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# EXAMINING CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE LEADERSHIP

An investigation into how one school leader, in a primary school setting,  
provides culturally responsive leadership that ensures Maori students  
achieve.

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

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## ABSTRACT

Addressing the achievement disparities that exist within New Zealand education between Maori and non-Maori is a major government priority and is identified by the Ministry of Education as being a critical challenge for school leadership (Ministry of Education, 2008a). Therefore, an important question for school leaders to contemplate is: How do we raise Maori student achievement and eliminate the 'gap', or more specifically, what are the teaching and leadership practices that will make a difference?

The research project presented in this thesis examines how one school leader, in a mainstream primary school setting, provides culturally responsive leadership practice that ensures Maori students achieve. This case study was conducted within a kaupapa Maori theoretical framework and used a mixed methods approach that incorporated the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data included student achievement data in reading, while qualitative data collection and analysis included school documents, participant observations of the principal, a series of semi-structured interviews and a stimulated recall interview with the principal and focus group interviews with the school leadership team and a group of teachers.

The literature reviewed highlighted the centrality of culture in education, the implications for relationships and interactions between teachers and students that are born out of cultural deficit theorising and the potential culturally responsive teaching practices hold for students from minority groups. It also identified a series of effective leadership practices that enable school leaders to influence classroom teaching and have a subsequent impact on student outcomes.

The case study school reflects a mainstream primary school context where the majority of Maori students are achieving at or above national expectations in reading. The findings indicate that the principal is implementing many of the practices that characterise effective leadership in successful schools. The principal's leadership practice is guided by her understandings of culturally responsive leadership, which emphasises the importance of developing quality relationships and quality teaching and learning. Consequently, she has focused her leadership practice on three interrelated strategies that reflect this theorising. The strategies include: prioritising the development of relationships with and between school stakeholders, establishing systems and structures to support the development of relationships and creating a school culture of learning where teachers reject deficit theorising, accept ownership for the performance of students, implement culturally responsive teaching practices and are critically reflective about their practice.

This study suggests that further research examining culturally responsive leadership in mainstream education is needed to provide a more comprehensive profile of a culturally responsive leader in the New Zealand context. However, this report does provide an interesting point for reflection and discussion amongst school leaders who want to raise Maori student achievement and reduce disparities.

## MIHI

*Ko Maungataniwha te maunga*

*Ko Mamari te waka*

*Ko Rangaunu te moana*

*Ko Awanui te awa*

*Ko Waimanoni te marae*

*Ko Ngai Takoto te iwi*

*Ko Therese Ford-Cartwright ahau*

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## CHAPTER ONE - INTRODUCTION

Throughout the past four decades various sectors of New Zealand society have expressed concerns about the low educational achievement levels of Maori students compared with non-Maori (Bishop, Berryman, Taikiwai, & Richardson, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, & O'Sullivan, 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Hemara, 2000; Macfarlane, 2004; Phillips, McNaughton, & Mac Donald, 2001; Te Puni Kokiri, 1998). In 1991 Graham Hingangaroa Smith referred to this situation as the "Maori educational crisis" (p. ii).

I am the deputy principal of a large urban primary school where Maori students constitute 70% of the school roll. In 2007, concerns that I had about the disparities between Maori and non-Maori student achievement in my own school context prompted me to participate in a Ministry of Education funded project called the Quality Teaching Research and Development Programme (QTR&D). QTR&D was a pilot development and research project which aimed to improve the quality of teaching for Maori and Pasifika students (Earl, Timperley, & Stewart, 2009).

Although I was a non-teaching deputy principal, for the period of 12 weeks I assumed a teaching role in the afternoons and worked with Maori students in a Year 5 and 6 composite classroom to complete a science unit. During this time I implemented a number of culturally responsive pedagogical approaches that I was introduced to through my participation in the QTR&D project. I was intrigued by how the students engaged with the learning programme. While my role in the project was about exploring and developing my classroom teaching practice and more specifically developing my understanding of what culturally responsive

teachers *do* in classroom contexts, I could not separate myself from my leadership role and this experience compelled me to query and contemplate what culturally responsive leaders would/should/could *do* in their wider school contexts to ensure that Maori students engage with learning and subsequently achieve.

Through my participation in the QTR&D project I have developed an ongoing and deepening interest in the area of culturally responsive leadership practice. This interest and the question I contemplated about culturally responsive leadership in 2007 provided the motivation for my choice of topic of this thesis.

In this study I am interested in exploring the leadership theories and practice that exist within a mainstream primary school setting where Maori students are achieving. I would like to know what the principal in such a setting understands about culturally responsive leadership practice and how this theorising translates into practice. I would also like to know what other leaders and teaching practitioners in the same school understand about culturally responsive leadership theory and practice.

The notion of investigating the relationship between leadership practice and student achievement is supported in literature (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood, Seashore Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Robinson, 2007; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). In their Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) iteration on school leadership Robinson et al. (2009) state that “school leaders can indeed make a difference to student achievement” (p. 35) and they propose that in New Zealand schools, “the fundamental challenge for educational leaders across the system is to raise achievement and reduce disparity” (p. 35). Additionally,

they suggest that the second challenge for educational leadership is to, “improve educational provision for and responsiveness to Maori students” (p. 54).

In recent years the role that school leaders have in raising Maori student achievement has also been emphasised in a number of Ministry of Education publications including *The Kiwi Leadership for Principals* document (Ministry of Education, 2008a) which stipulates that addressing the Maori educational crisis is a critical leadership challenge:

We face a number of challenges that require committed and responsive leadership at all levels. A critical leadership challenge is reflected in the disproportionately large number of Maori and Pasifika students who are not achieving to their potential within the current education system. These challenges require leaders who are committed to ongoing professional learning, who are receptive to new evidence as to what works and who are skilled at relating to students and their school communities. (p. 4)

The Professional Leadership Plan (Ministry of Education, 2009) also highlights the importance of school leaders providing leadership that is responsive to the aspirations of Maori students and school leadership is specifically identified within Focus Area Four of the *Maori Education Strategy, Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success* (Ministry of Education, 2008b). These publications serve as evidence that the Ministry of Education expect school leadership to respond to the challenge of raising Maori student achievement. However, what is not so obvious in the documentation is a clear definition or model of what this response should be.

This has been partially addressed by *Te Kotahitanga*, another Ministry of Education research and professional development project which

commenced in 2001 and is ongoing. Through an analysis of the experiences of Maori students in mainstream secondary schools, Te Kotahitanga is providing many secondary school principals, senior leaders and teachers with professional development and educational reform models that support the implementation of culturally responsive practices to improve the achievement of Maori students (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, 2008). He Kakano is another secondary school based professional development programme which commenced in 2010 and specifically focuses on supporting and developing school leadership.

While research projects such as Te Kotahitanga and He Kakano provide evidence to support secondary school leaders in their endeavours to provide culturally responsive leadership, with the focus on the secondary school sector, there is currently a lack of research that explores culturally responsive leadership in mainstream primary school settings. An examination of culturally responsive leadership in primary school settings is valid and important because while patterns of underachievement for Maori students are “more clearly exhibited in secondary schools, the foundations for these problems commence in the primary school years” (Bishop, 2008, p. 48). Bishop (2008) also cites other research (Crooks, Hamilton & Caygill, 2000; Wylie, Thompson, & Lythe, 1999) and asserts that upon entering primary school there are achievement differentials between Maori and non-Maori which become more prevalent by Years 4 and 5.

This situation illustrates the need for research that provides evidence of school leadership practices that facilitate educational success for Maori students in mainstream primary school settings. According to Robinson et

al. (2009) Maori and Pasifika students represent the fastest growing groups in the population, which makes the equity issue “all the more urgent for school leadership” (p. 60).

It is hoped the information obtained from this research will raise awareness and support primary school leaders to develop an understanding of culturally responsive leadership practice. The information gathered from this study could provide a point of reflection for, and potentially assist those responsible for planning and providing professional development to principals and the wider school leadership community.

The thesis is organised in six chapters. Chapter One provides information about me as the researcher, explains my interest in the topic and also offers justification for this topic. Chapter Two reviews a selection of both national and international literature to provide the theoretical basis for this research. Chapter Three outlines the methodology, methods, data collection and analysis and a review of ethical considerations of the study. Chapter Four presents the research findings and Chapter Five reviews the main findings in relation to the research questions and the literature. Chapter Six summarises the findings, identifies the limitations of the study and details the recommendations that have emerged from the research.

## **CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Introduction**

This research is concerned with examining leadership practices that ensure Maori students achieve in mainstream primary school settings. The literature review begins with an overview of current New Zealand research detailing Maori student achievement and experiences in mainstream school education. It then examines both national and international literature pertaining to the impact of culture in education and discusses research into the development of culturally responsive pedagogies. An analysis of research pertaining to effective school leadership practice will also be discussed and the chapter concludes with a description of culturally responsive leadership.

### **Maori students' achievement and experiences in mainstream education**

In their summary of the current situation for Year 4 and 5 students, Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al. (2007) cite extensive research from a range of studies (Crooks, Hamilton & Caygill, 2000; Project asTTle Team, 2006; TIMSS, 2002-2003; Wylie, Thompson, & Lythe, 1999) which show gaps between the achievement levels of Maori and non-Maori students. In mainstream secondary schools the statistics also indicate that in comparison to non-Maori, the overall academic achievement of Maori is low. The general situation for Maori is aptly summarised in this statement by Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al. (2007):

Statistical data have consistently shown that, compared with non-Maori students, Maori students consistently underachieve, are stood down and are suspended at greater rates than other

student populations in this country, opt out of schooling (by leaving before the official leaving age of 16 or being exempted from schooling) at greater rates than other student groups, and when they leave, are less qualified. (p. 10)

While the gaps between the achievement levels of Maori and non-Maori students present a concern for the education community, Phillips et al. (2001) suggest that this is not a new problem stating that, “‘gaps’ have been identified in literacy achievement associated with ethnicity and type of school since at least 1930” (p. 11). They assert that the challenge of resolving this problem and reducing the gap has been the focus of a number of intervention and improvement programmes:

In the early 70s there was a major effort to improve the situation. Though this was a national effort to improve literacy overall there was a particular concern for underachieving schools (ERIC, 1980). This issue again came to the forefront with the recent position statements from a Ministerial Task Force. (Literacy Task Force, 1999) and a Literacy Expert Group (1999). (p. 11)

Within the international context Hattie’s (2003a) analysis of New Zealand student achievement indicates that the bottom 20% of students, many of whom are Maori, are falling behind at a rate that is greater than any other Western country and that this has consequently created the widest achievement gap in the OECD. Based on these statistics it is suggested that New Zealand could soon have “the greatest proportion of physically present but psychologically absent students” (Hattie, 2003a, p. 6). Despite the numerous studies and intervention programmes mentioned previously, Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al. (2007) contend that few long-term, sustainable solutions have been identified.

In recent years there has been some recognition from the Ministry of Education that Maori students are “not receiving the value from education that they should” (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 5) and that “the system was not working well enough for many Maori” (Ministry of Education, 2006, p. 3). This acknowledgement stands in contrast to some historical perceptions of the underachievement by Maori students which reflected the opinion that the problem of underachievement was caused by Maori students themselves, and/or their families. An example of such assumptions is evident in Lovegrove’s study in 1966 which concluded that, “the reasons for Maori retardation are more probably attributable to the generally deprived nature of Maori home conditions” (p. 31).

Educators are now being challenged to look beyond cultural deficit theorising (Shields, Bishop, & Mazawi, 2005; Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; McKinley, 2000; Valencia, 1997) and consider systemic factors that influence learning and achievement. The need for educators to refrain from focusing on cultural deficits to explain underachievement is emphasised by Ryan (1976) in the following statement:

We are dealing it would seem, not so much with culturally deprived children as with culturally deprived schools. And the task to be accomplished is not to revise, and amend and repair deficient children, but to alter and transform the atmosphere and operations of the schools to which we commit these children. Only by changing the nature of the educational experience can we change the product. To continue to define the difficulty as inherent in the raw material, the children, is plainly to blame the victim and to acquiesce in the continuation of educational inequity. (p. 61-62)

Bishop and Glynn (1999) contend that it is this deficit theorising that has dominated New Zealand education and changing the nature of the educational experience of Maori students will require teachers and school leaders to develop cultural consciousness, create culturally safe schools (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh & Bateman, 2007) and as MacFarlane (2004) pointedly suggests, to 'listen to culture'. However, if educators are going to genuinely consider culture in their respective school contexts, in the first instance they need to understand what culture is and in the second instance they need to understand how culture has impacted on and shaped the current educational landscape.

## **Culture**

### **Defining culture**

Culture and cultural process are so central to human development that human beings are defined in terms of their cultural participation (Rogoff, 2003). In explaining the power of culture, Bruner (1996) asserts that the human mind could not exist without culture because the evolution of the mind "is linked to the development of life where "reality" is represented by a symbolism shared by members of a cultural community" (p. 3). Bruner (1996) elaborates on his explanation and proposes that it is this shared symbolism that allows the community to conserve, elaborate, pass on and maintain their cultural identity.

