used, there should be public accountability. He acknowledges the dilemmas that such a stance produces. There are 'tensions between the private and the public; the individual and the collective; rights and duties; discretion and prescription; and responsibility and accountability' (Kogan, 1986, p. 18). These are realities of leadership in the public service and the dilemmas educational leaders face. Kogan (1986) extends these challenges in that:

'teachers are publicly employed but need reasonable working privacy if they are to be creative. Their rights as professionals need to be matched with those of client groups and of the larger society which might seek explanations of, or enforce demands about what the schools do' (p. 18).

Hopkins (2009) acknowledges the dilemma Kogan (1986) presents, as do Hopkins, et al. (2009). They highlight the complexities of accountability. Hopkins (2009) presents the dilemma that accountability creates competitiveness within the collaborative environment; where student needs are given priority yet external measures of achievement are in the public domain. 'School and district administrators are now being held accountable as rarely before for the nature and quality of instruction' (Scott-Nelson & Sassi, 2005, p. 3).

Accountability has stemmed, in part, from political and social turbulence, rather than with a purpose for improving student learning (Kogan, 1986) and appears to be of more interest to the system creators than parents themselves. Whatever the driver, for educational leaders, having multiple

levels of public accountability is a reality and is something that can not be ignored (Church, 2005; Martinez, 2005; OECD, 2007).

One could dwell on the fact that accountability is founded in a managerial rather than educative state (Church, 2005). Sergiovanni (2001) makes links to the ethical nature of educational leadership relating accountability to acts of responsibility and empowerment. 'It is not likely that one is empowered or has real responsibility unless one is also accountable' ...'when combined with empowerment, accountability helps the school become a community of responsibility' (Sergiovanni, 2001, p. 118). The emphasis on responsibility is reiterated by Handy (1994) in suggesting accountability is not only about the things that have been done, but also for those things that could have been done. Zmuda et al. (2004) welcome accountability and suggest that greater focus and purpose in schools comes from this. Church (2005) stresses 'the dominance of discourses of accountancy or accountability has significantly affected the work of school leadership' (p. 87).

If accountability is such an important feature of school leadership, with greater emphasis on student achievement, does this question the accountabilities principals present for their professional learning? Reporting an account of the most recent conference to the board, informing members of the programme is one form of accountability. Kogan's (1986) definition 'to give an account' provides a platform for this type of reporting. Timperley and Parr (2004) and Villiani (2008) offer a different perspective, suggesting accountability is both through description and then in the new learning that has resulted, stating clearly the impact or outcome.

If 'leadership is then a crucial determinant of a schools success' (National Commission for Education, 1996, in West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998, p. 23) successful development of the principal is essential.

West-Burnham (2009) found:

‘professional development helped respondents to realise their ability and potential, increasing their confidence and determination to succeed by demystifying the job; developing understanding and knowledge of leadership; giving an opportunity to stand back, reflect and take stock; challenging thinking and seeing the bigger picture; shaping vision and philosophy; helping develop the school culture; creating space to understand what learning means for all; motivating and inspiring them’ (p. 7).

A respondent in West-Burnham’s (2009) work provided this response: [Professional development] has enabled me to become a knowledgeable and reflective practitioner. The inbuilt desire to make a difference to the lives of children and young people is what drives me, but the knowledge and skills to do it effectively are what enable me to do this job’ (p. 7).

Cotton (2003), Richardson, (2007), Scarborough (2008), Timperley and Parr (2004) and Zmuda et al., (2004) build on the difference made for students. The reward of professional learning is evidenced in successful adoption and implementation of innovations and student achievement levels (Cotton, 2003; Hall, 1996; Vandiver, 1997).

‘Learning schools are making a difference in the lives of students everyday’ (O’Neill, 2008, p. 52). Timperley and Parr (2004) describe this as meaningful change.

Meaningful change is also evident in the development of a culture of continuous improvement. (Argyris, 1990, 1991; Gray & Streshly, 2008; Griffin, 1987; Law, 1999; Lueder, 2006; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Palmer, 2008; Peterson, 2002; Rhodes et al., 2004; Robertson, 2005; Stewart & Prebble, 1993; Wendel et al., 1996; Zmuda et al., 2004). The development of a learning community transpires (Schmoker, 2005; Stewart & Prebble, 1993; Villani, 2008).

It is a 'learning organization that is continually expanding its capacity to create its own future' (Senge, 1990b, p. 14). The future is what we are preparing our learners for. Future thinking is surely then a key element. Stott and Lee (2005) suggest leadership at this time is 'not about 'reacting' to a changing future; it is also about exerting some influence over the shape the future will take' (Stott & Lee, 2005. p. 99).

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

With all research comes the consideration of the research focus and the research process. An understanding of the purpose and focus of this research has been introduced and focus is now given to providing an understanding of the selected research methodology and its 'fitness for purpose' (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007). This chapter discusses the process of, and reasoning for, research decisions.

3.1 What is educational research?

Swann and Pratt (2003) suggest the term research implies some form of systematic investigation. Research investigates and develops an understanding and exploration of a concept or idea. It does not necessarily generate 'new knowledge', though this may in fact be achieved. Research can create a new perspective about an existing issue, advancing knowledge, in turn suggesting alternatives. It involves the researcher in learning and can be both a critical and creative activity.

In this setting, research follows a process of investigation as defined by Cates (1985). It:

'involves the identification of a specific problem, library research to expand and refine one's own understanding of the problem, the setting up and carrying out of a research study using appropriate procedures and measurement instruments, the gathering and statistical analysis of data, and the drawing of logical conclusions based on this analysis' (p. 2).

Bassey (2003) suggests that 'critical and systematic enquiry aimed at informing educational judgements and decisions in order to improve educational action' (p. 110) is required. Cohen et al. (2007) offer research as more than a systematic process. Rather it is seen as an attempt to discover the truth, through a combination of experience and reasoning.

Labree (2003) stresses research is not evaluation, nor a normative practice; rather it is analytical. It focuses on the effort to produce valid explanations, as opposed to a definition of truth. The focus of this research is to bring some understanding to how principals make professional learning decisions. Like Labree (2003) it has no purpose in determining correctness of decisions, nor in a single pathway for principal professional learning.

3.2 Educational research paradigms

In undertaking educational research, the researcher can be asked to position themselves within a qualitative or quantitative paradigm. Each has its value and place. They are varied in their process, theory-base and application. However they may in fact work alongside each other in a mixed-methods approach. Some would suggest that this is not possible, while others would view this as sensible.

Alternatively, it could be suggested that best practice puts to one side the attempts to fit the research question to a research paradigm. Rather, best practice concerns itself more with seeking methods that extract data to address the question. What matters is not the positioning or paradigm, rather the research itself.

Kuhn's (1962) work is most well-known in developing an understanding of paradigm. Fielding and Fielding (1986) explain this from a sociological perspective. While paradigm is widely used in Social Sciences, it has many interpretations and 'is probably most usefully understood to refer to as a set of assumptions which a group of scientists or theorists share' (Swann & Pratt, 2003, p. 207). Paradigms are simply a classification tool to help researchers generalise the processes undertaken by researchers. Patton (1990) explains that 'paradigms tell them what is important, legitimate and reasonable' (p. 26). Paradigm is defined as 'a world view, a general perspective, a way of breaking down the complexity of the real world' (Patton, 1990, p. 26).

In educational research, within the broader perspectives of qualitative and quantitative, positivist and interpretive are also offered as working paradigms. Broadly speaking, qualitative research gives focus to personal interactions with data, whilst quantitative is more concerned with data based on quantities and numbers. Each has advocates who suggest that one has more value than the other (Sieber, 1973). 'For more than a century, the advocates of quantitative and qualitative research paradigms have engaged in ardent dispute' (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 14). A positivist frame generally works more within a quantitative paradigm, with a more calculated, scientific, empirical form. An interpretive lens is generally found within the qualitative paradigm, investigating and understanding actions and meanings, considering social constructions.

To understand principal professional learning, this research is undertaken within a qualitative paradigm, through an interpretive lens. 'Researchers adopting a qualitative perspective are more concerned to understand the individual's perceptions of the world. They seek insight rather than statistical analysis. They doubt whether social 'facts' exist' (Bell, 1999, p. 7). This work is more descriptive, sharing the events of the educational setting of today. It is non-numerical, using interviews and stories, document analysis and multiple realities to tell the story. It is inductive in approach, with theory evolving from the data. It is very much set in an interpretive paradigm.

Interpretive research gives focus to interaction – offering interpretations of social realities, experiences and interactions with others – interaction in both the collection of the data and then the analysis of it. Understanding principal professional learning cannot happen without significant interaction. The interpretive paradigm 'begins with individuals and sets out to understand their interpretations of the world around them. Theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations; it should be 'grounded' in data generated by the research act' (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 in Cohen et al., 2007, p. 22).

Central to interpretive research is the understanding of actions and meanings rather than causes. Whilst not exclusively, it is generally more suited to smaller scale research, relying upon subjectivity, and allowing for personal involvement with the researcher. It gives priority to the individual and learning that is interpreted from their experiences (Cohen et al., 2007). An interpretive paradigm allows the researcher to get close to participants and become immersed in research. To understand this focus of principal professional learning, empirical research is too messy with too many variables. The nature of the data is at times ill-defined. To restrict principal professional learning to numerical data limits the depth of understanding possible, without considering and investigating a number of variables. Controlling these and gaining rich data simultaneously with the purpose of using an empirical approach would be an example of putting the choice of a paradigm or tool before the essence of the research. This focus requires interaction, engagement and interpretation. It is this very immersion in the research that gives the qualitative paradigm its difference from its quantitative counterpart, where distance and an attempt at impartiality are prioritised. The very need to understand the social constructs is at the centre of this work.

The interpretive paradigm suggests a relativist ontology (that is our view of the world and perception of realities, the nature of being). Socially constructed realities are considered and provide multiple perspectives all viewed as the truth. In an interpretive paradigm, the constructed realities are those of the participants, the researcher and the interpretive constructs the reader brings. In this work multiple perspectives and realities are presented. Each has value within an interpretive paradigm. It acknowledges subjectivity and values the views offered.

In this case, each participant is an experienced principal with their experiences, contexts and service constructing their understanding of effective principal professional learning. The researcher is a current and serving experienced principal, with familiarity in roles of coaching and mentoring, leadership development and principal evaluative processes.

The subjectivity as to what could constitute 'effective practice' through the eyes of the researcher could be evident. Acknowledgement of this experience offers both perspective and potential barriers. Depending upon the understanding and needs of the reader, interpretation of this research will offer different realities. The adoption of an interpretive approach calls for interaction. In doing so there is a level of co-construction of data through the very act of semi-structured interviewing. The use of probing questions, the dialogic nature of this method and affirmations and other nuances would be examples of this.

With an interpretive approach comes an element of constructivism. The constructivist researcher draws theory and understanding, literally from the findings of the data. The evolving of theory from data through the development of theory is most certainly constructivist. In adopting an interpretive paradigm comes an understanding that theory emerges from research. In direct contrast to the positivist paradigm where more often than not a hypothesis is presented and either proved or disproved. The constructivist nature of the interpretive paradigm is future focused (Cohen et al., 2007). It gives focus to current action as opposed to past experiences. Future possibilities and theory can result. 'Qualitative research uses inductive logic. This means the key ideas (or theory) arise out of the data. This is commonly called grounded theory, that is theory that is grounded in data' (Mutch, 2005, p. 20).

In constructing theory from the rich data of an interpretive paradigm, gathered from reflection and immersion in practice, an axiological lens (an understanding of the role of values) must also be applied. This is considered in the values participants bring to their leadership platform, their decision-making about professional learning and in explaining the influences, emotion and the impact of their professional learning. An understanding of this is gained through the use of a semi-structured interview method. In the adoption of small scale research, with one interviewer across all interviews, there is a greater chance of a similar axiological lens being brought to the data collection. Whilst the

interviewer's own values should not impact on the data collection, they would and it could be argued, should, be evident in the interpretation of the data and presented findings. An understanding of the axiological lens then, is imperative in both the process of data collection and interpretation. Discussion is then needed to understand the selection of method and use of tools in this research.

3.3 Method

'Research does not fit into tightly defined categories' (Swann & Pratt, 2003, p. 4). What is important is that educational researchers adopt an approach to their research question that focuses on using methods fit for the purpose of their research and allows them to extract valid, rich, reliable data to respond to this. Cohen et al. (2007) reiterate this in that focus should be given to using methods that best fit the research question, defining this 'fit for purpose' as opposed to working with methods within a set paradigm or methodology as discussed earlier.

The definition of the topic shapes the selection of the paradigm, methodology and tools. Not all methodologies and tools contribute effectively to the best outcomes for all research questions. The purpose of the research, the population and the resources available to the researcher are considerations (Cohen et al., 2007). Effectively 'the research question should dictate the research methods' (Cook, 2001, in Desimone & Le Floch, 2004, p.3).

The selection of a semi-structured interview tool or method deemed 'best fit' or 'fit for purpose'. An understanding as to why is discussed below.

3.3.1 Interviews

The use of interviews in research 'marks a move away from seeing human beings as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans, often through conversations' (Kvale, 1996, p. 11). Cohen et al. (2007) suggest an 'inter – view' is an 'interchange of views between two or more people

on a topic of mutual interest' (p. 349). This has as its central focus human interaction for the purpose of gaining understanding, developing knowledge, with an emphasis on extracting socially situated research data. It is not an ordinary conversation (Dyer, 1995), rather it has a specific purpose, is often question based; it is 'constructed rather than a naturally occurring situation, and this renders it different from an everyday situation' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 349).

Interviews can be discussed along a spectrum of formal and structured to a completely informal and unstructured format. Lincoln and Guba (2000) suggest the 'structured interview is useful when researchers are aware of what they do not know and therefore are in a position to frame questions that will supply the knowledge required, whereas the unstructured interview is useful when researchers are not aware of what they do not know, and therefore rely on respondents to tell them' (p. 269).

Bogdan and Biklen (1992), Cohen et al. (2007), Mutch (2005), and Wragg (2002) offer value in a more mid-line approach of the semi-structured interview. Patton (1990) labelled this in earlier work as a guided interview approach.

For this research the adoption of a semi-structured interview is the method of choice. The semi-structured interview, while planned with key open-ended questions, allows the interview to be responsive and to develop an explanation of reasoning, choice and action by the individual. The individuality of this allows for variations from respondent to respondent and asks the researcher to demonstrate receptiveness to new data, rather than seeking responses to pre-determined ideas. Cohen et al. (2007) offer that the semi-structured interview allows for the use of 'natural language to gather and understand qualitative knowledge'. Whilst it focuses on specific ideas and themes it avoids being tightly structured. 'Semi-structured does not mean that it is a more 'casual' affair, for in its own way it also has to be carefully planned' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 355).

The purpose of the semi-structured interview is 'as a principal means of gathering information having direct bearing on the research objectives' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 351). It allows for the sharing of rich narratives and experiences and the testing of hypotheses developed through the review of literature. The semi-structured interview allows for the gathering of data through direct verbal and non-verbal interaction and offers the opportunity to clarify positions, thinking, interpretations and understandings directly.

The semi-structured interview maximises the possibility of data collection, through initial and probing questions, in a short length of time. This process is heavily dependent on the use of open-ended questions, described by Kerlinger (1986) as supplying a frame of reference for respondent's answers, however placing a minimum restraint on the answers and the interpretation of these. The flexibility of the semi-structured interview allows the researcher to seek clarification throughout the interaction and to probe for greater depth and complexity. Whilst a survey could have extracted similar data, the depth of responses may have been lost. Open-ended questions allow for flexibility and interpretation by the respondent. This can result in unexpected and unanticipated answers and offers the opportunity to get closer to the participant's truth. The skill of the researcher is in questioning, prompting and probing.

3.3.2 Strengths and limitations

In adopting any research method there are strengths and limitations. The skill of the researcher and their ability to interview and question can be seen as a strength or as a limitation to the extraction of rich and useful research data. An interpretive paradigm, through semi-structured interviews, requires a level of skill by the researcher, not only in preparation and the ability to construct effective and purposeful questions, but in relationships, receptiveness and enabling engagement. The quality of data is dependent on the interviewer's skill base and their ability to question and synthesise during the interview. During the interview, the interviewer must demonstrate an ability to evaluate the depth and quality

of responses, to monitor the comfort and responsiveness of the participant, whilst maintaining an awareness of the wider objectives of the research. The interviewer should 'prompt and probe, pressing for clarity and elucidation, rephrasing and summarizing where necessary and checking for confirmation of this, particularly if the issues are complex or vague' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 356).