In their definition of culture Weiss, Kreider, Lopez and Chatman (2005) suggest that culture refers to the shared values, norms, beliefs and symbols that underpin what is acceptable within a given society. Quest

Rapuara (1992) provide a detailed definition that describes how culture is conceptualised, interpreted and demonstrated:

Culture is what holds a community together, giving a common framework of meaning. It includes how people communicate with each other, how we make decisions, how we structure our families and who we think is important. It expresses our values towards land and time and our attitudes towards work and play, good and evil, reward and punishment. Culture is preserved in language, symbols and customs and celebrated in art, music, drama, literature, religion and social gatherings. It constitutes the collective memory of the people and the collective heritage which will be handed down to future generations. (p. 7)

A visual model of culture was developed by Hall in 1976 in the form of an ice berg. This analogy has been used to represent the visible aspects of culture which can be seen above the surface such as behaviours that people demonstrate. Below the surface of the water is the larger, invisible proportion of the ice berg which represents the underlying beliefs and values of a given culture.

Culture connects people in a myriad of ways and ultimately informs how they behave, interact, and make sense of their world. Culture infiltrates all aspects of human life and according to Bruner (1996), the influence of culture is not limited to the linguistic and historical commonalities that collections of people share, rather it extends into “institutions that specify more concretely what roles people play and what status and respect these are accorded” (p. 29). In this regard the institution of education is not exempt from cultural infiltration.

## **Culture and education**

Many Western societies reflect a history of British colonisation, where colonial education was essentially used as a tool to both exercise control over the indigenous populations and to effectively build the British Empire (Rogoff, 2003). Indigenous populations were represented as the pathologized 'Other' (Shields et al., 2005) with some describing them as being "fallen, depraved, wretched, in their habits they are lazy, and under circumstance of need they are dishonest" (McNair & Rumley, 1981, p. 61).

Consequently, colonising authorities rejected the potential contribution that coloured or minority cultures could make and the education system was developed within a framework that reflected Western social history, cultural attributes, values and aspirations (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Shields et al., 2005; Scheurich & Young, 1997). This practice of prioritising the dominant Western culture and rejecting minority cultures is referred to by Scheurich and Young (1997) as 'epistemological racism'. They suggest that current mainstream policies and practices are a result of the culture and history of the dominant race and therefore, "logically reflect and reinforce that social history and the controlling position of that racial group (while excluding the epistemologies of other races/cultures), and that this has negative results for people of color in general" (p. 13).

In New Zealand, Maori peoples' experience of colonisation mirrors the experiences of other indigenous populations (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Consedine & Consedine, 2005; Smith, 1999). Throughout this period in history Maori were portrayed as being "'less than' and 'inferior to' everyone and everything European" (Consedine & Consedine, 2005, p. 210). Bishop and Glynn (1999) contend the education system that transpired out of this discourse not only failed to recognise Maori

worldviews, it also belittled and attempted to eradicate aspects of Maori culture such as language. Therefore, in order to participate in colonial education, Maori students had to abandon their cultural identity upon entering the school gate (Bishop et al., 2003).

It is suggested by Shields et al. (2005) that cultural deficit theorising in education is born out of our colonial roots and has subsequently resulted in pathologizing policies and practices which emphasise faults and inadequacies in students:

Despite increased awareness of, and theorizing about, pathologizing practices and deficit thinking, most of the discourse has remained at an abstract level. Moreover, the literature has remained relatively silent about how educators can reject deficit thinking and the pathologizing of students' lived experiences. (p. 3)

This provides an explanation as to why mainstream educational policies and practices "continue to be developed within a framework of colonialism" (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 12) which reflects "a structural relationship of Pakeha dominance and Maori subjection" (Walker, 1990, p. 10). The enduring impact for Maori students in mainstream education is encapsulated in this statement by Bishop et al. (2003):

What precludes significant advancement being made in New Zealand, in attempts to address Maori educational achievement in mainstream institutions, including classrooms, is that many current educational policies and practices, as in most western countries, were developed and continue to be developed within a pattern of power imbalances. These power imbalances favour cultural deficit explanations (victim blaming) of Maori students' educational performance that perpetuates the ongoing colonising project of pathologising the lives of these students, and maintains the power over what constitutes appropriate classroom interactions in the hands of teachers without any reference to the culture of Maori students. (p. 5)

## **The impact of culture on teaching and learning**

Pai (1990) contends that teachers' cultural orientations can be a powerful influence in determining the ways in which they approach teaching in classroom contexts. She states:

Our goals, how we teach, what we teach, how we relate to children and each other are rooted in the norms of our culture. Our society's predominant worldview and cultural norms are so deeply ingrained in how we educate children that we seldom think about the possibility that there may be other different but equally legitimate and effective approaches to teaching and learning. (p. 229)

Gay (2000) concurs and proposes that many teachers subscribe to the notion and attitude that good teaching transcends ethnicity, culture and context. However, in subscribing to this ideology she cautions that these teachers "fail to realise that their standards of "goodness" in teaching and learning are culturally determined and are not the same for all ethnic groups" (p. 22). Furthermore, when teachers disregard the pervasive influence of their own culture in the classroom and decontextualize teaching and learning from the student's culture, this can have a detrimental effect on student's attitudes and behaviours and could subsequently impact on their achievement potential (Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2007; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

## **The impact of culture on mainstream education in New Zealand context**

In 1973 Ranginui Walker observed the mono-cultural demographic in New Zealand which reflected a situation where teachers were predominantly European/Pakeha. Walker argued that Pakeha teachers theorised and delivered education through a "single cultural frame of

reference” (p. 4) which is not necessarily relevant to Maori students and consequently the students develop ambivalent attitudes toward education.

The ambivalent attitudes of Maori students that Walker identified back in 1973 were evident when Bishop et al. interviewed a range of engaged and non-engaged Maori students from mainstream secondary schools in 2003. In their discussions with both groups of students, most reported that for a range of reasons being Maori at school was a negative experience. Engaged students frequently disassociated themselves from non-engaged Maori students by, “labelling the others as Maori “over there”, in effect perpetuating negative stereotyping they themselves identified and complained about, while at the same time perpetuating the schools’ attempts to assimilate them into the majority culture” (Bishop et al., 2003, p. 57).

Bishop et al. (2003) detail other examples of the impact of the majority culture on the experiences of Maori students which include students being aware that teachers had low expectations of them and that Maori were not seen as achievers which resulted in many students conforming to negative stereotypes. Crucially, students felt that their cultural knowledge was not appreciated to the same extent as other cultures and that essentially being Maori was not valued.

The importance of understanding the impact of culture in education, cannot be underestimated. The findings of Bishop et al. (2003) in New Zealand education are consistent with Gay’s (2000) previously mentioned observations in American education and unfortunately nearly four decades after Ranginui Walker raised concerns about the single cultural frame of reference in education lacking relevance to Maori students – in

many New Zealand mainstream schools the picture remains the same (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007; Hattie, 2003a; McKinley, 2000; Phillips et al., 2001).

### **Changing the educational experiences of Maori students**

Excellent classroom teaching practice is the most significant and powerful influence on student achievement (Alton-Lee, 2003; Hattie, 1999; 2003b) however, Durie (2006) contends that the low expectations that many mainstream teachers have of Maori students have prevented these students from accessing excellent classroom teaching practice and they have become self-fulfilling prophecies of failure. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al. (2007) support Durie's contention and assert that:

A number of theories have been offered as a means of explaining Maori underachievement, however, it is the discursive positions that teachers occupy that is the key to their being able to make a difference or not for Maori students. (p. 5-6)

Numerous scholars (Berryman, 2008; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999) propose that in order to change these expectations and shift the current discourse, teachers need to examine their own cultural assumptions and transform the traditional classrooms that have characterised mainstream education into discursive classrooms.

## **Transforming traditional classrooms into discursive classrooms**

In his appraisal of traditional method classrooms, Young (1991) contends that 'transmission' of the set curriculum is the main objective. Bishop et al. (2003) draw on Young's (1991) description and explain that within traditional method classrooms teachers assume a dominant position as the 'font of knowledge', and that this knowledge is:

Guided by curriculum documents and possibly text that are created from within and by the dominant discourse.....Far from being neutral, these documents actively reproduce the cultural and social hegemony of the dominant groups at the expense of marginalised groups. (p. 8)

In such classrooms students are the passive recipients of this knowledge and denied a voice and the opportunity to, "bring their own experiences, sense-making processes or theorising abilities (their cultures) to the issue/text/lesson" (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 149). Bishop et al. (2003) further suggest that teachers positioned within this discourse promote 'control' relationship patterns, and that failure to critically analyse their teaching practice commonly results in them viewing student's inadequacies in terms of deficit theories.

Discursive classrooms represent the antithesis of traditional method classrooms because discursive approaches allow students to "enter into the discourse of the wider culture/s by means of promoting different interaction patterns (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 145). Young (1991) explains that such an approach to classroom interactions positions, "the learner as pedagogical partner, rather than pedagogical object" (p. 87).

When teachers shift away from deficit discourses (which view the learner as a pedagogical object) and discursively repositioned themselves, (Davies

& Harre, 1997) they develop an awareness of their own cultural positioning and consciously ensure that it is students' cultural discourses (not their own) that provide the foundation of teaching and learning (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). The resulting practice reflects what Gay (2000) describes as culturally responsive pedagogy.

### **Culturally responsive pedagogies**

Anthropologists' endeavours to acknowledge culture and improve education for culturally diverse students, has resulted in a wide range of terms and labels (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Ladson-Billings introduced the term 'cultural relevance' (1992; 1994; 1995) and while Gay (2000) also acknowledges the many different names given to teaching practices that reference students' culture, she asserts that in terms of the terminology, "the ideas about why it is important to make classroom practice more consistent with the cultural orientations of ethnically diverse students, and how this can be done, are virtually identical" (p. 29). Based on this assertion Gay (2000) concludes that the term "culturally responsive pedagogy" encompasses the ideas and explanations of a wide variety of scholars and these ideas provide the foundation of her definition:

Culturally responsive teaching can be defined as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them. It teaches to and through the strengths of these students. It is culturally validating and affirming. (p. 29)

In this sense culturally responsive teaching practices go beyond incorporating cultural myths and metaphors into classroom programmes (Earl et al., 2009) as it requires teachers to engage and interact with students and their families in a way that enables them to understand the

reality that is their students' lives (Villegas & Lucas, 2002; 2007). Such pedagogies empower learners by reducing teacher instruction and promoting shared ownership in classrooms so that students become "active agents sharing in the construction of their own learning" (Glynn, Wearmouth, & Berryman, 2006, p. 94). Culturally responsive teachers also use a wide variety of strategies to create inclusive classroom contexts where students are encouraged to acknowledge and celebrate diversity and learn from and with each other (Gay, 2000; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

### **Culturally responsive pedagogy in New Zealand**

A concerted effort to acknowledge that 'culture counts' (Bishop & Glynn, 1999) and raise achievement for Maori students has resulted in an increasing awareness of culturally responsive pedagogies in New Zealand, and there is now a significant body of research and literature to inform and guide culturally responsive practice (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop, et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Macfarlane, 1997; 2004, Macfarlane et al., 2007). Te Kotahitanga is one such example of a significant research and professional development programme.

From a Kaupapa Maori research theoretical position, the Te Kotahitanga research team examined Maori cultural metaphors that could potentially provide solutions for the achievement disparities between Maori and non-Maori in mainstream education. Specifically, Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy (2007) were interested in drawing on Maori metaphors which were "inclusive and focused on the importance of relationships and interactions for success in education" (p. 9). The Maori metaphors that were examined in this phase of the project reflect

metaphors that Smith (1997) identified as being essential to Maori medium schooling, namely; rangatiratanga, taonga tuku iho, ako, kia piki ake nga raruraru o te kainga, whanau and kaupapa.

These metaphors were translated and expanded to describe a framework that could represent an appropriate pedagogy for Maori students in mainstream schools: *Tino ranagatiratanga - self-determination*, refers to Maori having the right and ability to define their destiny. This includes the practice of powhiri, which refers to providing opportunities to meet and greet and formally establish relationships. This also includes the practice of hui which involves providing opportunities to engage in interactions that recognise the mana (power/status) of participants and allows participants to contribute to the decision making processes. *Taonga tuku iho – cultural treasures are handed down*, describes a situation where, Maori language, culture, knowledge and values are considered natural and normal and guide interactions. *Ako – reciprocal learning*, recognises the mutual learning that happens between the school and Maori, the process reflects a learning partnership that is interchangeable. *Kia piki ake I nga raruraru o te kainga – mediation of socio-economic and home difficulties*, refers to building partnerships between home and school and including family and whanau on terms that they understand and approve of. *Whanau – extended family*, involves fostering whanau relationships so that there is a sense of family and belonging within schools. *Kaupapa – collective vision*, relates to a philosophy for achieving excellence and success for Maori students (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007, p. 10-14).

After examining these Maori cultural metaphors, Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy (2007) suggested that this pattern of metaphors could guide and support educators to create the classroom learning contexts that

could facilitate engagement and improve the achievement for students by, developing teaching and learning relationships:

Where power is shared between self-determining individuals within non-dominating relations of interdependence; where culture counts; learning is interactive, dialogic and spirals; participants are connected and committed to one another through the establishment of a common vision for what constitutes excellence in educational outcomes. (p. 15)

Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy (2007) further suggest that this pattern reflects a combination of culturally responsive pedagogy described by Gay (2000) and Villegas & Lucas (2002) and a pedagogy of relations described by Sidorkin (2002) and Cummins (1995). They define this merger of the concepts as being a “Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations” (p. 15).

### **Implementing a Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations**

After listening to the experiences of Maori students, whanau, principals and teachers, the Effective Teaching Profile (ETP) was developed (Bishop et al, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007). The ETP was described as being the practical representation of the culturally responsive pedagogy of relations and was implemented in classrooms to examine what this pedagogy would actually look like in practice.

The ETP was based on the premise that effective teachers of Maori students create culturally appropriate and responsive contexts for learning in their classrooms. Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh and Teddy (2008) summarise and explain the ETP:

Fundamental to the ETP is teachers’ understanding the need to explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Maori students’ educational achievement levels, and their

taking an agentic position in their theorising about their practice; that is, practitioners expressing their professional commitment and responsibility to bringing about change in Maori students' educational achievement by accepting professional responsibility for the learning of their students. (p. 736)

These two central understandings constitute the first part of the ETP, while the second part reflects six relationships and interactions that can be observed in effective teachers' classrooms:

*Manaakitanga*: They care for the students as culturally-located human beings above all else.

*Mana motuhake*: They care for the performance of their students.

*Whakapairingatanga*: They are able to create a secure, well-managed learning environment by incorporating pedagogical knowledge with pedagogical imagination.

*Wananga*: They are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Maori students as Maori.

*Ako*: They can use a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners.

*Kotahitanga*: They promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Maori students. (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007, p. 26)

In Te Kotahitanga the ETP was implemented with support from the professional development programme and a range of instruments and measures were used to analyse both qualitative and quantitative sets of data. The analysis demonstrated positive results with regard to the ETP supporting the development of good relationships between teachers and

students and the establishment of new and more interactive approaches to teaching and learning as a result of emerging discursive repositioning by teachers. Another significant finding reflected “improvements in numeracy for Maori students in the classrooms of teachers who have repositioned themselves discursively and literacy gains for all Maori students, the greatest gains, however were for those in the lowest stanine groups” (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007, p. 2). Additionally, achievement levels of students who were not Maori also improved illustrating that this culturally responsive pedagogy of relations has the potential to benefit all students, not just Maori.

This research serves as evidence that the combination of teachers rejecting deficit theorising, accepting ownership and responsibility for student achievement and implementing culturally responsive pedagogical practices can be a powerful mechanism for changing mainstream education and subsequently improving Maori student achievement.

Recognition of the need to reform the education system, the development of culturally responsive pedagogies and research initiatives such as Te Kotahitanga are relatively new movements in New Zealand having been instigated within the last two decades. Here in 2010, addressing the underachievement of Maori students remains a matter of national interest and within various Ministry of Education publications (ERO, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2008a; 2008b), school leaders have been identified as the people who are responsible for leading and facilitating the changes that need to happen within schools to improve Maori student achievement.

Emphasising the role of school leaders in raising the achievement levels of students is appropriate given that in a review of leadership literature Leithwood et al. (2004) found that, “leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school” (p. 5). Much of the literature discussed so far has focused on how culturally responsive pedagogies can shape and influence teaching and learning and it has been acknowledged that classroom teaching practice is the most significant influence on student achievement. However, given that it is the role and responsibility of school leaders to establish school systems and classroom conditions that facilitate student learning, (Mazano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Robinson et al., 2009) a closer examination of effective school leadership practice is warranted.

## **School leadership**

### **Defining school leadership**

In attempting to define school leadership, Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999) conclude that this is a difficult task as there is no agreed or clear definition. This assertion is supported by Fidler (2000) who states that, “no one theory nor any one approach can subsume the complexities of leadership and indeed a search for an all encompassing theory may be illusory” (p. 59).

In their synthesis of school leadership, Robinson et al. (2009) define the concept of leadership by three important features: “It includes both positional and distributed leadership, it views leadership as being highly fluid and it sees leadership as embedded in specific tasks and situations”

(p. 66). The authors elaborate on their explanation of distributed leadership in their definition stating:

It is important that distributed as well as positional leadership is included within our overall definition, for while our primary focus is principals, we recognise that - especially in larger schools - formal leadership responsibilities are held by all those in senior and middle management roles. By including distributed leadership, we also recognise how leadership may be exercised by anyone whose ideas or actions are influential in the context of specific tasks and activities. (p. 66)

The second characteristic of leadership refers to the ability of participants within a group to transverse between the roles of influencing colleagues and being influenced by colleagues. This characteristic is consistent with Smith's (1997) previously mentioned Maori metaphor of *ako* which encompasses the notion of reciprocal learning. The third characteristic, where leadership is described as being specific to tasks and situations, illustrates the link between leadership and expertise so that within groups, people can be influential because their ideas and actions, "are recognised by others as useful for progressing the goal" (Robinson et al., 2009, p. 67).

### **The impact of school leadership**

Robinson et al. (2009) synthesis sits alongside a growing body of international literature and research that details the impact of school leadership (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004). Bush and Glover (2003) explain that the interest in investigating the effects of school leadership is associated with the "widely accepted significance of leadership for school effectiveness" (p. 4). This position is also supported by Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989) who assert that, "outstanding leadership has invariably emerged as a key characteristic of

outstanding schools. There can no longer be doubt that those seeking quality in education must ensure its presence" (p. 99).

In 2007 Robinson suggests that "the question of how much impact school leaders have on student outcomes is a flawed one, because the answer surely depends on what it is that leaders do" (p. 5). Robinson et al. (2009) explored this concept of what effective leaders do further by investigating the question: "What is the impact of various types of leadership on student outcomes?" (p. 38). The authors used two meta-analyses of research on leadership to address this question with the first comparing the impact of transformational leadership and pedagogical leadership.

### *Transformational leadership*

Transformational leadership has been traditionally concerned with establishing effective relationships and developing organisational vision and inspiration (Bass, 1985; Leithwood, Tomlinson & Genge, 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005). According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2000) this approach to leadership within schools fundamentally, "aims to foster capacity development and higher levels of personal commitment to organisational goals on the part of leaders' colleagues" (p. 113).

### *Pedagogical leadership*

Pedagogical leadership (also referred to as instructional leadership) is concerned with establishing clear educational goals, promotion of professional development, close monitoring of curriculum planning and evaluation of teachers and teaching practice (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Hallinger, 2005; Robinson et al., 2009). This form of leadership practice

requires leaders to have a comprehensive understanding of teaching and learning pedagogy (Day, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1999) and is emphasised by Sergiovanni (1998) as a more effective alternative to other forms of leadership in improving schools. He states that: “pedagogical leadership invests in capacity building by developing social and academic capital for students, and intellectual and professional capital for teachers. This emphasis on human capital development provides the conditions necessary to improve levels of student learning and development” (p. 37).

The comparative analysis conducted by Robinson et al. (2009) concluded that the impact of pedagogical leadership is four times that of transformational leadership. However, the authors caution against setting up an artificial opposition between these two types of leadership as there is an, “increasing convergence of transformational and pedagogical leadership theory as relationship skills come to be included in measures of pedagogical leadership and studies of transformational leadership gain a sharper pedagogical focus” (p. 93).

### *Leadership dimensions*

In their detailed examination of research on the impact of particular leadership dimensions, Robinson et al. (2009) identified five dimensions that impact directly on student outcomes. Dimension 1 - Establishing goals and expectations and Dimension 3 - Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum had the same relative impact which reflected small to moderate effect size. Dimension 2 - Resourcing strategically and Dimension 5 - Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment both had small effect sizes, while Dimension 4 - Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development had a large effect

size which was “twice that of any of the other dimensions” (p. 38). A further three leadership dimension are identified within the BES from an analysis of indirect evidence of leadership and these dimensions focus on, “the creation of educationally powerful connections; engagement in constructive problem talk; and selection, development and use of smart tools” (p. 38).

A significant finding of the analysis completed by Robinson et al. (2009) is the relatively large impact of school leaders promoting and participating in teacher learning and development. The critical suggestion here is that there is a clear link between school leaders participating in learning with teachers and student outcomes. The authors emphasise that participating in learning refers to leaders involving themselves as leaders or learners or both, “in structured situations, such as staff meetings and professional development workshops, and informal situations; for example, corridor discussions about specific teaching problems” (p. 101). Shared learning experiences provide a forum for leaders and teachers to reflect together (Sergiovanni, 1998) and as such reflective practices present a means of making sense of learning experiences (Day, 2003; Robertson, 2005).

### **Effective school leadership**

In their previously mentioned summary of major research findings on successful school leadership Leithwood et al. (2004) identified three broad categories and sets of practices that constitute the ‘basics’ of successful school leadership. These sets of practices include setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation. Furthermore, in their three year study of the impact of school leadership on pupil outcomes, Day et al. (2007) acknowledge the same three sets of basic

practices of successful leadership identified by Leithwood et al. (2004). However, Day et al. (2007) have slightly modified this framework of basic practices by extending the titles of the first two categories and by identifying an additional set of practices. Essentially their study “conceptualised successful leadership practices within four broad categories – building vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, redesigning the organisation, and managing curriculum and pedagogy” (p. x). In both studies specific leadership practices and behaviours are detailed within each of the broad categories.

### ***Building vision and setting direction***

According to Leithwood et al. (2004), successful leaders identify and articulate a vision, foster acceptance of group goals, create high performance expectations, monitor organisational performance and promote effective communication throughout the organisation. Assisting staff to develop both short-term and long-term goals to achieve the vision and the goals for teaching and learning is also highlighted by Day et al. (2007) within this category.

### ***Understanding and developing people***

Endeavours to develop people within the school included leaders offering intellectual stimulation, providing individualised support and “providing appropriate models of best practice and beliefs considered fundamental to the organisation”(Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 9). Day et al. (2007) extended this category to include an emphasis on leaders understanding people and suggest that successful leadership practice involved leaders providing professional development that was specific to both individual and school

needs and this development was specifically focused on “curriculum, pedagogy and assessment – especially the assessment of students’ academic performance” (p. xi).

### *Redesigning the organisation*

Within this category Leithwood et al. (2004) suggest that effective leaders focus on strengthening district and school cultures, modifying organisational structures and building collaborative processes. Day et al. (2007) emphasise that within this category leaders are motivated to develop a productive professional culture where raising the quality of teaching and learning is paramount. In their study Day et al. (2007) found that successful leaders’ efforts in this area had resulted in “a more rigorous culture of responsibility with greater individual and collective accountability”(p. xii). Additionally, in schools where this approach to leadership was evident, a ‘can do’ or ‘success’ culture existed and pupil failure had become an unacceptable outcome of teaching. Developing productive relationships and connecting the school with the wider community are also characteristics of leadership identified within this category with the findings reflecting “a high level of trust, mutual support and openness among staff” (Day et al., 2007, p. xii).

### *Managing curriculum and pedagogy*

In managing the curriculum and pedagogy, Day et al. (2007) assert that effective leaders prioritise, “the recruitment, development and retention of a stable staff team, which is deeply committed to meeting a wide range of pupils’ academic, social and emotional needs” (p. xii). In this regard managing and supporting the teaching and learning programme involves

leaders, “regularly observing classroom activities, working with teachers directly to improve their teaching after observation, sometimes through coaching and mentoring” (Day et al., 2007, p.xiii) and using pupil achievement data to monitor student progress and keep the school focused on the core work of teaching.

Many of the leadership dimensions identified in Robinson et al. (2009) are consistent with the competencies, orientations and considerations of effective leadership detailed in Leithwood et al. (2004) and Day et al. (2007). However, rather than making a distinction between tasks and relationships, Robinson (2007) suggests that effective school leaders “do not get relationships right and then tackle the educational challenges – they incorporate both sets of constraints into their problem-solving” (p. 9). This position is supported in Robinson et al. (2009) who emphasise that each of the leadership dimensions encompass relationship and organisational aspects. The authors use the example of goal setting to illustrate this point, “effective leadership involves not only determining the goal and the standard to be achieved (task aspect) but also ensuring that staff understand and become committed to the goal (relationship aspects)” (p. 94). The goals and tasks therefore have to be consistent with the shared vision that connects school community members.

### *Learning communities*

Timperley, Phillips, Wiseman & Fung (2003) assert that the schools that are most successful in raising student achievement reflect strong professional learning communities. They suggest that successful schools establish professional learning communities that concentrate on building teachers’ professional knowledge and skills and that within such schools

“teachers’ efforts, individually and collectively, are focused on the goal of improving student learning and achievement and making the school as a whole become a high-performing organisation” (p. 3). However, Bishop, O’Sullivan and Berryman (2010) stress that a professional learning community does not develop of its own accord, as it is a necessary product of leadership.