The interpersonal nature of the semi-structured interview is shared by Walford (2001). He suggests that 'interviewers and interviewees co-construct the interview (Walford, 2001, p. 90). The relationship or 'positive climate', as discussed by Cicourel (1964) is deemed essential. Without personal interaction and a positive climate, the data is less forthcoming and could be compromised. The semi-structured format allows for logical gaps in the data to be anticipated and addressed through the process. It is conversational, has some structure, and is both systematic and comprehensive. With a positive climate this becomes possible. The interviewer requires a heightened awareness of these nuances to achieve this.

Conversely, interviews are expensive in time, open to interviewer bias, may be inconvenient for respondents, have issues of interviewee fatigue and the difficulty of anonymity.

In addition to these limitations, the personalising nature and resulting interviewer flexibility of the semi-structured interview can 'result in substantially different responses, depending on the interaction and level of prompts and the nature of probing that occur throughout the process. This variation in process can result in some differences in responses, thus reducing the comparability of the data (Patton, 1990; Lincoln & Guba, 2000).

In this research, comparability is not an endeavour, however consistency and limitation of bias in interviewing is.

Biases are a reality of all research. However given the dependency on relationship for success in data gathering biases may be more prevalent in the interpretive paradigm. Biases are part of being human and are inevitable. Kitwood (1977) suggests that bias needs to be both acknowledged and controlled. Biases can transpire in the form of emotion, interpersonal transactions and human behaviours (Cohen et al., 2007; Kitwood, 1977) after all interviews are a social encounter (Walford, 2001). Cicourel (1964) suggests this can be overcome by mutual trust and social distance, both within the interviewer's control. Bias must also be acknowledged and recognised in preconceptions too. In doing so, it 'allows the researcher to understand what the interviewee is saying rather than what the researcher expects that person to say' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 471). Anticipation of responses to prove the hypothesis can interfere with the 'truth' of the data and influence the probing and questioning undertaken. Cohen et al. (2007) go on to suggest that 'as researchers we are members of the world we are researching so we cannot be neutral; we live in an already interpreted world' (p. 500).

Whilst acknowledging biases is one step, it does not essentially stop biases from influencing the data. A cognitive awareness of reflexivity is then a necessity. This is explored later, within ethical considerations and implications.

3.4 Sample selection

Careful consideration must be given to the selection of participants. In qualitative research probability or random sampling is generally applied. Probability sampling can be seen as more transparent and less inclined to bias than some of its non-probability counterparts. They appear more systematic, can be stratified, and representative of the population. There is a level of generalizability, i.e. 'applicability of the sample to the larger population' (Scott & Morrison, 2007, p. 219).

In this research, with a smaller sample and the use of a qualitative, interpretive approach, alternatives to this method of sampling are required.

'Principled sampling' could be utilised as this work could be seen as piloting or exploratory research. Convenience or availability selections according to the accessibility and proximity of participants to the researcher, or snowball sampling (participation by referral) could also have been considered. Each of these options was discounted as the purpose of the research was given focus. Hence of sampling best described as 'purposive' was adopted.

In purposive sampling the researcher is asked to make theoretically informed decisions about whom or what to include in their sample (Cohen et al., 2007; Scott & Morrison, 2007). It is important to note, that in selecting this method of sampling there are limitations to the 'transferability of findings' (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). At best, the application of findings from a purposive sample is in finding 'contexts similar to the contexts in which they were first derived' (Scott & Morrison, 2007, p. 221).

In the sample selection the following criteria were applied:

- All participants were experienced principals – this defined as having five years or more experience as principal
- All participants were identified by their peers as being regarded as 'effective' principals in their current school
- All hold, or have held, positions of responsibility in either their local and/or national principal associations
- All are current practitioners and see themselves as undertaking principal professional learning

The sample is from North Island, state primary, full primary and intermediate schools, through different regions of New Zealand, outside of the researcher's own region. A total of five participants were interviewed. Schools range from decile 1-10 and experience ranges from nine to 35 years as a principal. Four participants were male and one female. While a range is offered in perspectives this research has no intention of being representative of principals – the sample itself is too small and is not

statistically defined. Similarly there was no intention to undertake any comparative analysis of responses.

3.5 Data analysis

The use of the semi-structured interview amasses significant amounts of data. This data requires analysis. This analysis is a carefully planned and managed process. As with determining paradigms and methods for research, there is no single or correct process to follow in organising and explaining the data gathered within the qualitative paradigm. Fit for purpose has already been discussed in the selection of methods for data collection and the same consideration is given at the data analysis stage.

Having clarity of purpose determines the processes employed in interpreting and analysing data. Just as purpose determines the process of analysis, data analysis influences the type of qualitative study (Cohen et al., 2007). This appears almost as a complete cycle.

In this case, in an interpretive paradigm using grounded theory to analyse data, and theory and findings are extracted from this— ‘analysis begins early on in the data collection process so the theory generation can be undertaken’ (Le Compte & Preissle, 1993, p. 238).

3.5.1 Grounded theory

Grounded theory is a methodology that sees the emergence of theory from data. (Cohen et al., 2007) Grounded theory suggests the discovery and formation of theory comes from both systematically obtaining and analysing data from social research (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is a process that acknowledges the significant amounts of data that a qualitative, interpretive approach extracts and offers a data analysis and reduction process to manage and evaluate this. It is a process that enables the researcher to reduce the ‘copious amounts of written data to manageable and comprehensible proportions’ (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 475).

Grounded theory allows the researcher to 'discover what is relevant' (Cohen et al., 2007; Glaser & Strauss, 1967) and for theory to emerge from the data. The point of difference to some quantitative approaches is that the analysis begins with the data and does not force the data to fit with some predetermined theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Grounded theory is seen as being faithful to how people act. It takes account of apparent inconsistencies and contradictions. It is context driven and highly complex. While the process aims to reduce data, it can in fact increase complexities. Lincoln and Guba (1985) caution that grounded theory is not useful for all forms of qualitative research. It must be fit for purpose. The management of this is achieved through careful planning.

3.5.2 Planning

As much care must be taken in the planning of research as with the collection and analysis of data. Gorard (2001) suggests that design and analysis should in fact be concurrent. Without this critique and the ability to reconstruct and evaluate throughout the research process, 'you will not know if you have asked the right questions, or collected data in the right format' (Gorard, 2001, p. 8).

This evaluation is evidenced in the questions asked of participants. The development of questions that match the research focus and development of measured and effective questions seems simple enough. Asking the wrong questions will not give the data needed to analyse the research focus. Cohen et al., (2007) and Desimone and Le Floch, (2004) concur in that an analysis of questions before the analysis of data is time well spent.

The following questions were the foundation of the semi-structured interviews, gathering data to answer the research question of *Principal Professional Learning in New Zealand: How does it happen?* From an analysis of the literature five significant themes were determined – each in the form of a question, with questions that expand and explore these themes. While the theme is phrased as a question, it is not in fact asked. The theme and relevant questions are noted below.

Principal professional learning in New Zealand – how does it happen?

Theme 1: What is the 'job' of principal and how is this acted out?

The aim of these questions is to extract participants' understanding of leadership and management and the different purposes they serve. The literature suggests that while there is a need for both, the principal's role now has a greater emphasis on leadership. It is envisaged that from these questions a discussion of the leadership platform, paradigms, perspectives and style of the participant will develop. This presents their understanding of their leadership positioning – how they lead, their interpretation of this and the impact this has on others. This insight could assist in increasing the understanding of responses to the questions posed around professional learning, its role, selection and impact

- a) What motivated you into principalship?
- b) Could you briefly describe your role as principal, your leadership style and your beliefs or philosophy of leadership?
- c) For you, how does leadership differ from management?

Theme 2: What is the purpose of professional learning and how does it relate to being an 'effective' principal?

This theme questions the need for professional learning, reasons why and in what areas. It asks the participants to share their understanding of effective leadership, measures and qualities of this. This provides an insight as to how decisions are made and what professional learning is undertaken. It leads into questioning around needs analysis and the determining of these. Further questioning explores the term 'lead learner'. This is prevalent and a strong theme in the literature around school leadership and the principal position. An understanding of the participants' knowledge and thinking around this will allow the researcher to align this with the literature and gain some understanding as to what these principals understand the term 'lead learner' to mean.

- d) Do principals need professional learning? Why? What in?

- e) Can we measure the effective principal? What would an 'effective principal' look like?
- f) Tell me about the role of the 'lead learner' in your school?

Theme 3: How do principals know what they need to know and how are professional learning needs determined?

This series of questions explores what informs or influences professional learning decisions. It considers the place of feedback, curriculum focus, reflection and appraisals. Much of the literature suggests that professional learning and effectiveness begins with an understanding of self, the identification of both strengths and needs. Questions are asked as to how these are determined, if at all, by whom and discusses any measures of these. This leads to the discussion of their development in professional and personal learning.

- g) What informs or influences your selection of professional learning?
- h) How do you determine your professional strengths and learning needs? (Does feedback or reflection have a part in this? What impact does this have?)
- i) What place do the professional standards, appraisals, performance management or other external measures play in determining your professional learning?
- j) How do you use this? Can you describe what this might look like?
- k) How does this process differ to how you determine staff professional learning needs?

Theme 4: What professional learning is undertaken and how are those decisions made?

This section explores the practicalities of principal professional learning, seeking data focused on the planning and decision making processes undertaken; the evaluation and critique of professional learning experiences offered; the impact of environment, culture and climate on the

professional learning of the principal and finally barriers that may in fact impede this undertaking. What planning goes into professional learning?

- l) What is your most recent professional learning?
- m) How and why did you select these specific learning opportunities?
- n) What influences or drives your selection?
- o) How does this link with other school documentation and processes? (ie. School review, charter targets)
- p) What planning (if any) do you undertake for principal professional learning?
- q) What place does the culture or school context have in determining your learning?
- r) What stops you from participating in some professional learning? Why?

Theme 5: What impact does professional learning have and how do you know?

This final sequence of questions gathers data as to how principals are accountable for their professional learning and to whom. It asks participants to consider how they measure the effectiveness of their professional learning and the impact it may have had.

- s) In what way are you accountable for the professional learning you undertake?
- t) What is the impact of your professional learning? What has happened in your practice as a result of each of these experiences?
- u) How do you measure the effectiveness of your professional learning?
- v) What impact does this have on student achievement (and how do you know?)
- w) In your opinion, what professional learning has had the greatest impact on your practice? How do you know? Why do you think this? What was the difference?

With the development of the questions to form the semi-structured interview, discussion is led to how the rich data itself is analysed.

3.5.3 Coding

For the purpose of this research each interview will be recorded and transcribed in full. This offers the advantage of verbatim recording in an electronic form and allows the interviewer to engage and interact more fully with the participant. Notes and prompts with regard to body language and probes will be made to prompt the researcher during the coding process. It is with coding that this wealth of data is managed.

Coding is 'the process of disassembling and reassembling the data. Data are disassembled when they are broken apart into lines, paragraphs or sections. These fragments are then rearranged, through coding to produce a new understanding that explores similarities, differences, across a number of different cases' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 492-3). Coding of data is then a tool of grounded theory that enables the analysis to take place and for the development of theories and findings. This coding enables the content of data extracted from the semi-structured interview to be analysed. Careful thought needs to go into the units of analysis and coding (Robson, 1993).

In grounded theory, it is proposed that there are three types of coding: *open*, *axial* and *selective* (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). These codings have the purpose of deconstructing 'the data into manageable chunks in order to facilitate an understanding of the phenomenon in question' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 493).

Cohen et al. (2007) offer further explanation of each:

Open coding explores the data for meanings, feelings and actions. This is an open process, looking for contrasts, similarities, gaps and differences. From this emerges sub-themes, codings and categories. Breaking this into the already established themes of the literature and coding question by question, analysis of responses from each participant offers a broad

perspective. Key words emerge, offering the emergence of theory. Burns (2000) offers a more simplistic, yet manageable beginning to this coding process suggesting it is 'classifying material into themes, issues, topics, concepts and propositions' (p.432).

Stage two of coding comes from a second viewing. While this is termed a 'second view' it may in fact be better framed as the second phase, as the open coding phase calls for many reviews of the data transcripts. Termed *axial coding*, this seeks to make links between categories and codes allowing the researcher to see the interconnections across the data from different categories and codes. This goes further to offer grounding to the emerging theories and the process of triangulation begins, as these theories are referenced to the literature.

Stage 3 is that of *selective coding*. This asks the researcher to stand back from the data and to look for the wider themes, taking categories and seeking explanation and responses to the wider research question. It is the final call of triangulation and aligns closely with theory.

This process of coding is likened to the visual image of an hour glass. The raw data in the form of transcripts of the recorded interviews is read, and then laid out for a global scope – the top of the hour glass. The process is then repeated and repeated, with each scrutiny and analysis going deeper and deeper. As the process moves to the axial phase it is at the closest point of the hour glass. From this point, the wider perspectives are gathered and more global findings extracted, hence the selective coding phase and the widened point of the hour glass achieved once again, though from a vary different perspective. This analysis, however, creates tensions.

3.5.4 Tensions

Tensions arise in both the representation of interpretive data and in the need to maintain confidentiality. Tolich (2001) suggests that it is almost impossible to undertake confidential research in New Zealand because of

the very small population and somewhat parochial attitudes that are observable throughout the country. This has been given careful consideration in decisions with regard to the presentation of findings. The decision not to assign pseudonyms nor other identifying factors is deliberate. This is in an endeavour to maintain confidentiality and to avoid the potential identification of participants. In doing so an undertaking is given that the reporting of data is balanced and every effort will be made to represent equally the perspectives, understandings and discussions of all participants.

Further tension arises in the data analysis process in maintaining the balance between the holism of the interview and the tendency to fragment the data through detailed analysis. Given qualitative research data analysis is inevitably interpretive, the data analysis is less a complete and accurate representation of the whole interview (Cohen et al., 2007). Without analysis the interview stands alone, theory is not born and findings cannot be presented. With over-analysis the essence and 'truth' or validity of the data can be lost. The researcher is challenged in data-analysis to be mindful and truthful to the research question while maintaining this balance. This gives lead to the discussions of validity and reliability.

3.6 Validity and reliability

Questions arise from positivists over the validity and reliability of an interpretive approach. Denzin, Lincoln and Giardina, (2006) critique the validity of the interpretive paradigm through questioning the embedding of the researcher in the research itself.

Validity in qualitative research often concerns itself with honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved, the extent of triangulation and the objectivity of the researcher (Winter, 2000 in Cohen et al., 2007). In short, is the data gathered answering both the specific questions of the interview, and presenting findings and discussions relevant to the research question itself? This is evidenced in the processes of questioning, data

gathering and reporting. This honesty allows for richness and depth in data and authenticity of response. A tool of validity is the use of triangulation.

Triangulation is the act of using different methods or measure to look at the 'same phenomenon' (Scott & Morrison, 2007, p. 251). Whilst the use of multiple methods provides a more holistic and rich account and 'truths', in this work using a single method approach of semi-structured interviews triangulation is more complex and has greater limitations. It could be said that research based on semi-structured interviews is more of an 'opinion-aire' as opposed to a questionnaire. This aligns strongly with an interpretive approach. If strong awareness is given to the inability to make comparisons across the data, the opinions offered are truly interpretive by the researcher and reader.

Initial triangulation in this instance is drawn from alignment with the literature and the data gathered. This is then triangulated with the presented understanding of effective professional learning and the researcher's knowledge of professional learning opportunities. This triangulation is further enhanced through the validation of both transcripts and the analysis of data by the participants. This process is supported by Scott and Morrison (2007) as an alternative to triangulation. They suggest that 'respondent validation in which the researcher's analysis of the data or the transcribed interview, for example, or both are returned to the research participants who are asked to confirm the factual accuracy of the account, or record their feelings about it, or both' (Scott & Morrison, 2007, p. 252). Returning the transcript to each interviewee allows this to occur. Fielding and Fielding (1986) build on this, supporting that validity is enhanced when participants' post-data perspectives are used as additional or valuable data for further reflection by researchers. Coupled with wide literature review and different theoretical perspectives, this can be described as forms of triangulation and validity. In this case, transcripts are returned in full to participants for both confirmation and further

comment, as are the findings. The findings are validated against a review of the literature.