The role of leaders in developing learning communities is emphasised in Robinson et al. (2009). They state:

To establish such communities, leaders may need to challenge or change cultures that are not focused on collegial discussion of the relationship between what is taught and what is learned.

Associated with effective professional communities is a strong sense of collective responsibility and accountability for student achievement and well-being. Improved student outcomes strengthen teachers’ sense of efficacy and collective responsibility and this, in turn, encourages them to greater effort and persistence. The result is a virtuous circle, in which teacher confidence and competence and student success are mutually enhancing. (p. 40)

Sergiovanni (1998) also highlights the critical role that leaders have in engendering collaborative commitment and suggests that leaders develop human capital within schools by helping schools to become “caring, focused and inquiring communities within which teachers work together as members of a community of practice” (p. 37).

A community of practice is described by Wenger, Mc Dermott and Snyder (2002) as being:

Groups of people who share a concern, a set of problems, or passion about a topic, and who deepen their knowledge and expertise in the area by interacting on an ongoing basis... These people meet because they find value in their interactions. As

they spend time together, they typically share information, insight and advice... They discuss their situations, their aspirations and their needs. They ponder common issues, explore ideas...They may create tools...manuals and other documents – or they may simply develop a tacit understanding that they share....However they accumulate knowledge, they become informally bound by the value that they find in learning together. (p. 4-5)

Within a school context Wearmouth, Berryman and Glynn (2009) suggest that communities of practice can thrive when all stakeholders are empowered to participate in decision-making, “Combining the needs of the students (and staff and the local community) with the needs of the school is crucial – institutions succeed if they engage the creativity and strengths of their own stakeholders” (p. 10).

The concept of the professional learning community therefore, is extended in a community of practice to encompass people who are located outside of the official roles of leaders and teachers such as parents, extended family, and other community members. This highlights the importance of school leaders engaging and connecting meaningfully with their respective communities (Fullan, 2005; Tomlinson, 2002).

The ability of leaders to build and develop relational trust within their school communities is also emphasised by Robinson et al. (2009) as being significant. They state:

No matter how sound a leader’s pedagogical knowledge and problem-solving ability may be, their impact will be limited if relationships within the school are characterised by an absence of trust. In everyday, practical situations, effective leaders develop trust relationships by establishing norms of respect; showing personal regard for staff parents, and students; demonstrating competence and integrity by modelling appropriate behaviour; following through when expectations

are not met; acting in ways that are consistent with their talk; and challenging dysfunctional attitudes and behaviours. (p. 47)

Many tasks, skills and knowledge identified in the research of successful leadership are consistent with the characteristics of culturally responsive pedagogy discussed earlier in this review. This connection suggests that there is merit in considering leadership practice in relation to culturally responsive pedagogy. Juetten (2003) supports this viewpoint proposing that providing culturally responsive leadership will be one of the most important roles for contemporary school leaders.

### **Culturally responsive school leadership**

According to Johnson (2006) there have been few attempts to apply a culturally responsive framework to the study of leadership within schools. However, Johnson (2006) does cite studies of successful African American leaders (Bloom & Erlandson, 2003; Dillard, 1995; Lomotey 1989; Reitzug & Patterson, 1998) and identifies common characteristics. She asserts that culturally responsive leaders believe that all children can succeed, have high expectations for student achievement, and demonstrate an ethic of care and a commitment to the wider community. Based on this research and her own case study, Johnson (2006) conceptualised a culturally responsive school leader as being “a public intellectual, curriculum innovator, and social activist” (p. 27). Johnson (2007) expands on this definition by explaining that:

Culturally responsive leaders support academic achievement, work to affirm students’ home cultures, empower parents in culturally and economically diverse neighbourhoods, and act as social activists who advocate for social changes to make their communities “a better place to live.” (p. 54)

Another American study conducted by Jacobson, Johnson, Ylimaki and Giles (2005) examined the practice of seven principals who were successful in improving student performance in high need, challenging school settings and identified three enabling principles that characterised their practice. These successful principals utilised an accountability principle to raise expectations of student performance and provide clarity for setting direction. Focusing on developing caring and reciprocal relationships exemplified the caring principle which supported principals to develop and influence school stakeholders, while the learning principle reflected the principal's commitment to deprivatize practice, model and mentor and create collaborative structures.

In their summary of major research findings on successful school leadership Leithwood and Reihl (2003) make specific reference to the ways in which school leaders respond to socioeconomic and cultural diversity. They state that:

Leaders in highly diverse contexts help identify and implement forms of teaching and learning that are appropriate and effective for the populations they serve. This requires thorough, critical examination of practices that have failed in the past. It also requires careful attention to developing curriculum content that is accessible and engaging, assessment methods (including retention policies) that both monitor performance and motivate students, and features of school and classroom organization structures, such as class size, student grouping practices, and staffing arrangements, that will ensure ambitious and equitable performance from students. (p. 6)

We know from the literature discussed earlier that the existing education system has been ineffective in ensuring ethnic minorities succeed in mainstream schools. Culturally responsive leaders are concerned with and address the issues of "core beliefs and organizational culture"

(Johnson, 2007, p. 51) in their schools and in their roles as social activists they seek out teaching and learning models that represent an alternative to the traditional Western-European discourse. This requires leaders to be open and receptive to changes as stated by Bishop et al. (2010):

Institutional, organisational and structural changes are necessary to create contexts in which classroom learning can be responded to, supported and enhanced so that student achievement can improve and disparities can be reduced. It is leaders who drive these changes. (p. 100)

### **Culturally responsive leadership in New Zealand**

In New Zealand the need to connect culture, responsive pedagogies and leadership is being recognised with the research from both the BES programme and Te Kotahitanga informing governmental initiatives such as the culturally responsive leadership professional development project He Kakano. The establishment and implementation of He Kakano exemplifies the Ministry of Education's commitment to develop culturally responsive leadership in New Zealand schools.

Earlier this year the Ministry of Education reinforced their explicit expectation that New Zealand schools reflect educational contexts that are conducive to Maori student achievement within an ERO evaluation report titled, *Promoting Success for Maori Students: School Progress* (ERO, 2010). Within this report ERO detailed recommendations that exemplified specific expectations for school leaders. Such recommendations include school leaders evaluating the impact of school initiatives to improve Maori student presence, engagement and achievement and using this information within their self review processes, providing support for teachers to implement pedagogical practices that are effective for Maori students, and providing professional development that supports trustees,

school managers and teachers to implement “policies and practices that promote success for Maori students” (ERO, 2010, p. 4).

Other endeavours to encourage sustainable systemic reform to improve Maori student achievement in New Zealand education include an educational reform model detailed in Bishop et al. (2010). The authors contend that widespread educational reform could potentially reduce social, economic and political disparities and change the picture of educational achievement for Maori students.

This theoretical model was initially developed by Bishop and O’Sullivan (2005) and encompasses seven main components; goals, pedagogy, institutions, leadership, spread, evidence and ownership. The model is referred to as GPILSEO. While the components are presented in a linear arrangement, Bishop et al. (2010) state that, “each element is interdependent and interacts with the others in a variety of ways and in a variety of settings” (p. 35). Furthermore, the systemic reform that the authors are advocating differs from previous, unsuccessful reform initiatives which have been “short term, poorly funded at the outset and often abandoned before any real change can be seen” (p. 10). In contrast, Bishop et al. (2010) propose a sustainable model that can be applied across a variety of levels.

Within the intuitions dimension of GPILSEO, Bishop et al. (2010) reinforce the centrality of teaching practice in raising student achievement and emphasise that the reform that is necessary to change student achievement is not simply of matter of changing systemic infrastructure, but a complex undertaking that requires a concentrated focus on changing and improving the core business of teaching practice in classroom contexts.

This position is supported by research carried out by Elmore, Peterson and Mc Carthey (1996) which found that teaching practice changed as a result of enhancing the knowledge and skills of teachers, not as a result of organisational structural change. Bishop et al. (2010) expand on this point and explain:

In other words, structural reform works most effectively when the reform creates conditions where changes in practice lead to changes in structure, and where school institutions, structures and organisations evolve in a responsive, flexible manner so as to be supportive of classroom reform. (p. 79)

While government officials and policy makers have a role to play in educational reform, Bishop et al. (2010) suggest that it “is what teachers *do* that makes a difference” (p. 79) so the emphasis of the reform needs to be ‘bottom up’ and start with changing classroom practice and as a result in the changes in practice, school structures change accordingly (Elmore, 2004).

The specific identification of leadership within the GPILSEO educational reform model also highlights the important role leaders have in developing and implementing pedagogical practices that raise Maori student achievement. The goals dimension of the model requires school leaders to establish measureable goals so that progress can be monitored and subsequently acted upon and the foci for pedagogy pertains to the developing and implementing “new pedagogic relationships and interactions in the classroom” (p. 110). Leadership tasks that are relevant to the institutional dimension include leaders changing the school framework and organisational structures to support reform efforts that lead to an improvement in Maori student achievement. Furthermore, leaders have to be knowledgeable about their role in reforming schools to

raise student achievement, so they need to understand the theoretical foundations of what the reform “means for classroom practice, school structure and culture” (p. 110). The spread dimension refers to leaders widening the reform to include parents, whanau and community and the emphasis on evidence relates to leaders developing the capacity of teachers to produce and use data to inform and improve their practice. Leaders also have to accept ownership and take responsibility for the changes that need to occur within the school and the wider education system to raise Maori student achievement.

Within the GPILSEO model Bishop et al. (2010) have essentially provided a profile of effective, culturally responsive leadership. Additionally, an examination of the seven components reveals consistencies between this model and the core practices and dimensions of effective leadership identified by Day et al. (2007), Leithwood et al. (2004) and Robinson et al. (2009).

## **Summary**

This literature review has described the achievement disparities that reflect the Maori educational crisis in New Zealand and has drawn from both national and international perspectives to explain why it exists and what can be done about it. There are two major issues that need to be addressed. The first issue is the discursive repositioning of teachers so that deficit theorising to explain the underachievement of Maori students is superseded by teacher agency, whereby teachers take ownership and accept professional responsibility for the performance of Maori students. The second issue is the development and implementation of culturally responsive pedagogies that facilitate relationship and interaction patterns

that promote shared and interactive learning. It is essential that school leaders understand these challenges, for it is their role to provide the effective, culturally responsive leadership that is necessary to drive the reforms in schools that will change the educational experiences of Maori students and raise achievement.

The next chapter outlines the methodology, data gathering, data analysis processes of the research and the ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER THREE - METHODOLOGY

### **Introduction**

Research is described by Jahnke and Taiapa (2003) as being, “a universal notion, evident in some form in all cultures and among all peoples. It originated from the desire to develop and improve ways of life, and is inextricably interwoven with the concept of knowledge” (p. 39). Within an educational context research often reflects a systematic investigation (Burns, 2000) and plays an important role in assisting educators to understand and address educational problems and issues by; adding knowledge, improving practice and informing policy debates (Creswell, 2005).

This chapter will present and explain the research methodology that guided this research. The justification for selecting this methodology will also be discussed as well as the research methods that were employed throughout specific parts of the research.

### **Methodology**

Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) believe that those who will use research are entitled to expect that “research be conducted rigorously, scrupulously and in an ethically defensible manner” (p. 49). For this reason they advise researchers to consider carefully what they refer to as ‘fitness of purpose’ during the planning process as the purpose of the research essentially determines the methodology. Methodology refers to the approach and theory that guides the research process and is defined

by Strauss and Corbin (1998) as being “a way of thinking about and studying social reality” (p. 5).

The main research question for this study is: “How does one school leader in a mainstream primary school setting, provide culturally responsive leadership that ensures Maori students achieve?” The achievement of Maori students and the leadership practice of a primary school principal are the central foci of this research and therefore a case study informed by Kaupapa Maori research methodology was considered to be the most appropriate approach. A mixed methods approach incorporating the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data was also utilised and methods of data collection included an analysis of student achievement data, a document analysis as well as observations, sequential semi-structured interviews, a stimulated recall interview and focus group interviews.

### **Kaupapa Maori research**

Traditional research methodologies have their origins in Western scientific traditions, anthropology and social sciences (Mutch, 2005). Historically research concerning Maori issues has been conducted by non-Maori researchers and has predominantly benefited the researchers rather than Maori themselves (Bishop, 1996; Bishop, 1997; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Smith, 1999). Furthermore, Smith (1999) contends that this research has been interpreted and presented within a Western framework which has failed to acknowledge Maori perspectives. She states:

Research is implicated in the production of Western knowledge, in the nature of academic work, in the production of theories which have dehumanized Maori and in practices which have continued to privilege Western ways of knowing,

while denying the validity for Maori of Maori knowledge, language, and culture. (p. 183)

In recent years, Maori have expressed concerns about research into their lives and have challenged the Western dominance of research (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Bishop (1995) alludes to the tensions faced by scholars, “working within an academic environment predicated on one cultural worldview, with its very specific demands and traditions associated with research” (p. 40). These tensions have encouraged Maori scholars to circumvent traditional research paradigms, theories and methodologies and find alternative means of research, as expressed in this comment from Cram (2001):

Just as there is a pressing need to recognise other ways of looking at Aotearoa, there is now a pressing need for us to decolonise Maori research. Maori research by, with and for Maori is about regaining control over Maori knowledge and Maori resources. It is about having tino rangatiratanga over research that investigates Maori issues. (p. 37)

The response to these concerns has materialised in the development of what Gibbs (2001) refers to as “culturally appropriate and collaborative approaches to cross-cultural research” (p. 677). Kaupapa Maori research represents a mechanism by which Maori can address their concerns about research into their lives by locating control over research issues with Maori, and by confronting the dominant hegemony that has characterised historic and contemporary Western research (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Bishop (1995) stresses that, “Kaupapa Maori is simply not another paradigmatic shift within Western epistemology” (p. 56), but a calculated and deliberate attempt to position Maori research within an alternative worldview.

Kaupapa Maori research is informed by Kaupapa Maori theory as it operates out of a philosophical base (Smith & Cram, 1997) which acknowledges Maori epistemologies and ensures that the research is “conducted in culturally appropriate ways – ways that fit Maori cultural preferences, practices, and aspirations” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 169). Researchers have also identified principles and concepts which underpin and guide Kaupapa Maori research, namely: tino rangatiratanga – Maori self-determination; whanau; whakawhanaungatanga; whakapapa – family identity, connectedness and relationships; kawa and tikanga – Maori protocol; te reo – Maori language; a Maori world-view and social justice (Bishop 1996; Smith, 1999; Walker, Eketone, & Gibbs, 2006).

Central to Kaupapa Maori research is the understanding that the research should not be done to Maori, but serve to benefit all research participants, particularly Maori (Bishop, 1996). This view is also consistent with the description offered by Pipi et al. (2004) of positive outcomes for all stakeholders involved in the research. They state:

No distinctions are made about who experiences these impacts, with the inference that if research is tika, or right then all – the participants, their whanau (extended family), the researchers, the community – will be left in a better place because of the research project in which they have been involved (p. 142).

Mahuika (2008) describes the term Kaupapa Maori research as being multi-faceted which she suggests is, “indicative of the finely intertwined and interrelated nature of the many issues involved in Kaupapa Maori theory and practice” (p. 5). Essentially a Kaupapa Maori research framework is not restricted to a prescribed set of rules but rather provides guidelines which support the culturally appropriate implementation of research practices and methodologies that are responsive to Maori.

### *A Kaupapa Maori theoretical framework*

Bishop (1996) asserts that Kaupapa Maori research should address five key issues of power, namely; Initiation, Benefits, Representation, Legitimacy and Accountability (IBRLA). The IBRLA model reflects associated questions which provide a theoretical framework for the establishing, conducting and interpreting research:

*Initiation:* Who initiated the research and why? What were the goals of the project? Who designed the work?

*Benefits:* What benefits will there be? Who gets the benefits? What assessment and evaluation procedures will be used to establish the benefits? What difference will this study make for Maori? How does this study support Maori cultural aspirations? Who decides on the methods and procedures of assessment and evaluation?

*Representation:* What constitutes an adequate depiction of social reality? Whose interests, needs and concerns does the text represent? How were the goals and major questions of the study established? How were the tasks allocated? What agency do individuals or groups have? Whose voice is heard? Who did the work?

*Legitimation:* What authority does the text have? Who is going to process the data? Who is going to consider the results of the processing? What happens to the results? Who defines what is accurate, true and complete in a text? Who theorises the findings?

*Accountability:* Who is the researcher accountable to? Who is to have accessibility to the research findings? Who has control over the distribution of the knowledge? (Bishop, 1996, p. 22)

This framework contradicts traditional research approaches which have privileged the researcher by allowing them to set their own agenda, draw their own conclusions and produce their own story. In an educational

context Bishop (1995) contends that this alternative approach to research could potentially:

Demonstrate to mainstream educators how structural theory might address and transform the social realities of Maori and other marginalised and oppressed peoples so that they address the current educational crisis of under-achievement, non-participation and under-representation" (p. 58).

This current study is concerned with identifying leadership practices which ensure that Maori students achieve. Acknowledging that the solutions for addressing the current educational crisis for Maori can be generated by using Maori cultural preferences and practices provides the rationale for conducting this research within a Kaupapa Maori theoretical framework (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). The goal of identifying leadership practices that ensure Maori students achieve aims to support school leaders to improve their leadership practices to subsequently enhance Maori student achievement. This goal is also consistent with the Kaupapa Maori principle of ensuring that research provides benefits to all participants, particularly Maori students.

*Initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation and authority*

The IBRLA framework was utilized throughout this research project. Addressing the issues of initiation and benefits were discussed during the planning and development phases at the beginning of the research and reflect consideration of the research participants and the research site. Representation, legitimation and accountability were raised during the instigation phase of the research, but were revised and discussed in greater detail as the research progressed and drew to a conclusion.

### *Initiation*

This research was initiated by the researcher in response to concerns voiced within Maori and education communities about the low achievement levels of Maori students. These concerns have been voiced often (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Bishop, Berryman, Taikiwai & Richardson, 2003; 2007a; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy & O'Sullivan, 2007b; Hemara, 2000; Macfarlane, 2004; Phillips, McNaughton & Mac Donald, 2001; Te Puni Kokiri, 1998) and formed the basis of this research which aimed to respond to these concerns by identifying how a primary school principal provides culturally responsive leadership practices that ensures Maori students achieve. Identifying these practices essentially reflected the goal of the research.

In describing the initiation phases of this research it is necessary to explain how the participants were recruited. The research focus was very specific in the sense that I wanted to respond to concerns about Maori student achievement, by examining the leadership practice of a primary school principal who had been successful in ensuring that Maori students achieved. This procedure of selection reflects 'purposive' sampling which describes a situation where "researchers handpick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgement of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 115).

Within informal discussions amongst my local leadership network, I mentioned my research question and asked for recommendations of primary school leaders who were successful in ensuring Maori students achieved. I also asked one of my thesis supervisors for assistance as she had conducted educational research in my local area and was familiar

with a number of schools and leadership personnel. The principal who became the subject of this research was a person identified from both of these sources.

I made contact with the principal that had been identified and requested a meeting to present my research proposal. The goals of the research and the proposed methodologies and methods were discussed at the initiation meeting, although it was emphasised that in keeping with the Kaupapa Maori research principles of representation, legitimation and accountability, the methodologies would be flexible, in the sense that the research design could be adapted in accordance with participants' needs and aspirations. Another key question during this meeting related to the performance of Maori students. The principal told me that reading had been an area of significant learning and development for the staff and that Maori student achievement in this particular area appeared to be improving.

After accepting the invitation to participate in the research, the principal discussed the research project with the school leadership team and classroom teachers and gave them an opportunity to consider participating in the focus group interviews. The leadership team expressed an interest in the research and agreed to participate in the leadership focus group interview and the principal selected a random sample of willing teachers from each level of the school to participate in the teachers' focus group interview.

#### *Participants*

The principal is a European/Pakeha woman whose professional experience reflected 34 years in mainstream primary school education.

She was a classroom teacher for 17 years prior to becoming a deputy principal and was a deputy principal for 9 years. She has held the position of principal at the case study school for the past 8 years having been appointed in 2002.

The research participants from the leadership team reflected one of the assistant principals and three senior teachers from each level of the school (junior, middle and senior syndicates). Four classroom teachers from each level of the school and a teacher from the school rumaki unit constituted the classroom teacher research participants.

The case study school is a decile 5, contributing primary school (Years 1-6) located in an urban setting. At the time of this research the school roll was 511 and an ethnic composition of 44% Maori, 51% European/Pakeha and 5% identified as 'Other'.

#### *Benefits*

During the second initiation meeting the principal shared that she agreed that this research could potentially be useful to the primary school leadership community and she also felt that an investigation into her own practice could be beneficial to her personally - as a leader in her own school. In addition, she anticipated that participation in this research would provide her, her leadership team and teachers with an opportunity to internally examine and share their theories and practices of culturally responsive leadership with me and that this "sharing" process could help them to "better understand" what they were doing and support them to evaluate whether or not they were on "the right pathway".

### *Representation*

The issue of representation was discussed in terms of the importance of the research representing an accurate depiction of the social reality that existed within the school context. It was made clear that this research was not about me (the researcher) gathering information and then presenting my interpretation of the research participants' reality. The research participants understood that there was a "dual responsibility" (between myself and the research participants) to ensure that the research reflected a co-constructed, collaborative story (Bishop, 1996) of what constitutes culturally responsive leadership practice in their school. Consequently, the issue of representation is particularly significant and is discussed further in the data analysis section of this chapter.

### *Legitimation*

I was initially responsible for processing the data and the numerous return visits to the research site to conduct further interviews and conversations provided a context for the participants (researcher and research participants) to co-construct the interpretation of the data and jointly theorise the findings. In this regard the research participants and the researcher define what is true and accurate in the research, exemplifying the close link between representation (presenting an accurate depiction) and legitimation (verifying and confirming). The issue of legitimation in relation to the concepts of reliability and validity is also explained in the ethical considerations section of this chapter.

### *Accountability*

Through the very process of the research itself, the researcher is accountable to the principal, the senior teacher and classroom teacher participants, the case study school community, the thesis supervisors and the university. All of the research participants have access to the findings

as upon publication the thesis will be available on the Australasian Digital Thesis online database.

### **Case study research**

Case study research has been widely used in educational research and although these studies tend to be of a qualitative nature they can also encompass quantitative research (Burns, 2000; Dixon, Bouman & Aitkenson, 1987). In their description of case studies Cohen et al. (2007) assert that they provide, “a unique example of real people in real situations, enabling readers to understand ideas more clearly than simply by presenting them with abstract theories or principles” (p. 253).

According to Schramm (1971), the essence of a case study is to illuminate why decisions are made, how they are implemented and to examine the subsequent result of the decisions. While purposes for utilising a case study approach vary, Yin (1994) suggests that in terms of their outcomes, case studies can be exploratory, descriptive or explanatory. Exploratory case study designs include pilot studies which can precede major investigations (Burns, 2000). Descriptive case studies provide a descriptive or narrative account of phenomenon, while explanatory case studies are concerned with explaining phenomenon such as cause and effect relationships (Cohen, et al., 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

This current study reflects an explanatory case study as it investigates a possible relationship between the leadership practice of a principal and Maori student achievement.

### **Mixed methods research**

Mixed methods research is presented by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) as being “a research paradigm whose time has come” (p. 14) and is described as “the natural complement to traditional qualitative and quantitative research” (p. 14). They suggest that while the traditional paradigms of qualitative and quantitative research remain important and useful, each approach used in isolation has associated strengths and weaknesses.

### **Qualitative research**

Qualitative research endeavours to access people’s experiences, perspectives and understandings as it “seeks answers to questions that stress *how* social experience is created and given meaning” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 10). The importance of understanding experiences is also emphasised by Watling (2002), who states that, “the qualitative researcher is likely to be searching for understanding rather than knowledge, for interpretations rather than measurements, for values rather than facts” (p. 267).

Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that since a qualitative approach requires researchers to enter into the social world of the research participants, it is preferable that the researcher is familiar with and shares the research context when attempting to understand an individual’s point of view (Burns, 2000). This means that interpretation can occur in relation to the researcher’s engagement in the social setting (Wearmouth, Glynn, Richmond & Berryman, 2004). Bishop (1997) further suggests that the aim of qualitative research therefore, is to “paint a picture, potentially

facilitating the voice of the research participant to be heard, for others to reflect on” (p. 30).

This acknowledgement of social settings and social engagement emphasises the importance of relationships in research. Lather (1991) specifically highlights the reciprocal nature of the relationship between the researchers and the research participants so that the focus of the research is based on negotiated and co-constructed meanings. In this sense qualitative research supports Kaupapa Maori research by ensuring that researchers acknowledge their participatory connectedness by promoting “a means of knowing that denies distance and separation and promotes commitment and engagement” (Bishop & Glynn, 1999, p. 103). The emphasis on relationships is also consistent with the Kaupapa Maori concept of whakawhanaungatanga (Bishop, 1996) which acknowledges the connection and involvement of the researcher and research participants.

Prior to this research I had met the case study principal once at a private family function and in a professional capacity we were familiar with each other through our association with the local leadership network. Although we did not know each other well, during the initiation phase we acknowledged that we were connected in several dimensions, namely; on account of people we both knew in our private lives (family and friends), common colleagues (previous and present), and the fact that we shared similar responsibilities in our professional roles. I also found that these same dimensions connected me with many of the other research participants and this acknowledgement of our relatedness (whakawhanaungatanga) assisted me to develop mutually supportive relationships with all of the research participants.