From validity and triangulation, comes a focus then on quality and reliability. As discussed a determinant of both quality and reliability is the skill of the researcher. Reliability is the transferability of the method from one context to the next. The quality and reliability of this process, with particular reference to the data gathering and analysis processes, can determine the validity of all research (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 334-335). This demonstrates the importance of asking several questions around the same topic, thus increasing both validity and quality of data. Reliability asks the researcher to work within the semi-structured form of the research, ensuring that each interview covers the questions and topics intended. A measure of the reliability is in the consistency of data gathered. In this research, the interview is structured through a series of questions, related to five established themes. The researcher will use a printed copy of these questions to lead the interview process, to ensure continuity, reliability and to pursue quality. The measure of consistency will be evident in the review of the data, through coding.

The findings of research are dependent upon the quality and reliability, the validity and triangulation of the data collected. These too are dependent on the ethical considerations and implications of the entire research process.

3.7 Ethical considerations and implications

Research is a critically reflective activity. It is perceived as the 'systematic examination of moral life, asking what we ought to do by asking us to consider and reconsider our ordinary actions, judgements and justifications' (Johnstone, 1999, p. 42). Beyond informed consent or 'educated consent' as Finch (2005, p. 63) would state, are other ethical considerations.

With the right to research comes the responsibility of ethical care. Kvale (1996) suggests care in research would be evident in that the interactions and research process 'be a positive and enriching experience' (p. 30). The method of semi-structured interviews concerns itself with interpersonal interaction and produces information about the human condition (Cohen et al., 2007). Ethical care is an essential consideration. The values of respect and trust are highlighted as components of this.

Respect is central to all ethical decisions and is a 'guiding ethical principle' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 270) of all research.

Respect, in this instance, is defined in the action of the research relationship, the values displayed, the rights of the researched, the responsibilities of the researcher, the procedures of ethics approval and in an understanding of reflexivity. Respect is both a value and an ethical action.

Integrating ethics and respect throughout the research practice is one of 'sensitising the process' of research (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 270). In doing so this positions the participant at the centre of the research, giving rights and respect to the researched. 'People should not be used as a means to an end' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 271). 'Human dignity' (Vaiolenti, 2006, p. 29) and respect for persons over knowledge (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Smith & Andrews, 1989; Vaiolenti, 2006) are highlighted as the foundations of ethical decision making. This is described as 'equal respect [which] demands that we respect the equal worth of all people. This requires us to treat people as an end rather than means' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 70). Finch (2005) and Guillemin and Gillam (2004) define this as beneficence.

'Beneficence: what benefits will the research bring, and to whom?'... This 'requires researchers to do more than pay lip service to the notion of treating research participants as subjects rather than objects to be used instrumentally' (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 60). An emotional, relational environment must be created for respectful relationships within research to

occur (Finch, 2005). When participants feel safe and are given respect, this in turn generates trust (Kana & Tamatea, 2006; Vaioleti, 2006).

Respectful relationships do not exist simply because of the process of research. They are 'earned and then reciprocated' (Kana & Tamatea, 2006, p. 13/15). With such foundations, there becomes a level of comfort (Carr & Mannington, 1996). Such values increase validity and in turn enhance the quality of data for analysis.

Like respect, trust is an ethical consideration throughout the research process. It is evidenced in the relationships formed, the acts of confidentiality and anonymity, in the quality of the data gathered and highlighted in the validity of the outcomes presented. 'Validity of any research study depends on the trustworthiness of the representations that depict it' (Eisenhart, 2006, p. 568), where Vaioleti (2006) explains this as the responsibility 'to tell the truth' (p. 16).

The place of reflexivity comes to the fore as an ethical consideration. '*Reflexivity* is a self-conscious awareness of the effects that the participants-as-practitioners-and-researchers are having on the research process' (Cohen et al., 2007, p.310) or more simply, 'the effects of the research on the researched and the researchers' (p. 35). Reflexivity, though an ethical notion, is not recorded as an expectation nor included as part of the ethical approval process in the University of Waikato regulations nor in the School of Education application for research approval.

This notion of reflexivity calls for a level of accountability in both the approval process and the action of on-going research. It calls for the protection of a respectful relationship between participant and researcher. This 'adds to the ethical procedure' (Smith, 1998, p.319). It calls for a conscious awareness of the effects on both participant and researcher. This considers both the 'interpersonal and ethical aspects as well as epistemological aspects of rigorous research' (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p.

277). One such impact is the acceptance that 'the interview process may provoke new insights and changes in the participants themselves' (Kvale, 1996, p. 10). Reflexivity acknowledges the place of respectful relationships and respectful environments. Reflexivity is also acknowledged in the lens that the researcher brings to this work. As an experienced principal, having worked in an evaluative setting for principals, ethical care at the fore-front of the researcher's thinking in the interaction of data collection. This awareness and monitoring is aimed at minimising the impact of this lens. This is achieved through pilot interviewing, monitoring of questioning and probing through supervision, and triangulation of the data collected.

Ethical approval was gained for this research from the University of Waikato School of Education Ethics Committee, in April 2009.

3.8 Summary

In summary, the method of semi-structured interviews is immersed in the interpretive paradigm and is qualitative in approach. It is naturalistic gaining an understanding from within the research situation. Outcomes are presented through description and are not reducible to single events and situations, examining experiences through the eyes of the participants, rather than the researcher.

The interpretive paradigm is characterised by concern for the individual, is subjective and relationship focused. Data is focused on the experiences, goals and interpretations of participants with their world of principal professional learning. The researcher is directly involved with participants therefore relativism becomes very important.

The knowledge generated is personal and unique. In using an interpretive paradigm, the transference of knowledge is made by the reader. Therefore 'generalizations of the scientific kind are impossible as well as inappropriate in this research, arguing instead the case of 'fuzzy

generalizations' or propositions – which show how the discovery may apply more widely' (Scott & Morrison, 2007, p. 221).

CHAPTER FOUR - FINDINGS

Chapter four presents a summary and synthesis of the semi-structured interviews and highlight emerging findings. Responses are shared as themes, rather than supported by numerical count.

For ease of reading and so as not to distract from findings, neither pseudonyms nor numbers have been assigned to each participant. Rather they are referred to as 'participant' throughout. A deliberate effort has been made to present an equal weighting of all five voices.

Five themes emerged from the review of literature in chapter two. In the review of the literature and formulation of questions, theme two explored measures of effectiveness while theme three investigated how principals determine what they need to know and measures used to achieve this. On analysis, the data related to these two themes showed strong correlations and therefore has been conflated and presented as one.

This chapter will follow four themes:

1. *Understanding the role of the principal* – This theme presents findings that provide an understanding of the role of the principal, their philosophical beliefs and motivations. Participants' understandings of effectiveness are explained. Effective principal professional learning is scaffolded from an understanding of these concepts.
2. *Determining needs* – This theme explores how principals determine their learning needs. In understanding effectiveness, suggestions are offered as to how these might be measured and how professional needs are identified.
3. *How professional learning decisions are made* - This theme presents some explanation of filters, drivers, barriers and conditions

employed to determine what professional learning opportunities are accessed.

4. *The impact of professional learning* – This theme discusses principals' perspectives of the impact of professional learning and levels of accountability for this.

4.1 Understanding the role of the principal

4.1.1 Motivation and philosophy

All participants viewed their careers retrospectively as an evolutionary process. Each participant felt they became a principal through the direction and support from significant others and accepting unplanned opportunities. All participants suggested they had no initial desire to be a principal earlier in their careers. However this focus changed as their teaching careers developed. Each participant had teaching experiences in a variety of schools and roles before becoming a principal. This variety of experiences may have been typical of the career path to New Zealand principalship in the past, prior to Tomorrow's Schools. However this appears less common for those appointed post 1989. The value of this variety was expressed as valuable preparation for their role. This is highlighted further in the discussion in chapter 5.

Participants discussed the variety in experiences as having provided influential models, shaping their personal leadership style. Roles as junior class teachers and deputy principals of larger schools are examples shared, on reflection, as preparation for both rural and larger school principalship. Many of these roles and opportunities were suggested by a person regarded as a mentor. For example, the understanding of the mechanics and nuances of large school management and leadership as a principal came from being in a middle management role earlier in their career. The experience of junior school teaching was seen as preparation for sole-charge principalship. One participant voiced they had had a 'crafted and supported career'.

Finding: Experiences and the influence of a mentor are significant in shaping careers. Initial motivations can influence the long term career and actions of the principal.

In describing the role of the principal, participants articulated an understanding of leadership style and philosophy. Each participant described their role as principal through a philosophical and idealistic lens. No reference was made to job descriptions. There was concurrence across participants as to what the role entailed.

One participant expressed a view that principalship is a mixture of caring and business - managing and leading a business, as well as a role of caring – for students, staff and community. The relational or human aspect of the role was seen as a priority. This was expressed as ‘knowing teachers and engaging with them’; ‘empowering others’, ‘demonstrating listening, drive, passion, openness, receptiveness’. Three participants described this as being able to have professional conversations with others and to work collaboratively. ‘Knowing staff’ was a recurring response. The practice of scheduled one-to-one meeting times with individual members of staff to discuss goals, offering feedback and feed forward was shared by all participants. This sustained mentorship was identified as a significant role of the principal.

Collaboration was described as working alongside others and being part of a developmental process, in which everyone has a leadership role. One participant shared this as ‘either you are leading or being led’. A second participant stressed that leadership was not heroic – this was unsustainable.

The business side of the role was described as having the ability to question and challenge current practice. Management was identified as preparing, resourcing and completing tasks while leadership roles were emphasised as being creative and visionary. Three participants presented the importance of not conforming as a principal. Perhaps this is reiterated

by the discussion of autonomy as a motivator to principalship. The ability to lead and drive decision making was expressed by three participants as a key motivator. 'I don't have to walk to the beat of someone else's drum'.

Finding: The role of the principal is seen as complex. It is a mix of business management, leadership and extensive, in-depth people relationships. A key element of the role is seen as having the ability to work collaboratively and to mentor others. Autonomy through leading decision making can be a motivation to principalship.

4.1.2 Leadership and the role of principal

The role of principal was described as a mixture of governance, management and leadership. These descriptions were seen as inter-dependent with different emphasis given to each at different times.

Leadership was discussed most extensively and described through a range of actions. Emphasis was given to the importance of modelling - 'leading through action and discussion'. One participant expressed this as 'authenticity in action, being invitational, receptive, open, welcoming and friendly'. Leadership was seen as taking data, sharing this with staff, questioning, challenging and interacting with others about this. 'I think critical questions are important and need to be asked at the right time'. This extended to being open to new ideas, new learning, to challenging and to being challenged. This need for receptiveness and the ability to challenge focused on the role of the principal as the lead learner – 'you have to be at the forefront of teaching and learning'.

All participants were emphatic in their belief that whilst there was an element of reaction and responding to external influences in their role, the more significant and consuming part of their work was that of being proactive. This was seen as leadership. Descriptions such as 'pre-feeding the duck pond' and 'things don't happen by osmosis, it has to be driven' support the deliberate, planned, proactive, visionary elements of leadership.

Finding: The ability to lead appears closely aligned with the principal's ability to question, engage, interact and challenge both data and practice. The principal is expected to be knowledgeable in curriculum and student learning. Leadership is seen as being able to react to need and to be proactive and visionary.

Authentic leadership and authenticity of action were used as style and philosophical descriptors by all participants. This was emphasised when phrases such as 'walking the talk', 'do as I say and do as I do', and 'putting words into action' were shared. Participants shared authenticity with an unproblematic and extensive use of the term 'credibility'.

Credibility was not explained in great depth, but was expressed as an important factor in being effective as a leader. It was suggested that to be credible meant that discussions and statements made by the principal came from a strong knowledge and experiential base. The principals had to be authentic in their actions and from this gained credibility. This in turn provided a platform in 'being able to influence'. Influence was linked with both leadership and credibility. Credibility was closely linked to authenticity, working as a positive and as a potential inhibitor. 'Credibility inhibits or supports one's ability to give advice and guidance'. Credibility was lost when the principal made the attempt to lead or guide without evidence, understanding and prior learning.

Participants' leadership was described as collaborative and collective. One participant explained this as: 'There is no leadership without followship' adding, 'leadership isn't top down anymore, it's about a community of leaders'. A second participant described leadership as 'developing collective leadership'.

Finding: Descriptions of effective leadership include the ability to influence, collective ownership, collaborative practices, credible decision-making and authentic action.

4.1.3 Leadership and culture

The responsibility of developing the culture of the school is linked closely with leadership. While three participants described developing culture as a key element of the principal's role, one went further to state that 'leadership is culture'.

With culture came strong links to change management. While worded as management this was seen as a leadership task. 'Not managing but leading the change'. Reculturing both individuals and the school was part of this. It is described as:

'changing and change management – so part of a leader's role is to actually change, not only themselves but to get into change management. You are going to change others and there is a way of doing that.'

This includes developing the environment, the culture and 'building a community of learners.' This has come through accepting and addressing diversity – in students, staff and the wider community – having a contextual awareness.

While external developments and influences remain relevant, culture is seen to be internally driven.

'A lot of the cultural stuff is driven internally. The way we do stuff around here is driven internally. I can't apportion percentages. The culture stuff is 100% us, because governments don't believe in culture.'

'Leaders create the environment.' This understanding of culture and the development of it is essential before change is introduced.

'And I think a key thing for some of them in those small schools where a lot of them are starting is getting to know the community. And that is an interesting part, the vibes of the community, what

makes the community click and I think it is also looking at the school and the school culture’.

Every community is unique and the skills of the principal should be personalised to this community and this context.

‘This community has unique needs as every community does and so what I do needs to be catering for those, so how I grow as a professional needs to fit with that and taking the school forward and all those sorts of things. So their needs will, must, I think, give direction to where my professional learning will go’.

‘When I shifted from School X to here, it actually took say 18 months to really sort of get into the culture of School-Y. It takes you a year to go through the whole cycle and suss everything out. You are coming into a school where actually the previous principal has developed a culture. Your culture is not necessarily the same so it is a matter of you taking on some of the culture, the school taking on some of your culture, so there are skills there in fact. Like for an experienced principal going into a new school. I think it is probably just as hard as the first time principal as there is nothing there to support them.’

This understanding of culture influences goals for the school, the staff, the community and the principal.

Finding: The culture of individual schools is unique. A significant role of the effective principal is to understand, cultivate and lead the development of this.

4.1.4 Identifying skills of effective principals

Identifying the skills of an effective principal could provide a structure to measure their effectiveness. In doing this potential areas for future principal professional learning could be identified.

All participants were able to identify core skills and actions they believed to be essential to effective principalship. These descriptions were offered with some hesitation. All participants emphasised that 'effectiveness is contextual and dependent on the culture of the school' as 'one size doesn't fit all'.

This was reiterated with the statement: 'effective in whose eyes?' This questioned both the measures but the ability to measure effectiveness.

A second participant suggested that there was significant complexity in describing effectiveness and two others offered that perhaps it was easier to describe 'ineffectiveness rather than effectiveness'.

'An ineffective principal. It is where people go in, they have got their preset ideas. They are not prepared to change. They won't listen to communities.'

Two participants suggested that effectiveness begins with being present: 'to be effective you actually have to be present'. This was explained that some principals spend a lot of time away from schools and that to be effective purposeful, engaged time and action in their school was really needed.

In describing skills of effectiveness, seeing the bigger picture and being visionary were common immediate responses. However, interpersonal skills, described as 'listening, guidance, communication, getting on with a range of people, highly functioning staff relationships, rapport and engagement' were prioritised. One participant summarised this as 'people, people, people.' This same participant went on to explain:

'Communication skills would be critical, ability to form a rapport. That is all about people, people, people. Our job. You can get away with being a bit tardy in paperwork. I think you can get away with not having really good financial management skills because others can help you with that, but if you can't relate well to people, if you can't exhibit

leadership then your school is going to be in strife. There is so much development a school can have through effective communication. A school can be easily ruined by somebody who can't effectively communicate and build rapport. I am wondering if you are not naturally very good at communication then is principalship the right choice for you?.... If you can't communicate how do you influence?

Building on the described interpersonal skills and the ability to influence, was the skill of knowing people and valuing staff, 'really knowing the pulse of the people and having vision for them'. One participant suggested that this was having 'head and heart engaged – emotionally intelligent'. A second participant reiterated this and four participants questioned whether in fact the most effective leaders 'lead intuitively'? This is discussed further in chapter five.

An effective principal was seen as one who coached others through empowerment and challenge, building capacity and building rapport. This extended to the ability to guide and mentor others, 'setting others up for success with skill development and leadership' referred to as 'scaffolds for learning and building capacity.'

As expressed previously, effectiveness is suggested as the ability to lead in a genuinely collaborative and authentic manner. Whilst 'role-modelling' was discussed, the effective principal was seen as demonstrating openness, flexibility, discernment, resilience, using reflective and evaluative skills and being willing to learn. The participants suggested that the effectiveness of the principal could be measured by their ability to engage in professional discourse about teaching and learning. Identified as further measures were the culture, staff interactions and engagement, student achievement and feelings of support and challenge and the sense of community. One participant suggested that the first impression one gained in visiting a school was a simple, yet accurate measure of the

effectiveness of the principal. A second suggested that NCEA results and roll numbers could be more direct measures too.

An effective principal was seen as a self-starter, self-motivated and self-generating of ideas, visions and destiny. This 'understanding self' and 'really knowing who you are' was discussed by four participants. It was felt that once the principal had an understanding of themselves, they were then more able to lead others. Gaining this level of understanding was described as coming from the ability to reflect. However to learn the skills of reflection and accessing development to do this was seen as difficult. Providers of this were said to be limited.

All participants presented the importance of life-balance as a measure of principal effectiveness. Most admitted to finding this difficult to achieve. It was seen as important for both principal well-being and in modelling to staff. Hauora (well-being) was seen as bringing a more balanced perspective to leadership and a way of demonstrating a greater understanding of people and their needs – both professionally and personally.

Finding: Effective principals appear to have highly effective interpersonal skills. These are seen as central to, and underpin, other measures of effectiveness. Effective principals are seen as self-driven and self-motivated while being authentic role-models and mentors. They have the ability to reflect, to lead and the skill to cultivate the school culture and to model work and life balance. Achieving this is based on the principal having a strong understanding of themselves and their leadership.

4.1.5 Leader of learning

The participants shared a common understanding of and familiarity with the term 'lead learner'. Being the lead learner was seen as central to the principal's role. This was explained as having responsibility for developing a culture of learning and in being a learner themselves. Each participant

saw themselves both as a learner and the lead learner in their school: 'I am the leader of learning'.

Being the lead learner meant 'doing more than leading from the office door.' It meant engaging in curriculum. It was seen as difficult for some. One participant suggested: 'I could leave it to my DPs and it would be easy to escape but I need to participate in curriculum learning.'

'Putting yourself out there' was a frequently used phrase, supported by 'role-modelling as a learner'. The impact of this was also shared: 'My involvement means people take it seriously and see it as important'. This position also meant that there was 'testing (of) our learning and opinions'. It was suggested by two participants that there was real value in both engaging in discussion and debate about their understandings and impressions, and through writing and publishing, positions and opinions.

'So in leadership I say you have got to put yourself out there. One part of the learning journey is to have your opinions and views tested. We don't write. Lots of our leaders do not write, they do not externalise their thinking.'

The importance of being current and informed was raised. This was framed as being credible in the lead learner role. 'You can't hold an informed discussion from an uninformed position'. A second participant spoke of this as a responsibility. 'I have the responsibility to be aware of things that are happening around us in education, not just in New Zealand but globally, and so there is that whole thing about reading and talking and that sort of professional learning I think is really important as well.'

All participants emphasised that while local networks were seen as valuable, accessing knowledge from national and international interactions and involvements had a profound effect on their leadership and professional learning.

Wherever the learning was sourced from, putting learning into practice was seen as significant in being the lead learner. Authenticity in action, 'walking the talk', being 'able to show the staff' were references made to this. 'Sometimes you are so busy learning yet you are not doing anything' was a further response. Aligned with this was 'having energy and motivation to learn', modelling not only enthusiasm but 'depth in learning, discussion and debate.'

The difference between management and leadership was highlighted in this discussion of 'lead learner'. One participant suggested that while some principals saw the organisation of resources as leading learning, it should be in fact 'determining the content and what actually happens'.

The multi-level nature of leadership in the principal's role as 'lead learner' was summarised in this quote: 'The lead learner is having an understanding, and I think, learning with them and learning alongside them and learning about them.'

Finding: Leading learning is a crucial role of the principal. The 'role-modelling' as a learner has a significant impact on others. This requires principals to become knowledgeable, current and conversant in curriculum as well as other elements of leadership. Being the lead learner calls for the principal to access and engage in purposeful learning from a range of local, national and international sources. This learning must be contextually relevant and put into practice. The effective lead learner is seen to be engaged and involved in learning, management and leadership.

4.2 Determining needs

Theme one explored the understandings of the role of the principal and effective leadership. Theme two offers response to the how these qualities might be measured, actioned and aligned with professional learning.

When asked if professional learning was valuable and important all participants responded: 'Yes'. When probed as to why this was important a diverse range of responses were offered:

Role-modelling; the need to learn more; the need to be challenged in their role; the impact of professional learning in setting themselves and others up for success.

Four participants suggested that professional learning was certainly about being proactive not reactive, visionary and for the most part, this need was internally driven. 'I mean we've got to be learning, not reacting'.

One further participant offered advice to those principals who decided not to engage in professional learning: 'I'd say lucky you. How can you be a model to your staff and your students as a learner if you are not prepared to learn yourself?' The phrase 'the more you know, the more you need to know' was presented, suggesting the professional learning was unending.

One participant indicated the plight of experienced principals and perhaps their motivation for engaging in professional learning:

'I think we get to a point in our principalship where we are looking. We are directionless in some ways and we look for those times to refocus or to re-energise.'

Finding: Professional learning is valued. It is an on-going expectation of principalship. Professional learning can offer direction and motivation for experienced principals.
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If professional learning is seen as important and valuable, how is this determined? What are the needs of principals and how are these identified?

4.2.1 Interpersonal needs

When asked to identify specific areas for development, the area of interpersonal relationships was discussed at length. This was founded on having effective communication skills.

It was seen that professional learning was accessible in curriculum and management functions; however development in communication and interpersonal skill was seen as less readily available. 'I wouldn't know where to go for any development of that. You never see it and yet it is so critical.'

Areas of need were voiced as learning in human resources and relationships; learning the art of reflective action/reflection; gaining an understanding of the professional self; structured and formal mentoring including how to develop leaders, how to give feedback and the act of empowering others; how to lead discussions; futures thinking; increasing communication and relationships/rapport. One response further summarised the struggle in developing these skills: 'I don't know where to go to get this – it's such an HR thing.'

Finding: There is an identified need for professional learning in communication and interpersonal skills for principals. There is a perceived lack of accessibility to development in this dimension.

4.2.2 Personalised learning

It was seen as imperative that principal professional learning was personalised.

'It has got to be tailored for you. The reality here in ***** is that it would be easy for me here to curl up and repeat the same year, after year, after year. It would be easy'.

When challenged as to why this practice was not a reality:

'What stops this? Self-improvement and Sigmoid Curve theory. When the school is going well and we have a well respected school probably more respected outside the community than we are in it. We continue to review stuff when things are going well, not when they are in the downward curve'.

Further to this is the importance of development being contextually relevant. Different skills and qualities were needed in different school contexts and different situations. This was shared as 'learning the right things'.

Finding: Professional learning needs are diverse and specific to the individual principal and their context.

4.2.3 Tools and processes to identify needs

How are professional learning needs determined? Participants discussed the use of the appraisal and performance management process and the *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* as tools to identify their learning needs.

'I think a lot of the work that has been done around the KLP has certainly helped.'

Reference was made by three participants to *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (Ministry of Education, 2008) as a guide, though not as a tool to determine needs and goals. They suggested that there could be greater use of, and accountability to, this document.

All made reference to the performance management/appraisal process, aligning these with the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* (NZEI, 2008) and feedback from these sources. All participants expressed the limitations and validity of the process of appraisals. Some felt the process of appraisals adopted by their Boards of Trustees was limiting and lacking in rigour and purpose. Three suggested that they had an element of control over both the implementation of the process and the outcome of these. Participants felt limited by the process as a checklist exercise against the standards and in two cases questioned the credibility of those completing appraisals.

'So what is really important is really that knowledge of you and your understanding of how you work, but with that professional rigour. It comes from somebody you respect and not somebody who hasn't got the maturity or hasn't got the respect or credibility.'

'Mine is really through the appraisal system but I don't think it is really very robust.'

Two participants suggested that the appraisal/performance management process was in fact one of self-management and self-investigation. It should be self-generated and self-driven. One participant offered:

'My theory is that appraisal was a compliance issue and that we have had enough of that. You can't make people, oh you can I suppose, but it is very difficult. It doesn't actually have any meaning unless people really want to do it anyway. There has to be a need or a desire to want to do it to start with.'

Finding: The appraisal/performance management process as commonly practiced is not seen as a process that is professionally rigorous and does little to identify learning needs.

4.2.4 Goal setting

All participants set goals based on appraisal outcomes. Many of these goals were defined as 'formal' or as an act of 'compliance'. Goals were stated as important by four participants. They were seen to provide direction and focus and aided in 'remembering'. The 'real goals' were those that they determined and often recorded outside of the appraisal process, and were deemed to be goals they worked harder towards.

'I will only have three. Three maximum. I don't look for anything more than that. I have got little informal ones and I might make myself little scribbly notes. These are the ones I like to work on.'

Several goals were focused on school needs rather than leadership needs and generic to the whole staff. Reasons for this related to the role of 'lead learner' and 'partially because the professional learning is available and accessible.'

Interest and motivation were motivators for participants in setting and achieving these goals. This appeared internally driven and was identified as a determinant of participation. ‘You can’t force PD – there needs to be a desire or drive for it.’

Two participants recorded both professional goals and personal goals. After recording these they were shared in a written form and discussed with all members of staff. All participants shared these goals with their chairperson of the board. One participant did not write personal professional goals, but rather framed the school’s yearly action plan to include their targets and needs.

Without understanding the individual professional needs as principal, it is seen that ‘for some, we are directionless.’

‘If some of them [our colleagues] actually sat and listened they would realise the message was really for them. But they say no, no this is the way I have always done it and they can’t see the relevance or importance’.

Finding: Purposeful and needs based goals offer focus and direction for professional development. The recording and sharing publicly of goals creates greater focus and drive to achieving these. Some principals set goals to comply with the appraisal process. The viability of these goals is questionable.

‘Knowledge of self’ was seen as an essential vehicle for helping to determine what the individual principal’s needs were.

‘A lot of principals don’t know what they need – they have perceived needs, not actual needs and are not seeing what they do need’

Two experienced principals working with other principals in mentoring roles, suggested in their work they saw that some principals’ ‘priorities are

wrong – people are working hard on the wrong things’ because they were unsure as to what to do and what their needs were.’

When professional learning is undertaken without purpose or an understanding of the needs, the desired impact may be positive, where in fact the reality is the reverse:

‘You can’t send someone away to a PPLC or a PPLG or do a university paper and suddenly they come back with all this knowledge but it doesn’t transfer. They are not intuitive; they don’t know what they are doing. They blindly go and do stuff and then wonder why there is carnage behind them.’

‘I think that this is huge in terms of people not knowing what they don’t know.’

‘Do we leave it to ERO?’

‘an HR base for analysis. That is what it needs. And also looking at how people work through problems and situations, you know, looking at behaviours which doesn’t happen in appraisals run by peer principals. You have got to have that HR background to understand it. That is fairly expensive to obtain’.

Finding: Access to, and knowledge of, tools that effectively identify the learning needs of principals is limited. For some principals professional learning does not necessarily match development needs.

While the place of ‘intuition’ was raised, perhaps the place of informal and formal critique or reflection is more apt. Reflection can be an independent and individual process however each principal discussed this as valuable in a peer or shared role.

The place of informal reflection was discussed extensively. While formal reflection was seen as valuable, it was less common in the practice of these experienced principals and discussed as difficult to access. Finding suitably skilled personnel with professional currency was expressed. One participant discussed their role as a mentor in the *First Time Principals' Programme* and the reciprocal value of the reflection in this. It was suggested that there is need for mentoring and peer reflection for experienced principals. One participant met with a mentor regularly and spoke of the value of this interaction, using this to challenge practice and to offer a different perspective to his thinking. This same participant described this as 'challenging my comfort zone'.

The ability to determine needs and to put into place the required action was seen to come from reflection. In all discussions, this was the single common element. One participant challenged reflection as only one aspect of the role of the principal. He suggested that it should be termed 'reflective action' or reflexivity, calling for leaders not only to reflect but to act upon this.

Finding: Formal and informal reflection are seen as a valuable tools. Reflection challenges practice and assists in the identification of learning needs. Formal reflection is under-utilised by experienced principals and personnel to support this are deemed difficult to access.

4.3 Filters, barriers, drivers and conditions

Theme three explores the data that referred to filters, barriers, drivers and conditions used to make decisions about professional learning.

Filters are the questions the principal asks to determine the value and applicability of a professional learning experience. Barriers are the obstructions or reasons why a professional learning experience cannot be accessed. Drivers are the motivations or reasons why decisions are made and conditions determine how these opportunities will be maximised. At times, barriers can be filters, filters can be drivers and this can cause

confusion. For this reason in presenting these findings some reoccur or cross multiple sections.

4.3.1 Filters

Purpose and relevance were key filters in considering professional learning sources. Goals had been established, based on personal context, local, national and international education focus areas and government directives.

In initial discussions three participants suggested that staff, student and community goals are the first priority and use this filter to select professional learning.

Challenges were the ability to source appropriate professional learning to meet identified needs and access suitable personnel to facilitate this. 'I wouldn't know where to go for any of that. You never see it and yet it is so critical'. Participants found they were either not undertaking professional learning in areas of identified need or found professional learning difficult to access to meet these.

Sourcing appropriate providers is identified as both a barrier and a filter. Principals filtered the quality of providers, discussing this as 'credibility'. Participants' interpretation of credibility is discussed earlier in these findings. This is largely based on prior interactions and experiences of others with the provider. They then consider the applicability of content advertised to ascertain the value and appropriateness of specific professional learning. Much of the advertised professional learning was not seen to be meeting the personalised needs of participants. Access relied upon professional contacts and knowledge of appropriate personnel.

Two participants used word of mouth and feedback from previous attendees or users to determine the usefulness or worth of a professional learning source. One went so far as to using a triangulation process before determining whether to engage with a provider.

'We develop our own understanding of strategic direction of the school before we get the staff involved in it. We then look at a presenter, like ****. We find stuff he's written. We are trying to find something that he is presenting at so we can attend it ourselves. We have been asking other principals who have used him of their opinions. People that we have got some trust in and yea that is basically through other professional judgments of schools he has worked in and through attending something he is doing to see whether we think he would be someone who would engage with our staff.'

Much critique of educational advisory services was shared – all five participants voiced that this was not a preferred source of professional learning support.

'***** Advisory Services. I mean because they are bloody hopeless.'

Finding: Access to quality professional learning providers who are able to meet the personalised needs of principals is limited. There is a range of providers. However the quality of these providers appear inconsistent. This can result in inadequate and limited professional learning. Critique of providers as well as content, have become significant filters in determining professional learning.

Cost and timing were two further filters. Cost was expressed as value for money, and then the upfront and ongoing costs for the school. One participant in a rural setting found his options limited and inhibited by cost. He funded aspects of his professional learning personally to ensure he had access to this.

'A lot of it is actually finance. It comes down to money and not being able to afford it.'

'Yes. With conferences I normally pay the registration, the travelling and accommodation'

Time was identified as a precious resource and therefore both time and timing were seen as critical filters. Timing related to time out of school, the level of time commitment required and timing in relation to the school term. One participant offered: 'I choose carefully who I spend my time with' suggesting that not only was principal time valuable, so too was the quality of the programme and personnel engaged in the learning.

'I think it is also really important to get the balance right, the time balance'

'Time out of school can be an issue around professional learning as well.'

The process of learning was considered. Participants questioned both the timing and time commitment of developments as well as how this time would be spent. While some participants voiced the value of interaction and collective learning in small group and discussion situations, others were more interested in wider group, lecture type learning. Readiness, receptiveness and an understanding of purpose, learning style and need were filters related to this.

Finding: Costs, timing and time commitment are common filters used in making professional learning decisions. The perceived usefulness and quality of content as well as the structure of the learning are further filters.

Student achievement and perceived benefit were common filters discussed. 'Will it benefit my school?' 'Will it make a difference to student achievement?'