The research questions in this study sought to understand what the principal, some of the members of the senior leadership team and a group of teachers, made of their experiences of culturally responsive leadership practice. It also sought from them a consideration and explanation of the various systems, structures and documents that existed within the school that reflected their understandings of culturally responsive leadership practice. Research participants understandings, interpretations and experiences formed the basis this research which necessitated a qualitative approach.

Qualitative research however, is not without its flaws with Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) proposing that such an approach can be limiting because the knowledge produced may not necessarily generalise to other people and other settings. They further suggest that with some administrators, qualitative research may have lower credibility which could be related to their assertion that “results are more easily influenced by the researchers’ personal biases and idiosyncrasies” (p. 20). However, in this study, I was not seeking to generalise, but rather to provide a picture of culturally responsive leadership practices that other leaders can reflect upon in relation to their own leadership practices. In answer to the accusation that results could be biased by my own, a kaupapa Maori approach includes the theorising and sense making of the participants (both the researcher and the research participants) into the final text thus limiting the potential for personal bias.

## **Quantitative research**

In contrast quantitative research is characterised by its emphasis on standard and fixed variables which according to Creswell (2002) provides a framework for more objective and unbiased research. In this sense quantitative research is concerned with testing hypotheses and validating theories by means of statistical analysis of specific, measureable and observable data (often numeric data). Consequently, such a method “provides answers which have a much firmer basis than the lay person’s common sense or intuition or opinion” (Burns, 2000, p. 9).

It is also suggested by Creswell (2002) that a quantitative approach allows researchers to describe and explain a trend in order to answer a research question. Such an approach can also be used to explore the connection between variables and is useful in “determining whether one or more variables might influence another variable” (p. 51). The investigation of this relationship between variables is supported by an explanatory case study approach which endeavours to explain cause and effect situations (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006).

To take this research beyond the status of a study that simply explored what a principal understands and does, it was necessary to investigate the impact of her theorising and practice within the school, specifically with regard to Maori students’ achievement. Quantitative research methods allowed me to examine the possible relationship between two variables, namely; the principal’s leadership practice and Maori students’ achievement data.

Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) contend that while quantitative research may have a higher degree of credibility with some people, they advise that

such an approach could also be limiting as the researcher's categories and theories "may not reflect local constituencies' understandings" (p. 19). Quantitative research is also criticised by Johnson (1992) because "it focuses on too few factors, it reduces these factors to numbers, and simply does not attend to much potentially important and interesting contextual information" (p. 34).

### **Mixed methods - Triangulation**

Rather than exclusively embracing the traditional paradigms of either quantitative or qualitative research, mixed methods research seeks to combine both quantitative and qualitative approaches which allows researchers to "draw from the strengths and minimize the weaknesses of both in single research studies and across studies" (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 15). This view is supported by Miles and Huberman (1994) who propose that quantitative and qualitative inquiry can be mutually supportive and that "narrative and variable-driven analysis need to interpenetrate and inform each other" (p. 310). Bryman (1988) further suggests triangulation as a means of combining qualitative and quantitative research.

Triangulation is defined by Denzin (1978) as "the combination of methodologies in the study of the same phenomenon" (p. 291). Jick (1979) suggests that the triangulation metaphor allows researchers to use multiple reference points for accessing information and consequently he asserts that, "researchers can improve the accuracy of their judgements by collecting different kinds of data bearing on the same phenomenon" (p. 602).

Two types of triangulation are identified by Bush (2002), namely methodological triangulation and respondent triangulation. Methodological triangulation involves using two or more methods to investigate the same phenomenon, while respondent triangulation involves the researcher asking the same questions of multiple participants.

Jick (1979) advocates that in the first instance the overall strength of the multi-method design of triangulation, is that it allows researchers to have a greater degree of confidence in the validity of their results. In the second instance such an approach may reveal a deviant dimension within the research because “different viewpoints are likely to produce some elements which do not fit a theory or model” (p. 609). In this regard, mixed methods research in the form of triangulation, may well address the limitations of qualitative research identified by Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) pertaining to the credibility of the research (namely researcher bias), and by incorporating contextual influences, this approach also addresses the narrow focus that is often associated with quantitative research.

This research utilized triangulation to enhance validity and reliability of the research by employing five methods of data collection (methodological triangulation). The incorporation of individual interviews and two separate focus group interviews (reflecting the same questions) ensured that respondent triangulation was also addressed.

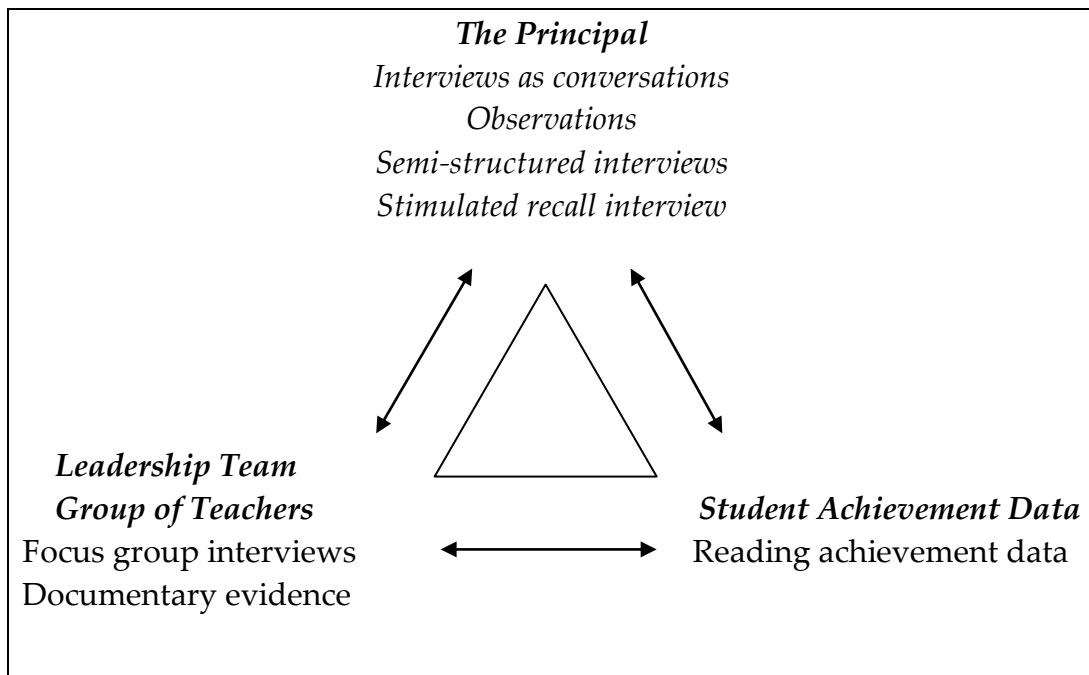


Figure 1: Triangulation of data

## Methods of data collection

### Student achievement data

Quantitative data collection includes a range of strategies and the nature of the data collected is largely determined by the research question. Creswell (2005) identifies four major types of information that reflect quantitative data collection and details corresponding examples of the tests and instruments used to collect the data. Performance measures include achievement and intelligence tests, attitudinal measures include affective scales, behavioural observations include behavioural checklists and factual information reflects public documents and school records (p. 155).

As has been mentioned, the achievement of Maori students was one of the central foci on this research. This necessitated an examination of performance measures in the form of school achievement data.

### **School documents**

An analysis of documentary evidence is often used in research to supplement information that has been gathered from other research methods (Duffy, as cited in Bell, 2005). The purpose and nature of the research informs documents selection and the analysis that is subsequently undertaken (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007).

Document collection and analysis can be valuable in case study research as the documents can provide a useful means of corroborating information from other sources and they also allow the researcher to make inferences about the organisation (Yin, 2009). However, Yin (2009) cautions against relying on inferences made from documentation and suggests that they should be treated “only as clues worthy of further investigation rather than as definitive findings” (p. 103).

In this research the principal selected school documents that she felt related to the systems and practices within the school that reflect aspects of what she understood about culturally responsive leadership practice. She also provided me with documents that she felt reflected the school’s learning journey in terms of the policies and practice guidelines that inform the philosophical and pedagogical frameworks within the school. The documents were collected and discussed during an initiation meeting, prior to the observation and interview phases of the research.

## **Participant observation**

Ethnographic research is concerned with studying people for the purpose of “describing their social-cultural activities and patterns” (Burns, 2000, p. 394). Participant observations constitute a basic approach to ethnographic research. A major tool of qualitative research, participant observations enable the researcher to share the same experiences as research participants which offers a direct account of the social reality that exists within the research context (Bell, 2005; Burns, 2000).

Cohen et al. (2007) caution that while direct immersion in the research setting has the potential to provide “more valid or authentic data than would otherwise be the case with mediated or inferential methods”(p. 396), it is important that researchers clarify what will be observed. They suggest that observations allow the researcher to gather data in four specific settings namely; the physical setting, the human setting, the interactional setting and the programme setting.

Observations of the principal in this research took place over a period of a week and allowed me to observe the principal’s leadership practice. In this regard the research reflects observations in the interactional setting because they focus on “the interactions that are taking place, formal, informal, planned, unplanned, verbal, non-verbal” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 397). The interactions observed during the observation period were revisited and discussed in a stimulated recall interview.

## **Interviews**

Interviews are used extensively in qualitative research and are acknowledged as being the preferred method of data collection by

qualitative researchers (Bell, 2005; Burgess, 1991; Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2005). Interviews provide a forum for what Kvale (1996) refers to as an 'interchange' of views between two or more people. In case study research Yin (2009) suggests that interviews should be fluid, guided conversations which pursue a line of inquiry as opposed to structured queries.

According to Bishop (1995), interviews are often selected as a method to investigate issues concerning researcher imposition, however, he cautions that "the interview itself can be a strategy controlled by the researcher and repressive of the position of the informant/participant" (p. 69). Oakley (1981) suggests that careful consideration needs to be given to how interviews are approached to avoid a situation which sees the "interviewers define the role of interviewee as subordinate" (p. 40), where "extracting information is more to be valued than yielding it" (p. 40) and where the hierarchical arrangement of interviewer-interviewee in an expert-client relationship is promoted in order to reveal the 'truth' that the research intended to uncover.

Prioritising the development of what Oakley (1981) describes as an "enhanced research relationship" is identified as a means of addressing these issues and tensions in interview situations. She asserts that this relationship is "best achieved when the relationship of interviewer and interviewee is non-hierarchical and when the interviewer is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship" (p. 41).

Bishop (1995) identifies sequential, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth, interviews as conversations as interview procedures that support the development of such enhanced research relationships. He further

suggests that these procedures are appropriate in Kaupapa Maori research because they optimise the self-determination of research participants. A series of interviews, utilising four methods of interviewing were used in this research, specifically; interviews as conversation, semi structured individual interviews, a stimulated recall interview and focus group interviews.

### *Interviews as conversations and semi-structured interviews*

Qualitative research interview methods are differentiated according to the degree of structure in the interview. Interviews as conversations resemble unstructured and open-ended interviewing (Burns, 2000) because they allow for free-flowing dialogue between the researcher and research participants. Burgess (1991) suggests that these unstructured interviews are perceived as 'conversations with a purpose' (p. 102). Haig-Brown (1992) concurs and describes 'interviews as chat' as informal interviews which are similar to everyday conversations, in the sense that they provide an "opportunity for people to follow up on more formal interviews or simply to comment generally" (p. 105), on significant events or details of interest.

In semi-structured interview contexts, flexibility of open-ended questions allows for a more valid response of the research participant perception of reality (Burns, 2000). In this regard semi-structured interviews can provide research participants with a greater level of control over the interview process because they can revisit aspects of the interview and clarify their understandings and perspectives (Cohen et al., 2007; Goulding, 2002; Mutch, 2005). The idea of revisiting and repeating interviews is promoted by Lather (1991) who suggests that implementing

a sequence of semi-structured, in-depth interviews maximises the potential for reciprocity through negotiation.

Bishop (1997) cites a range of authors (Burgess, 1984; Haig-Brown, 1992; Oakley, 1981) to describe the interactive nature of interviews as conversations and semi-structured interviews, and reinforces the importance of researchers contributing to the interview conversation as a speaker, not just a questioner to enhance the research relationship. He states that “this type of interview offers the opportunity to develop a reciprocal, dialogic relationship based on mutual trust, openness and engagement, in which self-disclosure, personal investment and equality is promoted” (p. 32-33). The notions of researcher objectivity and subjectivity are rejected as this approach acknowledges the researcher as a member of the research group, “with identity and hence the ability to participate” (Bishop, 2005, p. 129).

As well as promoting Kaupapa Maori principle of tino rangatiratanga – self determination, interviews as conversations and semi-structured interviews support Kaupapa Maori research because the flexibility to revisit and clarify responses (within individual interviews and by conducting a series of interviews) reflects what Bishop (1996) refers to as ‘spiral discourse’. Spiral discourse describes a pattern whereby the researcher and research participants engage in a cycle of collaborative construction of meaning. The collaborative construction of meaning is not however, confined to the interview process, but extends into the analysis and interpretation of all of the data represented in the research. The means by which interviews are used to analyse and develop this collaborative construction of meaning is explained and discussed in the data analysis section of this chapter.