'Well the student achievement one is because if it is to be meaningful and have any benefit then it will be related to what we are doing as a school and therefore there must be some sort of impact further. On student achievement for example, if I am doing some reading around boys' education or going to some course and

then feeding that back to the staff and having put some sort of structure around their professional development in that area, then that will have an impact.'

These reflective questions were linked to both school and personal professional goals.

'Just in time' professional learning was as much a feature as strategically planned learning related to school and individual professional goals and focus. 'So it is kind of those sort of decisions based on our strategic direction as a school plus the just in time.'

Similar filters were used by participants for both planned and unplanned professional learning. Most professional learning decisions were made on how to meet a perceived need or desire to learn.

Finding: Professional and personal goals, student achievement targets and perceived impact are filters for determining professional learning.

4.3.2 Barriers to effective professional learning

Identified previously were filters concerning the issues of cost, timing and programme quality. These were also located as barriers. Other barriers and inhibitors to professional learning were determined.

Linked closely with time is the goal and barrier of work/life balance. Work/life balance, while held as an ideal of effective principalship in earlier discussion, featured with four participants as a reason why some professional learning opportunities were not accessed. The impact of accessing ongoing professional learning outside of school hours in addition to the out of school hours workload already asked of principals, was seen as a barrier.

'Barriers would be work life balance that I have always wanted to maintain a good work life balance: that is being able to do the work

well in the amount of time that I feel I am able to give it. There is not a lot left for other professional development that I am doing now.'

'I need to be more balanced, and the criticism in my appraisal process about my lack of balance is just I need to be able to do other things.'

'One of the things this year for me is we talked before about barriers and one of those things was time. So one of my own goals this year is actually to do with that and with balance and those sorts of things.'

Finding: Work-life balance is a goal and barrier for principals and has been given greater consideration when making professional learning decisions.

Further to this were three issues significant for those in more rural settings or away from main centres. The cost and time for travel were seen as barriers to accessing national and international sources of professional learning. The rural nature of New Zealand schools meant that for some participants the desired professional learning was in fact inaccessible. The third challenge was 'the availability of appropriate staff as relievers and release staff to enable the principal to get out'. It was seen as easier on students, the school dynamics and principal hauora to simply not attend professional learning. This was identified by participants in this situation and those working as mentors with colleagues experiencing this.

Finding: Rural principals are the majority in New Zealand schools. Travel, staffing and accessibility are barriers to participating in principal professional learning and inhibit the development of principals.

Isolation was identified as a barrier, not only for those with rural settings as the physical location of their schools, but also for those in urban schools. This was particularly relevant for those coming into a new school. Issues

and barriers included not being able to access local networks or clusters and sometimes the insular or exclusive nature of these. In turn, this limited access to professional networks, information, resources and in some cases Ministry of Education supported professional learning.

The culture of 'clusters' was discussed by four participants as a significant barrier. While clusters of school principals working together are seen as common in New Zealand schools, the functionality of these was called into question. The insular and familiar nature of these and lack of diversity in thinking was seen as an avenue to 'squash new ideas'. The culture of some clusters allowed principals to accept the status quo and not to be challenged in their thinking. The competitive element of local school networks was shared as a contributor to 'low levels of trust' existing and therefore blocking the sharing of ideas, innovations and interactions.

'Then you have got somebody who starts dominating it saying we should be heading in this direction, and speaking for us all. Telling us what we think. So you have got this group they are sort of following their own agenda.'

Cluster networks were shared as a vehicle for the 'collective we' where power talking was common and others spoke on behalf of colleagues, with little evidence or authority to do so. They were discussed as places full of 'well-poisoners and know-it-alls power playing' where principals offered each other reassurance and 'excuses for not doing things and how we still can't get things done.' One described clusters and principal associations as 'social cliques' and questioned the functionality of these.

The lack of trust in these settings was significant:

'Some people it doesn't matter how well you know them, you won't be open. There are other people that you know you can trust, that you bounce ideas off and it is that sort of rich discussion that's the most valuable'

‘Clusters or old girl networks around here. They are exclusive and maybe they do get the messages they want. They are not prepared to listen to the messages that don’t really fit in with their perceived message.’

Finding: Isolation is a barrier for many principals both in rural and urban settings. For many principals, clusters are inaccessible, dysfunctional and undesirable forms of support and development. The culture of these can be isolating, inhibiting and exclusive.

4.3.3 Culture of professional learning

These findings discuss types of professional learning and the conditions to achieve this.

Culture was interpreted as both an overwhelmingly important feature of professional learning and as a significant barrier. This is not limited to the culture of the school and clusters. One participant suggested that this was evident in the culture of principalship. It was simply stated that ‘New Zealand principalship hasn’t yet developed a culture of continual learning, really.’

Added to this were suggestions of procrastination and obstruction, with principals making excuses for not getting things done.

‘I mean there are people like I said before that have made an art form of development. There are those who have made an art form of procrastination. Done nothing. You know I know principals who are never there, the school is collapsing yet they are developing their own academic needs. The others who say I don’t need to know this, so they are the procrastinators the ones that don’t do anything. Generally they are your experienced principals.’

Finding: As a profession, many principals are yet to develop a culture receptive to professional learning.

4.3.4 Types of professional learning

Discussions of best professional learning were based on participant's individual experiences. An extensive range have been experienced and suggested. The experiences shared were seen as profound, as are the conditions they are set within.

Two participants spoke highly of two aspects of the First Time Principals programme – the on-going interaction and support offered through mentoring; and the formation of a network established independently by one group of participants through this programme. One participant spoke of the Principals Development and Planning Centre as having the most significant impact on the development of his principalship. Two spoke of secondment to the Education Review Office (ERO) and one of his role in the New Zealand Principals' Federation. Each spoke of the change in their thinking and behaviour as a direct result of these experiences. One participant offered that university study was transformational. The opportunity to link theory to his practice was seen as significant, providing a justification as to why he did things in his school and offering explanation to wider national and international trends.

A second participant spoke of his experience with the Education Review Office (ERO):

'ERO was an honour and the best professional development ever – the depth of discussion; different perspectives; privilege; practical application of professional development'.

In challenging this participant as to why they selected ERO as professional learning the following was offered:

'Because I was feeling too comfortable and I knew I was in this for the long term and needed a practical injection. This was a practical way I could develop my evaluation and critique skills, engage in professional dialogue. I had to be committed and be prepared to be challenged.'

4.3.5 Conditions for profound professional learning

The experiences of participants were diverse. What then was the common thread in the profound impact they had on the professional learning of these participants?

Previous findings spoke of the importance of personalised, context driven professional learning, where the contradiction is that while personal to them, in all cases the learning is external to their school setting. It appears this external view of education – external from their school context – is what has made this profound. For these principals, after gaining experience in their school and the role of principal the profound learning has come from developing a broader, though deeper understanding of education itself. This contradiction is explored further in chapter five.

One participant spoke of the importance of ‘cross-pollination of sectors and location’; another suggested this as ‘diversity and getting outside of my own cluster – looking beyond locally to nationally and then internationally.’ This was seen as ‘external stimulation with mixed perspectives’. Working within an education setting, however being external to their own school and local context was emphasised by all participants as valuable. So too was the sustaining of this learning over time. The opportunity develop their professional skill in this way was described as ‘invaluable’.

The depth of these experiences was described as profound. The reasons for this were attributed to the high trust, challenging and professional environment they were experienced within. In some cases, the personalisation of this learning environment was expressed.

‘It gave a chance to talk to some pretty highly respected people in education. They weren’t all practicing principals. There were retired principals who have kept active. There were primary principals who have kept active. They weren’t all primary. You were talking to

secondary principals. Principals who had lots of links from all over the place.'

Professional learning in these secondment positions provided time for reflection, in-depth discussion with 'lots of talking, caring, being together, face to face'. For the participants they developed relationships, felt they experienced higher levels of engagement and were more honest, direct and impartial in receiving and giving feedback. 'It felt professional.' These conditions were reiterated by four of the five participants.

For each, while diverse and personalised, these pathways of professional learning were self-selected. There was discussion of being receptive to professional learning and a desire to see a direct application of this to their school setting.

'The time at the Review Office also made you critique your appraisal skills because you were in and out of classrooms all the time and you only had a finite time to make an informed judgment about how good is that teacher meeting the needs of the students? I probably wasn't very good at prior to going into the Office and through doing it, in that collegial setting, you had to justify why you are making judgments. So that was really good PD.'

'I went into it thinking that it was PD. Probably because, and that practical PD being in the school setting, was what I wanted. I am not one for doing a paper.'

Finding: For experienced, effective principals, self-selected, external, on-going, professional learning in a high-trust, challenging and professional environment was profound. This required high levels of engagement and reflection. Secondments and external education roles are accessible sources of this development. A national and international perspective to professional learning is seen as valuable.

4.4 Impact, accountabilities and alternatives

4.4.1 Impact of professional learning

Ultimately student achievement was identified as the area of greatest desired impact, though acknowledgement was given that this was more indirect than direct.

‘It is not necessarily going to impact on the learning outcomes, but indirectly it does because it has an influence on teachers and the way they think and the way they behave.’

Measuring or undertaking an impact analysis of professional learning was seen as somewhat intangible by all participants. Each suggested the greatest impact was in their ability to be more effective in their current position and in their interactions with staff.

‘I think one of the things that did have a big impact on me in regard to looking at some of these things and what we were doing in our schools and questioning ourselves.’

This required demonstrating an ability to discuss, debate and influence, with currency, about topical and future needs of the school.

After secondment to ERO, one participant saw the impact of this development was ‘deeper analysis, a greater awareness, higher expectations; I am more driven; I know I can empower others; I expect greater responsibility; I have developed my critique and appraisal skills’. Others discussed the impact of their involvement in whole school development, suggesting that ‘being present shows value’ and ‘being a learner as part of the group’ was valuable. This participation created an opportunity to engage with staff at multiple levels, to increase understanding and currency in curriculum, to role-model for staff, to be seen as a group member. There appeared to be different purposes for participation, beyond increasing professional knowledge. ‘My participation demonstrates that the focus is valued – role modelling’. ‘It’s about being present and not retreating.’

‘You have got to be there supporting it and I think that is really important for me. As the leader of learning, I sat in on the staff

meeting and did the sessions and I was just part of the group. Whereas I might have colleagues who would opt out and feel threatened and go back to the office’.

Finding: The impact of professional learning can be evidenced in the development of culture, levels of interaction and engagement with staff, increased student achievement and in the impression of the principal as a role model. Professional learning can increase expectation, skill development and understanding of the principal role.

4.4.2 Accountability

The final challenge to professional learning is accountability.

‘Well I suppose the bottom line is that you are accountable to your community. I mean there are the levels of accountability. You are accountable to your board for professional learning and you do that through appraisal or through reports that you do for the Board around specific things, accountable to your staff.’

When challenged with ‘in what way are you accountable for your professional learning?’ the researcher anticipated the response of ‘written reporting to the board’. This was less than forth-coming and only offered by one participant. Three others suggested that they were ‘professionally accountable and responsible to the community, to the staff’ and ‘it is evidenced in change and performance’... ‘through actions, just as it is for teachers’, ‘being able to be an active participant in discussions’, ‘engage with staff from an informed position.’ Sustainability of changes and developments, the culture and ultimately changes in student achievement were also seen as being accountable.

Accountability through the appraisal process was suggested by one participant. This is explained as: ‘I guess I am accountable to others through my team goals and when I plan with others – others hold me accountable through these’.

Finding: Accountability is not limited to recount reporting: rather it could be measured in terms of impact and behavioural changes.

4.4.3 Options and alternatives

Participants were asked to make suggestions for experienced principal professional learning and how this might happen. In this section many ideas are listed.

The importance of pre-principal learning and continuation of supports offered through the First Time Principals programme were emphasised. Particular focus was given to the use of mentors. Having a professional mentor was seen as a powerful support for experienced principals.

‘A structured mentoring coaching type situation is good, but once again it has to be structured, it has to be a good mentoring or coaching relationship not just a fuzzy type of one.’

Suggestions were made for a ‘Growing Leaders Programme’ focusing on the development of leadership skills in all teachers in preparation for future leadership.

All participants discussed the closure of the Principal Development and Planning Centre, and expressed concern about the gap created in experienced principal development. The external, personalised, national setting of this development was given emphasis by three participants who suggested that any alternative needed to ensure these elements were covered. Acknowledgement was given to the importance and need for this national resource with all participants watching with caution as new developments are explored.

One participant suggested perhaps direct funding from a national level of principal professional learning could be an option to replace this.

Sabbaticals and secondments were voiced as potentially valuable professional learning. Suggestions were made that secondment and sabbatical should be cyclic, compulsory and on-going throughout the career of the principal. The learning needs, leadership style and school context would determine the type of sabbatical or secondment offered. This was given significant discussion from all participants. However accountability for these types of sabbaticals was seen as an area that required improvement.

Suggestions went as far as to offer that the Education Review Office and Ministry of Education should have a set number of positions for this purpose annually. Benefits of this were seen as rejuvenation for the principal; offering a greater understanding of the role of these education agencies; increasing and challenging the principal's immediate skill base, having direct relevance to their school; seeing a range of practices across a number of school contexts; further development of networks across sectors and providing the opportunity for principals gain a more national, external perspective.

External supports coming into the principal's school were voiced by four participants. The challenge was to identify these key personnel and to gain access to them. In support of this external view, three participants recognised the value of the role and actions of the rural advisor in previous years. 'They came whether you wanted them to or not. They saw what was happening across the region and got us together for development'. 'You knew they were going to turn up. For some of us, it was the first person you saw from the outside for weeks on end.' This was suggested as an effective way of overcoming the barrier of isolation.

The ability to discuss and dialogue in depth around professional issues was identified as a significant pathway of professional learning. In addition to this, professional reading and scheduled opportunities for this were seen as valuable. The opportunity then to discuss this, in a mentor situation enabled the principal to verbalise their understandings and

applications. This was supported by the suggestion of two participants that within the school setting, quality learning circles (QLC's) and externally professional learning groups (PLG's) and blogs were excellent forums for these. These forums provided opportunity for professional reading and the chance to 'challenge and be challenged'. They were seen as being proactive in focus, with value placed on the 'on-going, face-to-face' organisation of these. The aforementioned cluster culture barrier was reiterated with this suggestion.

Finding: Professional learning is valued by principals. A range of options and alternatives deserve exploration. Secondment opportunities, formal mentoring, professional learning groups and external, independent support are options for consideration in developing professional learning programmes for experienced principals. An external, national perspective is seen as a priority.

4.5 Summary

Understanding effective conditions for and programmes of principal professional learning is gleaned from an understanding of the principal's role and what constitutes effectiveness in that role. From this, measures of effectiveness and an understanding of needs can be developed. Professional learning can then be aligned with these needs. To do this an understanding of barriers, filters and best practice is needed. These findings offer some insight into these understandings.

CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION

Introduction

The voices of participants provide valuable insight. This chapter contextualises their voices presented in the findings of chapter four, aligning these with the literature reviewed in chapter two. While presented in the four themes of chapter four, there are threads woven throughout. The themes of authenticity, credibility and being a role-model are examples of these.

The first theme explores the role of the principal and draws an understanding of what effectiveness in this position might look like. Theme two discusses the determining of professional learning needs. The third theme considers how professional learning decisions are made, while the fourth investigates the impact of professional learning.

There are findings presented in chapter four that do not appear in the literature reviewed, and literature that does not align with the findings. This is, as Kerlinger (1986) suggests because 'respondents will sometimes give unexpected answers that may indicate the existence of relations not originally anticipated' (p. 443). This is research in action, and a direct result of the semi-structured interview process. This process has provided both responses to questions and has been 'helpful in learning respondents' reasons for doing or believing something' (Kerlinger, 1986, p. 379).

5.1 Understanding the role of the principal

This theme provides an understanding of the role of the principal, motivations, leadership and explorations of effectiveness. This is essential in understanding profound principal professional learning and how this happens. Without this foundation then professional learning is at risk of becoming an isolated activity. Learning then has the potential to be disjointed and limited in its relevance. To understand professional

learning needs and how these are met, an understanding of what effectiveness is and the role of the principal is required. An understanding of effectiveness then provides qualities to measure against, work towards and ultimately increase effectiveness. Increasing effectiveness should drive principal professional learning. Hence the value, relevance and importance of this theme.

Finding: The role of the principal is seen as complex. It is a mix of business management, leadership and extensive, in-depth people relationships. A key element of the role is seen as having the ability to work collaboratively and to mentor others. Autonomy through leading decision making can be a motivation to principalship.

Understanding the role of the principal assists in understanding possible professional learning needs. This understanding is gleaned from more than the reading of a job description or defining the position of principal. To understand the role of the principal there is a need to understand motivations, philosophy, leadership style and to define effectiveness.

The role of the principal is diverse and complex (Stacey, 1992). This is acknowledged by participants in their hesitation to describe and measure effectiveness.

As participants discussed motivations, philosophy, style descriptions and effectiveness their responses blurred from one dimension into the next. A silence appears in that not one participant referred to their job description or a written definition of their role. The understanding of their position came from a philosophical level, including their expectation of effectiveness within this. Perhaps in the selection of participants for this research, their own level of high functionality or effectiveness has been demonstrated. Those with less experience or less awareness of themselves could be more inclined to use more closed descriptions of their role. This leads to the thought that experienced, effective principals have an intuitive or profound understanding of their role and the expectations of

them. The mechanics of management and administration are seen as valuable, but the real measure of their effectiveness is in their understanding of what it means to lead and to model leadership. People relationships are given priority and therefore a culture of collaboration and mentorship is allowed to evolve and grow.

Finding: Highly effective interpersonal skills are central to and underpin other measures of effectiveness. Achieving this is based on the principal having a strong understanding of themselves and their leadership. Effective principals are seen as self-driven and self-motivated while being an authentic role-model and mentor. They have the ability to reflect, to lead and the skill to develop the school culture. Modelling work and life balance is identified as significant.

When describing both the role and their understanding of effectiveness a strong sense of confidence is presented by the participants. This is in their ability to do their job, to discuss their role and to challenge questions posed, while demonstrating a capacity to critique and a strong desire to continue learning. Are these measures of effectiveness? I would suggest that this is just the beginning. It is beyond confidence and challenge. It is about understanding self.

This strong sense of self and knowing who they are as leaders enables them to fulfil their role as principal of the school. This sense of self appears almost instinctive or 'intuitive' - a word that was raised often during these interviews and aligns with Dyer (2000) and Emery (1994) in the literature.

There was little evidence of self-promotion; rather participants expressed a sense of deep understanding of self. It appears those school leaders who have this understanding of self have the self-confidence and self-assurance to move beyond their own needs. This allows these principals to lead their school in away that encourages deep thinking and reflection.

Again there is congruence between the literature and the data. Goleman (1995) speaks of this as emotional intelligence, where Bell and Gilbert (1996) and Robertson and Murrhly (2006) share this as understanding professional and personal self. Stott and Lee (2005) suggest that extraordinary leaders lead from the soul. One participant commented that the role of principal is one that requires self-motivation and to be self-driven. Bell and Gilbert (1996), Duignan (2004), Leithwood (1990), Schein (1996), Wendel et al. (1996) support this in that from self-development comes an increased self-awareness, self-management, self-acceptance and self-responsibility.

Begley and Wong (2001) suggest that knowing self forms a foundation for ethical and authentic leadership. The literature and data suggest that there is a higher level of operation from the effective principal. This satisfaction with self allows the leader to work with a wisdom and freedom to interact with others, developing a culture and sense of extra-ordinary leadership.

West-Burnham (2009) summarises this as:

‘outstanding leaders have a very clear, robust and realistic sense of self. They know who they are and they are confident and comfortable in that knowledge and possess a high level of emotional intelligence. They invest in personal growth and development... have a strong sense of vocation and a very clear personal and professional ethical code’ (p. 13).

Finding: There is an identified need for professional learning in communication and interpersonal skills for principals. There is a perceived lack of accessibility to development in this dimension.

Knowledge of self extends to the importance of knowing the people one works with. Emphasis is placed on the principal’s ability to demonstrate highly effective interpersonal skills. This includes the ability to engage in challenging conversations, to question, support, understand and motivate.

Communication and engagement were two prevalent themes presented in the data. Without the ability to communicate and engage, overwhelmingly, participants think the ability to be an effective principal is compromised. This area of professional learning appears as the most difficult to access. While professional learning is accessible in curriculum, administrative and management roles, little is presently available for principals in the development of interpersonal skills and knowledge.

Learning needs are identified in the area of human resources, specifically in offering feedback and learning the skill of difficult conversations. Robertson and Murrphy (2006) and Robertson (2005) reiterate the value and importance of a skill base in this as a leader in schools. Developing a depth of understanding in how to communicate; engage others in learning; challenge and question effectively; to be challenged, the skills of mentoring and coaching; and to implement change are identified as needs. These could be expressed as 'the finer art of leadership'. Principals see this as essential in their professional learning portfolio but seem paralysed by the inaccessibility of it. Some responsibility to enable development in this area must lie with the principals themselves. Elmore (1996) and Fullan and Stiegelbauer (1991) suggest that if there is a need in the market, it is important that leaders create and voice a demand for it.

<p>Finding: Descriptions of effective leadership include the ability to influence, collective ownership, collaborative practices, credible decision-making and authentic action.</p>
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In describing leadership style and their philosophy of leadership participants present three recurring messages – authenticity, credibility and role-modelling. Begley and Wong (2001) have already suggested that knowing self can enable greater authenticity in leadership. School leadership is a public position. With this comes the responsibility of being an authentic role model. Barth (1986), Narvaez (1997), Pickens (1997), Sparks and Hirsh (1997) and Zmuda et al. (2004) discuss the public

learner image where Hall (1996) discusses commitment and responsibility as the driving force.

Authenticity is presented throughout the data in responses such as 'do as I say and do as I do', 'walking the talk', 'putting words into action' and 'leading through action and discussion'. The data and literature align. Barth (2001) reiterates this in 'you can't lead where you won't go' (p. 27). Villiani (2008) presents a model of authentic leadership, very much set in a post-modern paradigm. This model, supported by Bryk and Schneider (2002) and Martinez (2005), suggests that leaders are expected to 'walk the talk' and operate within a frame of trust, legitimacy and credibility. For principals, if authenticity is not easily identifiable in their work and interactions, perhaps this becomes a focus of reflection and acts as a point to begin their professional learning.

The challenge is that authenticity, influence, credibility and role-modelling are somewhat intangible to measure.

Discussion of authenticity aligns closely with credibility. Credibility is presented through two avenues – one in being the lead learner – knowing the craft, having a currency in curriculum as well as other areas of leadership and management – and then in the transference of this learning into everyday practice. Robertson and Murrphy (2006) discuss this transference as espoused theories becoming theories in action. Barth (1986) suggests learning means action and that if you learn something you have to do something about it. One participant voiced this as 'reflective action'. This is supported by Zmuda et al. (2004) who offer 'if we know better, why don't we do better' (p. 5).

Glanz's (2006) summary of credibility aligns most closely with the findings of our participants: 'One may espouse commitment to collaboration, but one's actions may belie such a stance. Faculty will listen respectfully to you articulate your vision of collaborative leadership, but they will postpone judgement until they see you in action' (p. xxi). Without

credibility the leader will have difficulty in being a role-model to staff. This alignment of credibility and authenticity demands that principals not only undertake professional learning, but model this and put this into action. Dyer (2008) and Barth (2001) direct the reader to the role-model the principal-as-learner represents. If leadership is to have the 'followship' participants speak of then credible, authentic professional learning and practice must become the norm.

Finding: Leading learning is a crucial role of the principal. The 'role-modelling' as a learner has a significant impact on others. This requires principals to become knowledgeable, current and conversant in curriculum as well as other elements of leadership. Being the lead learner calls for the principal to access and engage in purposeful learning from a range of local, national and international sources. This learning must be contextually relevant and put into practice. The effective lead learner is seen to be engaged and involved in learning, management and leadership.

To be the lead learner of the school the principal must have currency and credibility. This is shared as having the ability to speak from a knowledgeable and informed position. As one participant stated 'you have to be at the forefront of teaching and learning'. This touches on the importance of 'instructional leadership' and 'leading learning'. Cotton (2003), Du Four (2002), Gaziel (1995); Hattie (2009), Leithwood (1994), Martinez (2005), O'Neill (2008), Smith and Andrews (1989), Southworth (2002), Stewart and Prebble (1993) emphasise the importance of principals giving priority to their leadership of curriculum. Clegg and Billington (1997), Crow (2008), Fullan (2002), Lindstrom and Speck (2004) and Scott-Nelson and Sassi (2005) go further in support of participants' emphatic emphasis on leading learning, to state that 'the principal must be the lead learner of the school'.

The credibility of the principal has an impact on their leadership and the learning within their school. Credibility can be gained or lost through both

action and inaction. An example of this is the credibility lost when the principal 'retreats to the office' or 'leads from the office door'. Barth (2001) suggests that the message sent in this situation is that 'learning was for unimportant people and important people don't need to learn' (p. 26). Hall and George (1999) and Robinson (2007) reiterate this. The leader makes as much difference in what they do and in what they fail to do. It is detectable throughout the institution. Principal leaders are asked to engage with instructional and curriculum development and leadership, beyond the organisation and provision of resources, to learning and working alongside their people. This neo-liberal approach engages staff, increases credibility and is a reflection of what is important.

Experiences and the influence of a mentor are significant in shaping careers. Initial motivations can influence the long term career of the principal.

The significance of the principal as a role-model is career lasting. Several participants spoke of 'role-models' and the long term impact they had had on their careers, as models and mentors. This in turn created a sense of responsibility to do this for others - a ripple effect. As one participant stated 'someone believed in me' and in turn 'I have to grow new leaders'.

The ability to mentor others is identified by participants as a measure of effectiveness. If this is a significant element of being an effective principal, what support and preparation and professional learning is available to principals to develop these skills? Bush (2003) emphasises the importance of preparation for these roles. This is supported by the National College for School Leadership (2007) document, which encourages succession planning and explicit leadership development. If there is this sense of responsibility to grow and support future leaders, does this impress the importance of development in interpersonal skills, communication and mastering the art of coaching and mentoring, not only in our current principals but in future leaders too?

This motivation is closely linked with the sense of making a difference and having the ability to influence, a sense of vocation and service, with a deep sense of responsibility. One response, 'I have to leave the world a better place' summarises this. Cotton (2003), O'Neill (2008), Richardson (2007), Scarborough (2008), Zmuda et al. (2004) share this thinking as making a difference in the lives of students. Timperley and Parr (2004) and West-Burnham (2009) discuss that from effective leadership can come meaningful change. While leaving the world a better place is a positive intention, to enact this, some skill and perhaps professional learning in developing others is needed.

Finding: The culture of individual schools is unique and personal to the individual context. A significant role of the effective principal is to understand, develop and lead the development of this.

The ability to understand, develop and enhance the culture of a school is identified as both a skill of leadership and a measure of effectiveness by participants and the literature alike. However, both the data and literature strongly suggest the skills of an effective principal are not necessarily transferable. They are only relevant to and measurable in the individual's current context. Perhaps this explains the participants' hesitation in defining the skills and traits of the effective principal.

Kotter (1999) states 'context matters' (p. 4). Church (2005) supports this 'to state the obvious, every school is different. Therefore the structures and processes that will be effective in one context may not be as helpful in another' (p. 17). Walker and Dimmock (2005) speak specifically of skill transference. While some skills may be transferable 'success in a particular setting or at a point in time does not guarantee success in a different setting or time' (p. 88). They go on to identify that too often 'the crucial factor commonly missing from principal professional development is the relating of practice to context' (Walker & Dimmock, 2005, p. 88). Glanz (2006) calls this context expertise, while Goldberg (2001) describes this as situational mastery. This contextual relevance reflects the

importance of the principal's self-assurance and authentic engagement with the staff, their students and the wider community. With this understanding, the principal is then able to make decisions about the skills and strategies required of them to be highly effective in this particular context.

With reference to culture, Sergiovanni (2001) suggests that in 'forgetting the importance of culture and the importance of creating new norms leads to changes that resemble the proverbial 'rearranging the chairs on the deck of the *Titanic*' (p. 119). The findings of this work suggest that an effective principal has a role in not only understanding the learning needs of the community, but in understanding and shaping a culture or environment conducive to this. This is an understanding of contextual specificity. The principal's ability to impact positively within the culture and context could be a significant determinant of effectiveness or ineffectiveness. The question is then raised as to what professional learning is accessible in the development of culture or contextual specificity and again, what demand principals as learners create for this?

Finding: The ability to lead appears closely aligned with the principal's ability to question, engage, interact and challenge both data and practice. The principal is expected to be knowledgeable in curriculum and student learning. Leadership is seen as being able to react to need and to be proactive and visionary.

If one role and measure of effectiveness is the ability of the principal to shape a positive learning culture, what are others? With a clear understanding of effectiveness, principals are then better positioned to determine measures against these and can ascertain their learning needs. Without such measures or processes then perhaps learning becomes one of trial and error, with a lack of definition and accountability.

The findings suggest that there are qualities of effective principals, which concur with Bainbridge and Thomas (2006), Bennis and Goldsmith (2003),

Clegg and Billington (1997), Dyer and Carothers (2000), Goldberg (2001), Kotter (1999), Marx (2006), Phillips (2006), Sparks (2005), Stott and Lee (2005), Villiani (2008) and West-Burnham's (2009) extensive lists of qualities of outstanding leadership.

A finite, summative list of effectiveness traits in the literature and data is elusive. Perhaps this is because of the diversity already presented in context and culture. Guskey (2003) concurs that this range is diverse and complex. Bainbridge and Thomas (2006), Bennis and Goldsmith (2003), Clegg and Billington (1997), Dyer and Carothers (2000), Goldberg (2001), Kotter (1999), Marx (2006), Phillips (2006), Sparks (2005), Stott and Lee (2005), Villiani (2008) and West-Burnham (2009) all offer a range of qualities of effective leaders.

In a New Zealand setting, participants suggested *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* (Ministry of Education, 2008) and *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* (NZEI, 2008) offer a standard for principals to measure against. While there is an alignment between these documents, there appears to be a void between these measures and the profession's willingness to access these as a list these measures or qualities of effectiveness.

However, some suggestion of effectiveness from the data and therefore opportunities for professional learning is offered in the following summary:

- Being authentic
- Having credibility
- Developing a collaborative, collective, learning culture
- Understanding the context of the school
- Being reflective
- Being present in the school and engaged
- Having a high level of interpersonal skill – knowing self and others
- A currency in curriculum knowledge and an ability to lead this
- Skill in challenging, questioning and supporting the learning of others
- Understanding and demonstrating work/life balance

Finding: Work-life balance is a goal and barrier for principals and has been given greater consideration when making professional learning decisions.

While the qualities and skills listed align closely with those in the literature, one stands apart and appears as a silence in the review of literature. Work/life balance was presented by all five participants. This was not explored in the literature as a measure of effectiveness although fatigue was considered a barrier. Barnett and O'Mahony (2002), Church (2005), Griffin (1987), Lortie (1975), Martin-Kneip (2004), Robertson (2005), Robertson and Murrphy (2006) make reference to fatigue as a barrier to professional learning. In the findings of this research, it was presented as both a measure and a barrier.

It is suggested in the data that hauora (well-being) is a measure of effectiveness. This is seen as the ability of the principal to bring balance to their position, making decisions that consider the time they commit to school and the impact this has on their professional and personal self. This may be measured in the principal's ability to spend time away from school and in being engaged in a range of other activities, personally and community based, external to the school. This is an action that is viewed as being as a role-model to others and a consideration of health, longevity and workload management. Four participants had goals set in this domain, with one requiring this of all staff as well.

This measure of work/life balance is seen as a direct impact of the 'vocational nature' of the role and consuming work of *Tomorrow's Schools* in the 1989 education reforms. The expectation of principals at this time was discussed as consuming and unsustainable. Reflection on this and new expectations of staff, have led to new learning and measures for these principals.

While some participants discussed the setting of goals in this domain, only one had worked to achieve a sense of balance and achievement with this. Some participants suggested that while they had this as a goal for development, they did not see themselves as realistically achieving this. Authenticity in leadership is called to question at this point. Do principals place as much value on achieving this goal as they do others? From the data it appears not. Professional learning for principals and other leaders in understanding and managing work/life balance appears to be limited.

Professional learning for principals has predominantly focused on the administrative and management tasks of the role. This theme demonstrates that effectiveness as a principal is not limited to these two domains. The significant and wider impacting roles of the principal are more complex than this. The development of tools to support leaders in measuring against these complexities of effectiveness is a challenge. When these needs are identified, then perhaps plans can be made for professional learning to support and address these.