Connections and association both personal and professional, between the research participants and myself have already been acknowledged and provided a platform for the development of mutually supportive relationships. Interviews as conversations between the principal and myself were conducted throughout the entire period of the research and generally reflected informal conversations based on the research agenda. These conversations were reciprocal and reflexive in the sense that the principal frequently asked me questions that required me to reflect upon and consider my own theories and interpretations of what I had observed and experienced within the case study school context and within my own school context. Disclosure and personal investment on my behalf served to enhance the research relationship.

A series of two semi-structured interviews were conducted. In the first interview the questions that were used reflect open questions that characterise the semi-structured format. The questions provided a guide for the interview but allowed the conversation to develop and evolve.

The questions used in the first semi-structured interview with the principal were as follows:

1. What do you understand culturally responsive practice to be?
2. What culturally responsive systems in structures operate within this school to ensure Maori students achieve?

The second semi-structured interview was conducted after the stimulated recall interview and revisited points and issues raised in previous interviews. The questions were as follows:

1. In the first interview we talked about the importance of relationships, particularly relationships with Maori students and parents. Why do you think relationships are important?
2. You have talked about the importance of relationships between teachers and students. What connection – if there is one, do you see between relationships and achievement?
3. We talked about how when you first came into the principalship role, you really wanted to develop a sense of inclusiveness within the school, how did you go about doing that?
4. In the first interview you talked about how it is really important for you to make sure Maori students are achieving – at and above national expectations and that there is no gap between Maori student achievement and non-Maori student achievement. Why is that important to you?
5. Is there anything else that you wanted to share or elaborate on?
6. You mentioned earlier that it is important that parents don't feel threatened by you so how do you achieve this?

### *Stimulated recall interview*

According to Bloom (1953), the basic idea behind a stimulated recall approach is to recall the original situation and generate thoughts, meanings and reactions associated with the situation in question. In this sense the observations provide a means of capturing the lived experiences

of research participants while a stimulated recall interview allows them to “bring their own sense making processes to the discussions in order to co-construct a ‘rich’ descriptive picture” (Bishop, Berryman & Richardson, 2001, p. 48).

The stimulated recall interview in this study was conducted after the first semi-structured interview and took place directly after the observation phase. The observations were focused on capturing the principal’s interactions with school stakeholders. An observation record provided the basis for the questions. Within this interview the principal was given the opportunity to consider and explain the interactions and essentially make sense of what she was doing and why she was doing it (see Appendix 5).

### *Focus group interviews*

Focus group interviews are defined as “the process of collecting data through interviews with a group of people” (Creswell, 2005, p. 215). The focus group interviews commonly include participants who share common characteristics or experiences and provide a non-threatening environment for engagement in an interactive discussion on a particular theme or topic (Bell, 2005; Cohen et al., 2007; Krueger, 1994). It is suggested by Creswell (2005) that focus group interviews are likely to yield good information because participants are similar to and cooperative with each other.

Puchta and Potter (2004) contend that focus group interviews can be used alongside other research methods in two distinct ways. In the first instance they suggest that focus group interviews can be used as a tool to

generate an initial hypothesis. In the second instance the focus group interview can be used as a “follow up phase that pursues exploratory aspects of the analysis” (p. 7)

In this research focus group interviews were used to ascertain what the senior leadership team and a group of teachers understood culturally responsive leadership to be. In this sense the intent of these interviews represent a follow up - exploratory tool that allowed me to consider the group responses in relation to the principal’s theories and practices.

The questions used in the semi structured interview with the focus groups were as follows:

1. What do you understand culturally responsive practice to be?
2. How is culturally responsive practice leadership practice implemented in your school – what are the systems and structures?

Discussion points from the interviews as conversations were recorded in field notes while a digital voice recorder was used to record the semi-structured interviews, the stimulated recall interview and the focus group interviews. I transcribed the interviews and returned the interview data to the research participants to verify and amend where necessary. Approaching interviews in this manner provided participants with a means of addressing their own self-determination, because like the interviews with the principal, the leaders and teachers were provided with the opportunity to make sense of the interview conversation.

## **Data analysis**

Data collected by both qualitative and quantitative methods is of limited value until it is analysed and evaluated. Quantitative data analysis usually requires researchers to explain numeric data, while qualitative data analysis generally sees researchers engaging in a process of, “making sense of data in terms of the participants’ definitions, of the situation, noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 184).

Concerns about researcher imposition regarding analysis and presentation of data has prompted researchers such as Tripp (1983) to question who controls what happens to data and how it is presented. These concerns are replicated by Bishop and Glynn (1999) who state that in traditional research:

The researcher has been the storyteller, the narrator, and the person who decides what constitutes the narrative. Researchers in the past have taken the stories of the research participants and have submerged them within their own stories, and retold these reconstituted stories in a language and culture determined by the researcher. (p. 103)

## **Spiral discourse**

Kaupapa Maori research does not necessarily follow the distinct, linear phases of traditional research, so the analysis is not simply an accumulation of the researcher’s interpretation and theorising about the data collected. Bishop (1997) suggests that the spiral discourse image used to describe the nature of reciprocal, co-constructed interviews can also be used to illustrate the process of “gaining access, data gathering, data processing, and theorising” (p. 43) in Kaupapa Maori research contexts. This image encompasses all participants in the cyclic evolution and

development of the research story. The approach is best summarized in this statement by Bishop (1997), "From the very first meeting total involvement by both the research and participant is developed. Decisions about access, description, involvement, initiation, interpretation and explanations are embedded in the very process of story-telling and retelling" (p. 43-44)

### **Collaborative stories**

Used as a means data of analysis, spiral discourse reflects a form of narrative inquiry, referred to by Connelly and Clandinin (1990) as being collaborative stories. Such stories acknowledge the experiences and interpretations of both the researcher and the research participants. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) describe collaborative stories as the new stories that reflect the merger or combination of the two narratives.

### **Representation and legitimation**

Engagement with IBRLA issues, particularly representation and legitimation placed an emphasis on the research partners co-constructing meaning from the research data, rather than myself as the researcher making all of the decisions and conforming or attempting to fit the data into a traditional theory (Bishop, 1995). Spiral discourse was implemented simultaneously, throughout the data collection and data analysis phases and the mutually evolving understandings constituted the collaborative stories of this research.

### **Student achievement data analysis**

In educational research quantitative data analysis is often used to describe trends in numeric data (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2005). Descriptive analysis “simply report on what has been found” (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 504) while inferential analysis seek to compare or relate two or more variables (Creswell, 2005).

During our second meeting and prior to the observation phase the principal presented me with the 2009 literacy report which contained the school reading achievement analysis. The analysis I received reported on trends in student reading achievement in relation to national means. Maori student reading achievement statistics were identified within the report (descriptive analysis) and Maori and non-Maori achievement results were also compared and discussed (inferential analysis).

I viewed the school’s analysis of the statistics and then in an informal conversation I discussed the school’s analysis with the principal. The analysis of the 2009 student achievement data in the findings section of this thesis reflects the co-constructed analysis that we developed as a result of this conversation. Following this conversation and the initial analysis it was decided that a previous ERO report from 2004 would also be used as part of the student achievement data analysis to provide a historical depiction of Maori student achievement.

### **Document analysis**

The principal and I discussed the school documents that she had given me during one of our initiation meetings. In our conversations we discussed our shared understandings of the relevance of each of the documents in

terms of what she was endeavouring to achieve with regard to the school's strategic goals and her personal beliefs and philosophies about culturally responsive leadership practice. The resulting discourse is reflected in the summaries that describe the purpose and intent of the school documents in the findings section.

### **Interview analysis**

As has been discussed earlier in this section, the spiral discourse process acknowledges that sequential interviews are more than merely a research tool to gather and process information. Crucially, the interviews also present a forum for reflecting on and revisiting aspects of the discussion, and essentially provide a means by which researchers and research participants can develop co-joint reflections and co-joint constructions to make meaning of the data (Bishop, 1997).

Following the initial meeting, ongoing visits to the school (and ongoing emails and phone-calls when visits were not possible) to share, check, listen, share and re-check characterised the means by which the interviews were collaboratively storied and re-storied throughout this research. Following transcription of the interviews I initially identified common themes in the responses of participants. I discussed these themes in a conversation with the principal and gave her an opportunity to read the responses and reflect on the interview data. Following her analysis of the interview and the proposed themes we co-constructed an interpretation that reflected our co-joint understandings of her theorising and subsequent practice.

The IBRLA issues of representation and legitimation were particularly emphasised during this analysis process. While the collaboration operation was largely between myself and the principal, the senior leadership team and the group of teachers were included in the spiral discourse in terms of being given the opportunity to revisit the interview data and contribute to the co-construction of the story.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical research practice requires researchers to consider their responsibilities in relation to respecting the rights and integrity of research participants and ensuring that the research is reported fully and honestly (Creswell, 2005). In traditional research methodologies codes of ethics, ethical principles, rules and conventions have been established to define what is considered to be acceptable behaviour by researchers and to subsequently guide ethical research practice (Bell, 2005; Burgess, 1991; Burns, 2000; Mutch, 2005). With regard to research in indigenous communities, Smith (2005) states, “research ethics is at a very basic level are about establishing, maintaining and nurturing reciprocal and respectful relationships, not just among people as individuals but also with people, as collectives, and as members of communities” (p. 97).

This recognition of the centrality of relationships in research is encompassed in the Kaupapa Maori research principle of whakawhanaungatanga, which emphasises the critical connection between the researcher and research participants and the corresponding commitment to ensure that participants are safe and the beneficiaries of the research (Bishop, 1996). This commitment goes beyond the technical rules and exercise of signing ethics documents, as a “Kaupapa Maori

researcher is also involved physically, ethically, morally and spiritually” (Powick, 2003, p. 20). This commitment to the research participants constitutes the issue of accountability in the IBRLA model and provides an example of the ethical dimensions that are reflected in this framework.

In this research an application for ethical approval was submitted to the ethics committee at the University of Waikato. The application required me, as the researcher to consider “in advance value issues and ethical dilemmas that may arise” (Kvale, 2007, p. 25). The application also detailed how I would adhere to ethical codes of practice. During the initial meeting with the case study principal and throughout the course of the research the issues of benefits, representation, legitimation and accountability were discussed and consequently also provided the ethical structure which guided this research.

### **Initiation - informed consent**

A key ethical concept of research is that of informed consent. Diener and Crandall (as cited in Cohen et al., 2007) define informed consent as being “the procedures in which individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of facts that would be likely to influence their decisions” (p. 52).

During the initiation phases all research participants were informed about the purposes of the research and the ways in which the research would be disseminated prior to signing the consent forms. This information was provided in an interview information sheet (Appendix 1), in the introduction letters (Appendix 2 and 3) and was discussed at various points throughout the research process. Participation was voluntary and

participants were assured that they could withdraw from the research at any stage.

### **Benefits - benefit and harm**

The requirement for researchers to very deliberately avoid causing harm to participants is described as an absolute basic consideration by Guillemin and Gillam (2004). It is the responsibility of the researcher to “reduce possible harm by anticipating it and discussing possible risks of their research with those who are likely to be involved” (Robinson & Lai, 2006, p. 69). In Kaupapa Maori research the solemn determination to avoid harm to research participants is matched by an absolute commitment to provide benefits. Essentially it is this notion of providing benefits to research participants that constitutes the foundation upon which Kaupapa Maori research has been developed (Bishop, 1996; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Pipi et al., 2004; Smith, 1999).

The research participants were aware that this research was solely focused on providing benefits for themselves, the wider educational community and Maori students. Shared ownership of the data and co-construction of the findings ensured that participants were safe, in the sense that they were represented on their own terms. This also eliminated the potential for harm.

### **Representation – anonymity and confidentiality**

Anonymity and confidentiality are methods employed by researchers to protect the privacy of research participants (Cohen et al., 2007). Anonymity is an aspect of confidentiality that is concerned with

protecting the identity of participants while confidentiality in a broader sense is concerned with the researcher maintaining and securing all identifiable information (Best & Kahn, 1998).

Addressing the issue of representation posed a dual challenge in this research. I had to ensure that the participants' voices were heard so that their perspectives constituted the social reality that existed within the school and at the same time I had to make sure that the name of the school and the names of the participants were kept confidential. This was undertaken by the very process of the spiral discourse approach. In addition, to ensure confidentiality was maintained, as best as possible, the pseudonym Kowhai School was used for the school and the participants were simply referred to as the principal, the leadership team (the senior teachers) or the teachers. Additionally, the school documents that were analysed, including the ERO reports, detail 'Kowhai School' as the name of the school. Names of people and places were also omitted from the interview data and for the duration of the research documentation and interview data was secured in locked filing systems.