5.2 Determining needs

It was suggested earlier that perhaps without a measure of effectiveness, a trial and error approach to professional learning is employed. With an understanding of what effectiveness might look like and the role of the principal, perhaps our attention should be drawn to understanding how learning needs are determined and how professional direction is identified.

Finding: Professional learning is valued. It is an on-going expectation of principalship. Professional learning can offer direction and motivation for experienced principals.
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Barth (2001) discusses a reason for student underachievement is because they are at the hands of at-risk educators. Effective professional learning is identified as a way of overcoming this. Professional learning is seen as important by both participants in this research supported by the literature

(Richardson, 2007). Simply undertaking professional learning is not enough. The learning is only one part of the process.

'How one learns is closely related to how one leads' (Byrne-Jimenez and Orr, 2007, p. 6). Principals demand evidence-based decisions from their teachers and apply this to other areas of their work. Why is it then, that principals allow themselves to undertake professional learning without the same evidence and rigour of process? The data suggested that this was the case. Principals admit to not engaging in a process or accessing tools to determine goals and professional learning plans. A reason for this is the suggestion that there are ineffective, inaccessible or under-utilised tools to do this.

Finding: Access to, and knowledge of, tools that effectively identify the learning needs of principals is limited. For some principals professional learning does not necessarily match development needs.

The research findings suggest that whilst professional learning is seen as important, the diagnosis of needs is less valued. Perhaps the perceived inaccessibility and ineffectiveness of tools to diagnosis is in fact the barrier. It is not that diagnosis is not seen as valuable, rather is it the processes to do so could be more accessible and better utilised. When challenged, participants suggest that measures and tools appear limited to the appraisal process through the professional standards. The data suggests that there is potential for the Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework to have a measuring role however no action from participants had been aligned to this.

Kotter (1999) states that to be effective it is imperative 'you know your needs, strengths and weaknesses and personal style' (p. 131). He goes on to suggest that 'individuals, too, get in their own way by failing to assess their developmental needs realistically' (Kotter, 1999, p. 4). The importance of a needs assessment is reiterated by Glickman (2002), Grady (2004), Schein (1998), Schmoker (2005) and West-Burnham and

O'Sullivan (1998). Walker and Dimmock (2005) however warn that this is not limited to a narrow, superficial list of skills.

Knowledge of and access to formal tools to measure effectiveness is limited. Because of this, perhaps the use of current processes is not seen as valuable. The commonly adopted appraisal cycle appears to have limited impact on the assessment of needs and appears more a compliance process rather than a diagnostic or learning tool. The development of tools and professional learning in the utilisation and benefit of these could provide a solution to support the identification of learning needs.

Finding: The appraisal/performance management process as commonly practiced is not seen as a process that is professionally rigorous and does little to identify learning needs.

While the data speaks of the performance management process as one of compliance, perhaps it is the tools or the way in which this process is applied that should be called into question. It appears that traditional technicist forms of appraisal do not meet the needs of these experienced principals. Given the perceived level of effectiveness of the participant principals did feedback or intuition play a part in determining their needs? There does not appear to be resistance to receiving feedback nor a lack of professionalism around this. Most participants spoke of welcoming feedback, however offer that they 'just know' what their learning needs are and do little to actively seek feedback, leaving it to 'I'm sure my staff would tell me'. This process could be strengthened and used in a formative way. As Collins (2001) suggests, these principals could then move from *Good to Great*. It appears a post-modern process is being applied to more neo-liberal leadership.

Rhodes et al. (2004) reiterate the importance of purpose and authenticity where 'performance management systems link with [professional] learning, not as a performance arena or a 'bolt on' activity' (p. 4). Grady (2004),

Hall (1996), the OECD report of 2007, and Timperley and Parr (2004) discuss the value and importance of evidence-based decision making. This is a silence in the discussions from participants. While evidence is identified as important in decision making, this is not applied so intently in to their own goal setting. Guskey (2003) suggests that profound professional learning occurs when it is purposeful, structured and well-organised. Data is needed to make purposeful and focused decisions. The silence in data could suggest that data is not important, or perhaps the data is inaccessible. Without a needs assessment perhaps principals are undertaking professional learning in areas they do not need it in and those areas of need continue to go undiagnosed and unmet.

Finding: Formal and informal reflection are seen as a valuable tools. Reflection challenges practice and assists in the identification of learning needs. Formal reflection is underutilised by experienced principals and personnel to support this are deemed difficult to access.

Reflection is one action used to determine learning goals though for all participants this was not a formal process and formal reflection was limited. However reflection is identified as a valuable process in having the potential to challenge practice and identify learning needs. The difficulty is it is seen as underutilised and difficult to access. Questions are raised about the quality and skill levels of those offering to guide this process. Glanz (2006) offers that reflection should be at the heart of professional practice.

The literature is awash with discussion on the benefits of reflection as a tool to highlight strengths and provide focus for next development steps for school leaders (Argyris,1991; Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002; Barth, 1986; Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007; Dewey, 1933; Dyer, 2006; Gimmet, Rostad & Ford, 1991; Griffin, 1987; Hall,1996; Hallowell, 1997; Kemmis, 1987; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993; Peterson & Cosner, 2005; Rhodes et al., 2004; Smyth, 1989; Stewart & Prebble, 1993; Villiani, 2008).

One participant took this a step further, suggesting that the practice is beyond reflection to one of 'reflective action'. This would align with those who promote an inquiry approach to professional learning, in that once an assessment has been undertaken, some action, either in the form of a question or goal should be explored.

It has already been stated that professional learning is inhibited by the ability to assess needs. 'Changing leaders' habits so they can become reflective practitioners is difficult. Critical reflection cannot be achieved by reading about it' (Robertson, 2005, p. 59). Reflection is inhibited by limited access to those skilled in the facilitation of this and in the limited understanding of principals in how to make this happen. Assessing abilities and needs is a significant outcome of reflection. Perhaps this is an opportunity for professional learning as well as tool development.

Finding: Purposeful and needs-based goals offer focus and direction for professional development. The recording and sharing publicly of goals creates greater focus and drive to achieving these. Some principals set goals to comply with the appraisal process and the viability of these goals is questionable.

The setting of goals appears to be a more prevalent practice than needs assessment. However, formal goal setting is seen as a compliance practice in the appraisal process, and is discussed as having only a slight impact on professional learning. It is implied that these are simply process driven.

Of interest is that all participants spoke of having other recorded goals and a professional learning plan. These were arrived at as a result of informal reflection, a desire to learn and from long term planning. Having these recorded provides motivation and acts a reference point in the busyness of the role to prompt and refocus the principal. Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007) and Marx (2006) speak of this as connectedness and creating

purpose. With purpose comes focus and in turn more likely to result in action.

The sharing of goals with at least one other is common to all participants. This provides a sense of transparency and accountability. Recorded goals establish a focus and purpose for professional learning opportunities. Barth (2001), Bell (1991) and Walker and Dimmock (2005) suggest goal setting should be one part of a personal development plan process. Clegg and Billington (1997), Sparks and Hirsh (1997), Timperley and Parr (2004) and West-Burnham and O'Sullivan (1998) advocate both goal setting and planning as components of effective professional learning. Supported by Guskey (2003), it is with this focus that learning becomes focused and purposeful, with the potential then of greater impact and increased effectiveness.

Finding: Professional learning needs are diverse and specific to the individual principal and their context.

Professional learning, based on goal setting is of value when it is personalised to the individual principal. This personalisation is aided through both goal setting and the relatively autonomous process of professional learning selection. Further exploration of the ownership, personalisation and autonomy of this is discussed as conditions for professional learning in theme three.

5.3 How professional learning decisions are made

This theme presents some discussion of the filters, drivers, barriers and conditions used to determine which professional learning opportunities are accessed.

5.3.1 Filters

Finding: Professional and personal goals, student achievement targets and perceived impact are filters for determining professional learning.

The filters of work/life balance and applicability to context, goals and learning needs have been discussed. The data and literature align in that being purposeful and connected to goals, targets and needs is seen as the most common filter to determine the value and appropriateness of professional learning (Byrne-Jimenez & Orr, 2007; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Marx, 2006). This places even greater importance on the processes of measuring effectiveness, needs analysis and purposeful goal setting to ensure the most appropriate and effective professional learning opportunities are selected.

Finding: Costs, timing and time commitment are common filters used in making professional learning decisions. The perceived usefulness and quality of content as well as the structure of the learning are further filters.

Beyond goal setting and targets, the data suggests a secondary range of filters is then applied:

- *Costs* – both initial and ongoing costs to the school. This action demonstrates the understanding of the bigger picture, considering both short term and long term impact to the school.
- *Timing and time commitments* – this is explained as the time of the school year, the timing in relation to other commitments, the length of time and when development is timed during the day, term and year. Argyris (1990), Barth (1986), Church (2005), Dyer (2008) reiterate this. It appears principals count the expenditure of time as a valuable resource to manage. This aligns with a greater focus on work/life balance. This filter implies principals are becoming more critiquing of professional learning options before committing to them. Perhaps professional learning providers need to evaluate this in the provision of professional learning to maximise engagement with principals.

Finding: Access to quality professional learning providers who are able to meet the personalised needs of principals is limited. There is a range of providers however the quality of these is inconsistent. This can result in inadequate and limited professional learning. Critique of providers as well as content, have become significant filters in determining professional learning.

- *Perceived quality* of content, the provider and the anticipated impact are further filters. One participant went so far as to triangulate this before engaging in professional learning programmes, seeking previous consumers' affirmations, finding literature about or written by the provider and then taking time, where possible, to observe them in action. Martin-Kneip (2004), Richardson (2007), Sparks (2005) and Wendel et al. (1996) support this triangulation as they emphasise the need for critique to ascertain quality professional learning.
- *Programme Structure* – the structure of the programme is given close examination not only to ascertain quality and best use of time, but in considering whether the style of delivery and process of learning would best meet the principal's learning style.

These filters suggest that principals are becoming more discerning and critical in their engagement with professional learning. There are strong parallels between effective leadership and effective professional learning (Bredeson & Johansson, 2000; Clarke, 2004; Du Four, 1999; Elmore, 1996; Fullan & Stiegelbauer, 1991; Hattie, 2009; Law, 1999; Rhodes et al., 2004; Richardson, 2007; Schein, 1998; Schmoker, 2005; Spanniet & Ford, 2008; Sparks, 2005; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997; Sugrue, 2002; Timperley & Parr, 2004; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998; Wideen & Andrews, 1987; Zmuda et al., 2004). Consequently principals not only have a right, but perhaps an obligation to critique professional learning and to apply these filters rigorously. The data suggests that in the identification and application of these filters principals are critical and make deliberate decisions about professional learning.

5.3.2 Drivers

Indirectly, principal professional learning raises student achievement. It is this that drives professional learning. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) suggest that 'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning' (p.3). Robinson (2007) and Sergiovanni (2001) offer that there is a strong relationship between effective school leadership and student achievement. So then student achievement and 'I want to be the best professional I can be' as stated by one participant, should be two strong drivers of professional learning.

Palmer (2008) and Dyer (2008) discuss the obligation and need for principals to undertake professional learning. Obligation does not appear to be a driver for principal participants. Rather their motivation is more intrinsic, driven by the responsibility of being a public learner (Barth, 1986; Pickens, 1997; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997) and in being a role-model to others. One participant spoke of being self-determining and self-driven. This participant made direct reference to the Handy's (1994a) *Sigmoid Curve*. The importance of self-improvement, challenging his practice and continuing to grow was emphasised – not allowing himself to fall on the downside of the curve. This is an example of the intrinsic motivation described above.

5.3.3 Barriers

Barriers to principal professional learning are both extrinsic and intrinsic.

Finding: Rural principals are the majority in New Zealand schools. Travel, staffing and accessibility are barriers to participating in principal professional learning and inhibit the development of principals.

Travel, staffing and accessibility are all barriers to professional learning. This is particularly relevant to rural principals who are a majority in New Zealand education. The costs of travel, the time to travel, the inability to access suitable relief staffing and then the location of courses create

barriers and stop principals from accessing learning. This is a silence in the literature but very relevant to the New Zealand context. While on-line learning is available enabling access for those in rural locations, the face-to-face personalised learning is seen as more desirable. Could a more equitable solution be found? There is the option of additional funding in rural settings, but perhaps the solution could be found in the central employment of quality mobile-staffing for the purpose of professional learning support and release. This is already present in the early childhood sector and for longer term principal relief.

Finding: Isolation is a barrier for many principals both in rural and urban settings. For many principals, clusters are inaccessible, dysfunctional and undesirable forms of support and development. The culture of these can be isolating, limiting and exclusive.

One form of face-to-face learning promoted through many professional learning providers has been the use of cluster formats. In more recent times, extensive government contracts have been accessed in this way, consuming significant amounts of professional learning expenditure. The data suggests that for many principals clusters are dysfunctional and somewhat undesirable. The reasons for this are explained in the 'toxic and isolating culture' which prevails in many of these clusters. This was emphasised by four of the five participants.

The use of the cluster format is extensive throughout education in New Zealand however is one where the effectiveness is somewhat under-researched. Why would the allocation of such resources be seen as appropriate when the culture, functionality and effectiveness of clusters are called into question nor based on data? Perhaps an evaluation of these from a national level could provide greater evidence and insight to this.

A positive learning culture (Glanz, 2006) with high trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Robertson & Murrphy, 2006; West-Burnham & O'Sullivan, 1998) and

mutual respect (Timperley & Parr, 2004) are three conditions conducive to effective professional learning. Low trust creates a feeling of vulnerability and can mean low responsibility and low effectiveness (Clerkin, 2007; Covey, 2006; Lencioni, 2005).

The findings suggest that many clusters provide a less than positive learning environment for their participants. Well-poisoners, egos, competitiveness, power and social cliques are all descriptors describing the composition and functionality of clusters. The culture of these groups is identified as a significant barrier to engaging in professional learning. Du Four, Eaker and Du Four (2005) and Hargreaves (2004) suggest that learning in a professional learning community requires more than adopting the title of learning community and having mission statements and launching strategic plans. It requires the development and establishment of a learning culture. One participant goes so far as to state, 'New Zealand principals are yet to develop a culture of continual learning.'

Finding: As a profession, many principals are yet to develop a culture receptive to professional learning.
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Further intangible barriers are isolation, procrastination and emotion. Isolation is not limited to the physical isolation of some rural principalships. It is just as easily found in urban schools as well. This can be illustrated by the inability to access the cluster support mentioned above, with principals who do not attend developments, local association meetings and other interactions. This isolation can create loneliness (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2002; Church, 2005; Griffin, 1987; Lortie, 1975; Martin-Kneip, 2004; Robertson, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2001).

Procrastination is another barrier seen through the inability to prioritise, or working hard on the wrong things or even adopting an attitude of 'I don't need to know this'. Argyris (1990) calls this defensive reasoning. Bradley (1987) and Phillips (2006) reiterate that a negative attitude or unwillingness to accept responsibility for professional learning is a

significant barrier. Others are scared, resistant and reluctant. Paterson and West-Burnham (2005) suggest these emotive barriers can come from the multiple demands and complexity of the position, creating anxieties and fatigue.

Barth (2001) concurs with the voice of one participant principal in that 'principals will become learners only when these barriers are directly acknowledged and addressed' (p. 144).

5.3.4 Conditions

Finding: For experienced, effective principals, self-selected, external, on-going, professional learning in a high-trust, challenging and professional environment was profound. This required high levels of engagement and reflection. Secondments and external education roles are accessible sources of this development. A national and international perspective to professional learning is seen as valuable.

'Learning means action' (Barth, 1986). If learning is to influence, change and transform, what conditions are conducive to effective principal professional learning? The voices of participants align closely with the literature. Ownership, purpose and personalisation were acknowledged earlier. It is as conditions for profound professional learning these are discussed in greater depth.

Ownership and personalisation are critical elements of learning (Barth, 1986/2001; Clegg & Billington, 1997; Hall, 1996, Stewart, 2002). Where there is ownership, there is commitment and more likely to be a behavioural change (Osterman & Kottkamp, 1993). Coupled with ownership is personalisation. Participants voiced 'learning has to be tailored to you' and 'one size doesn't fit all'. Learning then becomes purposeful, focused and meaningful (Bradley, 1987; Fullan, 1993; Griffin, 1987; Kemmis, 1987; Lueder, 2006; Marx, 2006; Senge, 1990a; Wideen & Andrews, 1987). Barth (2001) terms this legitimate learning.

The data concurred with the literature in that profound professional learning occurred when it was sustained and reflected upon in a challenging and positive learning environment over time. Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007), Fullan (1993), Gray and Streshly (2008), Griffin (1987), Timperley et al. (2003) reiterate the voice of the participants. From this engagement, reflection and challenge is established. Thompson and Zeuli (1999) and Walker and Dimmock (2005) note this as disturbance; a condition needed for profound learning.

However ownership and personalisation is not isolated to being contextually sensitive. While much of the literature discusses the value of school-based, context driven learning, participants see value in personal professional learning external to the school, away from its distractions, demands and immediate context. This is a silence in the literature. The data placed value on accessing learning from national and international perspectives outside of the school setting, not isolated to one sector of education. Secondments and other external learning opportunities were voiced as experiences that provided this and are discussed further in theme four.

The data suggested that for experienced principals, the continual focus on their personal school context does not meet the need of professional challenge and stimulation and a feeling of 'directionless' develops. 'I think we get to a point in our principalship where we are looking for more. We are directionless in some ways and we look for those times to refocus or to re-energise'. This suggests that without this external, yet personal stimulation and professional learning, the downward slope of the Sigmoid curve could become a reality.

Several professional learning opportunities have recently taken an inquiry learning focus as a mode of delivery – *National Aspiring Principals Project*; *Second Language Learning*; *Experienced Principals' Pilot Project* are recent New Zealand examples of these. This process asks participants to reflect on needs and take direction from an internal context. Perhaps, for

experienced principals this is not the best source of 'direction'. The inquiry process continues to focus on the needs of the individual within their school context.

While the process is credible, it appears to do little to extend the connectedness across sectors and settings to meet the external, bigger picture stimulation that the data suggests as vital to longevity and re-energising in the position. The external, national or international context offers this. This suggests that inquiry has a limited effect as a tool or condition for profound professional learning.

5.4 Impact of professional learning

This theme discusses the impact of professional learning and levels of accountability for this. Included in this is a synthesis of the thinking of participants' suggestions for alternatives in experienced principal professional learning.

5.4.1 Accountability and impact

Finding: Accountability is not limited to recount reporting: rather it could be measured in terms of impact and behavioural changes.
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An anticipated form of accountability before interviewing, was that accountability could come through a narrative and financial summary, forming 'an account' (Kogan, 1986) of the learning undertaken. The data suggests otherwise. While this was represented by one participant, this was not seen as being accountable by the others.

Three others suggest they are 'professionally accountable and responsible to the community, to the staff' and 'it is evidenced in change and performance'. 'It is evidenced through actions, just as it is for teachers'. Timperley and Parr (2004) and Villiani (2008) concur that accountability should be demonstrated by a change in behaviour. Impacts of professional learning such as sustainability of changes and developments,

a positive learning culture and ultimately increased student achievement are seen as forms of accountability.

Finding: The impact of professional learning can be evidenced in the development of culture, levels of interaction and engagement with staff, increased student achievement and in the impression of the principal as a role model. Professional learning can increase expectation, skill development and understanding of the principal role.

The data suggests that perceived impact could be accountability. This is voiced in the form of responsibility, a stance reiterated by Handy (1994) and Sergiovanni (2001). They go beyond accountability for what has been achieved and challenge that it is also for what has not been achieved. This takes accountability to a higher, reflective level, calling for 'reflective action'.

Accountability is predominant in a neo-liberal paradigm (Bradley, 1987; Crow, 2008a; Rhodes et al., 2004; Spanniet & Ford, 2008; Zmuda et al., 2004). Kogan (1986) suggests that where public funds are used there should be public accountability. Given our participant principals have already been located in a post-modern paradigm, the beliefs and responses of one paradigm are in conflict with the complexities of another (Higham & Ataridou, 2009). Currently formal, measurable, rigorous and transparent accountability is limited. Whether this should be a feature of principal professional learning is an unresolved dilemma. Tensions between public and private needs are an example of these complexities. 'Teachers [Principals] are publicly employed but need reasonable privacy if they are to be creative' (Kogan, 1986, p. 18). Leaders are asked to work collaboratively and demonstrate profound learning through a change in action, where the more neo-liberal paradigm asked for measured, written report like, objective based accountabilities.

Options and alternatives for professional learning and accountabilities then deserve discussion.

5.4.2 Options and alternatives

Advertising is rife with conferences and one-day courses promoted as professional learning opportunities. However these are not seen as effective. Conferences are seen to be more about collegial support than professional learning and one-day courses do not feature as effective in the data. Martin-Kneip (2004) suggests that little is gained from such options while Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) offer that conferences and one-day courses have limited impact on student outcome and in changing practice.

Finding: Professional learning is valued by principals. A range of options and alternatives deserve exploration. Secondment opportunities, formal mentoring, professional learning groups and external, independent support are options for consideration in developing professional learning programmes for experienced principals. An external, national perspective is seen as a priority.

Affirmation of current pre-principal and beginning principal programmes is shared, with a view that these preparations are a positive step in leadership development. Suggestions that all teachers should be exposed to a leadership development programme as part of their progression in teaching is seen as a significant step to developing the whole profession in leadership learning.

The closure of the Principal Development and Planning Centre is raised as a concern in the data. Questions are asked as to what support and development is available to experienced principals. Given the conditions presented for effective professional learning, there is a level of scepticism around the suggested alternatives and their inability to meet personalised needs, yet provide a national and global perspective.

As presented earlier, the data suggests that having a professional mentor is identified as a powerful support for experienced principals. This is identified as under-utilised and somewhat inaccessible. Allen (2008),

Barth (1986), Braun and Vigneau Carson (2008), Peterson and Cosner (2005), Rhodes et al. (2004), Robertson (2005), Robertson and Murrhiy (2006) and Stewart and Prebble (1993) concur that coaching can have a significant and positive impact on the effectiveness of the leader. Argyris (1991) suggests that this reflection in a formal setting enables leaders to learn how to learn (p. 15). This external support is advocated for. In earlier times in New Zealand education the 'rural advisor' was in this position. Perhaps a formal mentoring programme would reinstate this level of support.

Questions are raised over the skill base and knowledge of available mentors and coaches. It is seen as imperative that if coaching and mentoring were accessible that the credibility of personnel and their skill level would come into question. While the idea of continuing coaching or mentoring beyond the First Time Principals programme is seen as valuable, the execution of this proves challenging. As stated by a participant:

'A structured mentoring coaching type situation is good, but once again it has to be structured, it has to be good mentoring or coaching relationship not just a fuzzy type of one.'

In addition to this, the value of professional reading is promoted. Beyond simply reading professional texts is the opportunity to discuss and professionally challenge the thinking and assumptions of these. The ability to discuss and dialogue, in depth around professional issues is identified in the data as profound professional learning. Quality Learning Circles (QLC's), Professional Learning Groups (PLG's) and Blogs are forums that provide opportunity for both reading and dialogue. Braun and Vigneau Carson (2008), Brubaker (2006), Byrne-Jimenez and Orr (2007), Clerkin (2007), Cochran-Smtih and Lytle (1999), Du Four (1999), Leuder (2006), Martin-Kneip (2004), Schmoker (2005), Senge (1990a), Spannuet and Ford (2008), Sparks (2005), Stewart and Prebble (1993) and Timperley and Parr (2004) discuss the rich learning that comes through learning conversations. As highlighted earlier, there is challenge in the

development of the culture of these. Du Four, Eaker and Du Four (2005) caution that becoming a learning community is more than just adopting a title. Timperley and Parr (2004) advocate an environment of mutual respect. Bell (1991) challenges the often haphazard formation of learning communities, the importance of experience within the group, and questions the operational trust and honesty of these. Profound professional learning will only occur in this form with careful attention to the culture and conditions for learning.

Job-embedded development is discussed by Du Four et al. (2005) and Hall (1996). The data profiles this as having the greatest impact of all professional learning in the form of secondment to external education agencies. This, over an extended period, is said to enrich the principal's knowledge in education, refine and develop a skill base and increase their awareness of national and international education happenings. Being removed from the 'dailyness' of the school setting and put into a practical professional learning environment with the Education Review Office, Ministry of Education, New Zealand Principals Federation, First Time Principals, and the Principals Development and Planning Centre provides opportunity for this. Barnett & O'Mahony (2002), Church (2005), Griffin (1987), Lortie (1975), Martin-Kneip (2004), Robertson (2005), Sergiovanni (2001) acknowledge this 'dailyness' and the importance of 'sustaining a sense of purpose and enjoyment for the job' (Church, 2005, p. 88). The value of this practical refinement of skills through these experiences appears to have been under-estimated. Sabbaticals, with greater focus and accountability, are grouped as part of this. There is value in considering the participants' suggestion that secondments and sabbaticals should be cyclic, compulsory and on-going throughout the career of the experienced principal. The learning needs, leadership style and school context would determine the type of sabbatical or secondment offered. Discussions however, voiced the need for greater rigour and accountability from those who take up these opportunities.

Suggestions go as far as to offer that the Education Review Office and Ministry of Education should have a set number of positions for this purpose annually. Benefits of this are seen as rejuvenation for the principal; offering a greater understanding of the role of these education agencies; increasing and challenging the immediate skill base with a direct relevance to their own school; seeing a range of practices across a number of school contexts; further development of networks across sectors and providing the opportunity for principals gain a more national, external perspective.

Secondment opportunities allow then for the development of Deputy Principals, providing practical leadership experience while the principal is on leave. Perhaps then the Aspiring Principals Programme should be compulsory for all deputy and assistant principals to ensure they have sufficient training and understanding of the role, before assuming an Acting Principal role. This suggests that there would be a level of competency in the role before undertaking it and could go some way in offering a solution to the depleting numbers of those aspiring to the principal role. It may then appear less formidable, having tried it while leaders are on secondment. Potentially, there in lies a positive ripple effect.

5.5 Summary

This chapter has provided discussion in understanding principal professional learning in New Zealand and how this happens. Every attempt has been made to remain true to the voices of the participants as comparisons and parallels have been made with the literature reviewed earlier in chapter two.

To achieve this, a profile of effectiveness as a principal in a New Zealand context, leadership styles and paradigms in which they sit, have been explored. These traits of effectiveness are used as a measure, through the diagnosis of needs. Challenges in achieving this have been identified. The conditions, barriers, drivers and filters applied to professional learning

have been explored and the impacts and accountability of professional learning has been discussed. Some positive suggestions have been offered as alternatives and options for consideration if effective, professional learning for experienced principals is to continue.

Du Four et al. (2005) and Hargreaves (2004) demand that educators change and develop. To do so the culture of the profession needs to embrace this. 'A professional learning community is an ethos that infuses every single aspect of a school's operation. When a school becomes a professional learning community, everything in the school looks different than it did before' (Hargreaves, 2004, p. 5).

CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSIONS

6.1 Recommendations and possible actions

This research has had a profound impact on my thinking as a researcher and my practice as an experienced principal. A concluding chapter offering a summary would merely repeat much of the work already presented. Therefore, while uncommon, I take the unusual though deliberate step of offering possible recommendations and actions for further consideration in the form of two lists. This chapter provides ideas for future action.

A. Experienced Principals should:

1. Recognise that their staff respond to leaders who lead learning, are authentic in their actions and speak from a position of knowledge through professional learning. This increases 'credibility'. Inaction in learning can be the demise of this. There is an expectation that the principal continue learning, get involved in the curriculum learning alongside staff, engage in professional conversation, teach children and reconnect with the curriculum.
2. Role-modelling and effectiveness are measured in all areas of the position. This includes work/life balance.
3. Profound professional learning is personalised, self-driven and purposeful. This comes from an in depth understanding of themselves, their professional needs and then through the development of specific goals to meet these. This is followed with accessing professional learning focused on specific goals and needs, and then through committing this learning to action.
4. Consider professional learning that is external to their familiar surroundings, that challenges current practice and takes the principal from their comfort zone. This could be through secondment positions or national roles. A national perspective is important to visioning. This learning enables the principal to be proactive in their leadership.

5. The culture of clusters can be toxic. Review through reflection, the clusters each is involved in. Challenge these clusters to evaluate their purpose and the culture it shares.
6. Effective mentoring can be both supportive and challenging. There is the need for the principal to develop their skills in mentoring. Experienced principals should engage a coach to challenge their professional practice and to understand the role of coachee through experience.
7. Challenge the quality of professional learning providers and critique what is offered to ensure it meets their individual needs and those of your school. Seek out providers that provide the learning in those hard to access areas – emotional intelligence, communication, difficult conversations, coaching and feedback.
8. Appraisals and Accountability – Develop appraisal and accountability systems that are purposeful. Authenticity in their implementation is essential. This may begin with the development of a culture that allows this to happen. The principal must be accountable for their professional learning beyond the presentation of a recount. Consider how accountability can be demonstrated through action.

B. Ministry of Education could:

1. Train and develop the skills of principals and deputy principals in the area of leadership and human resources. Specific skill development in effective communication, feedback, difficult conversations, facilitation, emotional intelligence and collaboration skills.
2. Review the quality of Ministry of Education funded providers and their ability to deliver programmes that meet needs of principal professional learning.
3. Develop a range of tools that enable principals to undertake a needs assessment in an emotionally safe, professional way. This should consider the range of skills and abilities that are specific to the role of the principal.

4. Address the issue of isolation for both rural and urban principals. This could be achieved through the appointment of mentors into support roles for all principals and deputy principals and by providing professional learning in effective mentoring – the skills, the relationships needed and the impact of this.
5. Provide a range of secondment positions for all experienced principals to access over a regular cycle, that allow principals to work in agencies and roles that support education, develop skills outside of their own school, in an on-going, rigorous, and professional environment. Interaction with other educational professionals, external to those of familiar circles, is seen as having the most significant impact on professional learning. A national and/or international connection with this is seen as essential.
6. Provide credible, accessible, needs-driven, personalised on-going programmes for experienced principals throughout their careers. The closure of the Principal Development and Planning Centre has left a gap for the national development of experienced principals. A national perspective and development programme is seen as essential in the development and sustaining of principals in New Zealand Schools.

6.2 Limitations of study

These conclusions offered are limited by the mere fact that this is such a small sample size, based on five semi-structured interviews. While the findings are insightful, they are limited to the contexts of these experienced principals. A wider geographical spread, greater numbers and inter-sector investigation would offer more depth and detail, allowing for greater applicability of the findings. From responses and answers come more questions. From these questions come more challenges and opportunities for research.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

Of interest is the opportunity to work alongside professional learning providers. The purpose of this would be to gain an understanding of the processes worked through to ascertain the types and composition of professional learning. This could provide an understanding of the quality and rigour involved in the development of learning opportunities.

A second area of interest and future research is in analysing the impact of secondments and sabbaticals on professional learning, student achievement and principal hauora. There is a likelihood that research in this area may indicate that sabbatical opportunities have yet unknown benefits.

6.4 Conclusion

The role of the principal is complex. With purposeful professional learning principals grow and develop the skills and qualities that lead them to a higher level of effectiveness. Effective principals recognise the need for personal professional learning. They see the impact this has on them directly and the ripple effect on their staff, community and most importantly, students and their achievement.

The motivation to undertake professional learning for these principals is to support their endeavour of becoming the best professionals they can be and offer the best learning for their students. To 'be the best they can be' means accepting the role of learner as well as leader. As a learner they develop credibility and are seen as authentic role models. The public expectation of principals is great. The pressure of being a public learner is significant. Barriers can be used as excuses not to learn. Despite these complexities, the drive and the motivation to develop prevail among New Zealand principals.

Principals are more than managers and leaders. From humble beginnings as classroom teachers, they have grown into unfamiliar and challenging

roles of school leadership. In New Zealand principals are not required to undertake professional learning or to achieve a qualification before moving into this role. They are not taught the art of human resources, the skills of financial literacy, business management and employment law. The learning for this is only developed while in the role, often through experiences, error and by chance. What is known is that the impact of the principal in the school is significant. The culture they develop has the ability to empower or disempower staff, students and communities.

The ability to be an effective principal comes from purposeful, profound professional learning.

The true value of this research comes from the honest opinions and thoughts of the participants. Therefore the last word should belong to them:

'It all started because someone believed in me. Now it's up to me to believe in others and to grow them. To do this, I have the responsibility to be the best I can be' (Participant 1: An experienced principal learning for their staff, students and their community).

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