### **Legitimation – reliability, validity and reflexivity**

People who read or refer to research may query the quality of what is being presented and question "what faith can be put in the data" (Burns, 2000). Reliability and validity are two prominent criteria for evaluating social research (Bryman, 2004). Triangulation is one method employed by researchers to enhance the reliability and validity of research (Stake, 1995) and Burns (2000) also suggests that researchers need to acknowledge and report any personal biases that they may have that could potentially impact on the research.

As has been discussed, this research utilised methodological and respondent triangulation to support reliability and validity. While triangulation served as a useful means of addressing the technical aspects of data reliability and validity, Bishop (2005) cautions that in extracting and intensively focusing on these concepts the self determination of research participants could be at risk because researchers “might take control over what constitutes legitimacy and validity, that is, what authority is claimed for the text will be removed from the participants” (p. 128). In addressing the issue of legitimation this research sought validation from within the research group and ensured that the research participants defined what was accurate and true. In this regard “verification of the text, the authority of the text, and the quality of its representation of the experiences and its perspective of the participants”, (Bishop, 2005, p. 128) was determined through the process of spiral discourse, rather than depending exclusively on traditional reliability and validity measures.

Reflexivity is a process that requires “researchers to reflect on their own personal biases, values and assumptions and actively write them into their research” (Creswell, 2005, p. 50). The issue of personal bias has also been discussed previously in this chapter and it has been acknowledged that Kaupapa Maori research recognises the participatory connectedness between the researcher and the research participants and legitimises the researcher’s voice within the research group (Bishop, 1996; 1997; 2005).

Research participants in this study understood that it was my intention to identify leadership practices that ensure Maori students achieve and to provide research that supported other school leaders to implement

practices that could potentially enhance Maori student achievement. My contributions to the spiral discourse represent my personal investment into the research relationship and served to build the body of knowledge that became our collaborative story.

## **Summary**

This chapter has outlined the methodology and the Kaupapa Maori theoretical framework that guided this research. A case study approach facilitates an intensive examination of Maori student achievement data and one principal's leadership practice, while spiral discourse and collaborative storying represent the means by which the data was collected and analysed. As well as providing the theoretical framework the issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation and accountability have assisted me to adhere to ethical principles of research quality and participant care.

## **CHAPTER FOUR - RESEARCH FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

This research sought to examine the leadership practice of one primary school principal through an analysis of student achievement data, school documents, and through the triangulated development of a complex picture created by a series of in-depth interviews with the principal herself, some members of the senior leadership team and a group of teachers. This chapter presents the findings of the research based on the co-constructed analysis of the school documents, interview data and student achievement data.

### **School Achievement Data**

The data gathering phase of this research commenced with an examination of student achievement data. In previous years Kowhai School had engaged in intense professional development in reading. This had largely been a result of an ERO review in 2004 which took place 18 months after the principal was appointed. The ERO report identified reading as an area of school performance that needed to be improved upon and stipulated that there were a considerable number of Maori students underachieving in reading. The report also specifically referenced the fact that Maori student achievement was significantly lower than that of their peers.

Reading had been an area of significant learning and development for the teachers and the leadership team at Kowhai School, therefore, it was decided that this research would provide an analysis of student reading

achievement data for 2009. While the 2004 ERO report was not specifically analysed as part of this research, it was decided that references to student achievement data contained within the report were relevant to this study because they provided a historical account of Maori student achievement prior to 2009.

The school literacy leader collects and collates literacy achievement data for the school literacy report in Term 1 and Term 3. The school literacy report is based on the results of three summative assessments. The Supplementary Test of Achievement in Reading (STAR) is used to assess the reading progress and achievement of Year 3 and 4 students and Progressive Achievement Tests (PATs) are used to assess the reading comprehension of Year 5 and 6 students. Reading running records are also used to assess student's reading levels at all levels of the school. The results of STAR and PAT assessments for Term 1 and Term 3 are presented in this analysis and the reading running record levels for Term 3 are also collated and discussed.

The student achievement data is ethnically differentiated to reflect European, Maori, Pasifika and Other. Other refers to students who identify themselves as an ethnicity other than European, Maori, or Pasifika. While students identified as Pasifika and Other have been included in this analysis, it is important to note that in each of the year groups these students represent a relatively small proportion of the total number of students.

The tables detail the percentages of students achieving below, at, and above national expectations. The first graphs present an ethnic comparison of the percentages of students achieving at or above

expectations and the second graphs reflect the percentages of students achieving below expectations.

### Year 3 and 4 STAR data

Year 3	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/ Exceeding
European	42	24	60	5	12	77
Maori	27	33	52	15	0	67
Pasifika	1	0	100	0	0	100
Other	1	100	0	0	0	0
Year 4	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/ Exceeding
European	43	30	65	5	0	70
Maori	25	40	52	4	0	56
Pasifika	1	0	100	0	0	100
Other	3	33	66	0	0	66

Table 1: Year 3 and 4 STAR reading data - Term 1 2009

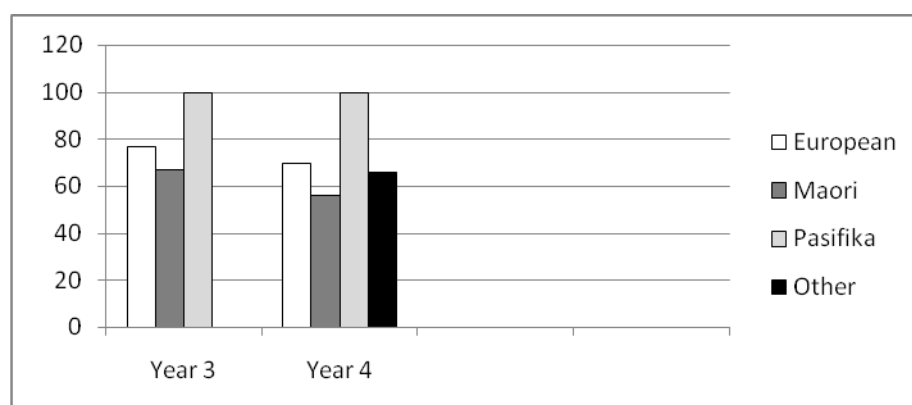


Figure 2: Students achieving at and above expectations - Term 1 2009

In Year 3 and Year 4, the majority of European and Maori students were achieving at or above national expectations in Term 1. The one Pasifika student in each of the year groups and two of the three students identified as Other were also achieving at or above expectations.

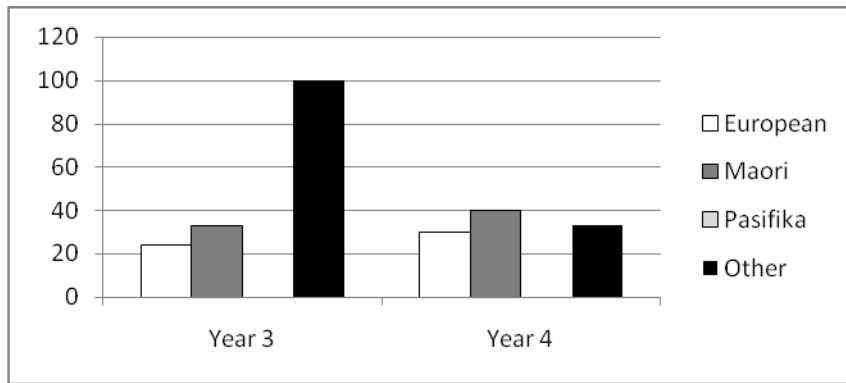


Figure 3: Students achieving below expectations - Term 1 2009

The number of Maori students achieving below national expectations is slightly higher than the number of European students achieving below in both year groups. This data represents one student identified as Other in each of the year groups achieving below expectations.

Year 3	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/Exceeding
European	35	9	37	31	23	91
Maori	25	20	32	32	16	80
Pasifika	1	0	100	0	0	100
Other	2	50	50	0	0	50
Year 4	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Out-standing	At/Exceeding
European	47	15	60	26	0	86
Maori	21	33	48	19	0	67
Pasifika	1	0	100	0	0	100
Other	3	0	100	0	0	100

Table 2: Year 3 and 4 STAR reading data - Term 3 2009

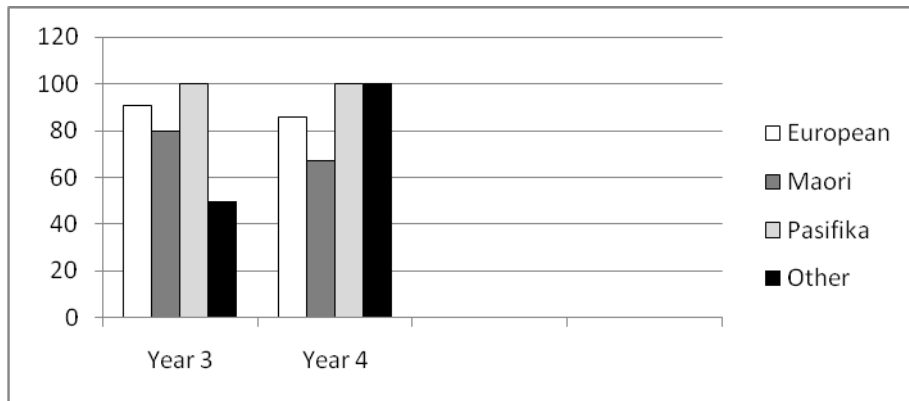


Figure 4: Students achieving at and above expectations - Term 3 2009

In Term 3, the majority of the students in Year 3 and Year 4 at Kowhai School were achieving at or above national expectations. All ethnic groups had increased the percentages of students achieving at or above expectations from Term 1.

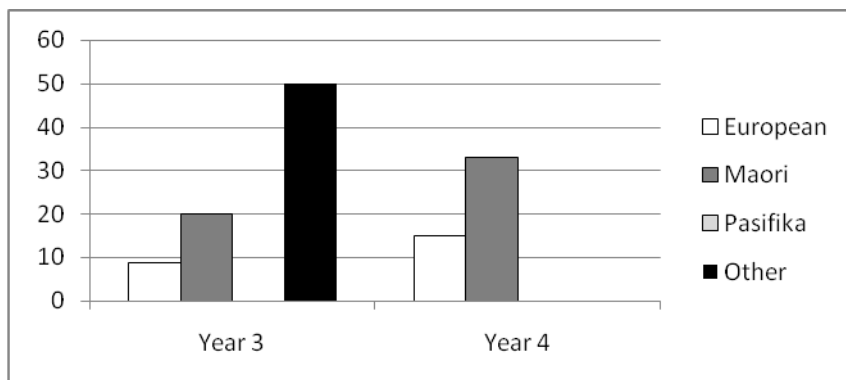


Figure 5: Students achieving below expectations - Term 3 2009

There was still a higher percentage of Maori students achieving below expectations in comparison to European students in Term 3. However, there were less students from each of the ethnic groups achieving below expectation in Term 3 than there was in Term 1. There is one student identified as Other included in the Term 3 data who was not enrolled in Term 1.

## Year 5 and 6 PAT data

Year 5	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/ Exceeding
European	53	19	70	8	4	82
Maori	14	7	71	21	0	92
Other	1	0	100	0	0	100
Year 6	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/ Exceeding
European	41	17	51	29	2	82
Maori	24	30	67	4	0	71
Pasifika	2	0	100	0	0	100

Table 3: Year 5 and 6 PAT reading comprehension - Term 1 2009

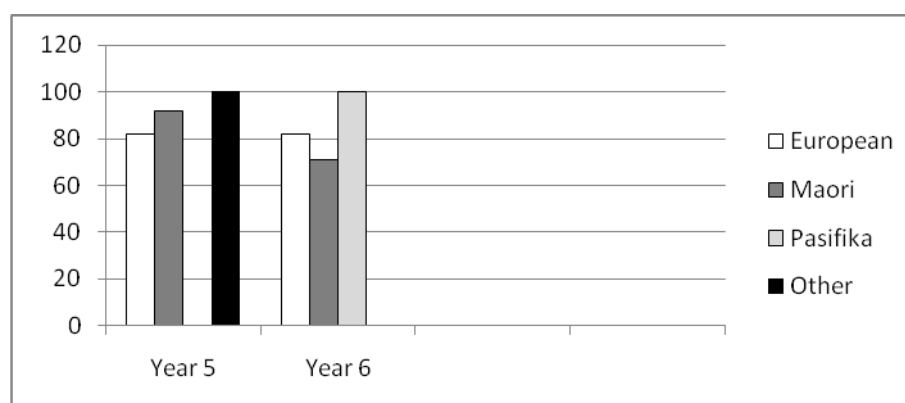


Figure 6: Students achieving at and above expectations - Term 1 2009

In Term 1, the majority of students were achieving at and above national expectations. Year 5 Maori student achievement was 10% higher than European student achievement, while Year 6 European student achievement was 11% higher than Maori student achievement. Two Pasifika students and one Other student are represented in this data which indicates that all of the students from these ethnic groups were achieving at or above expectations.

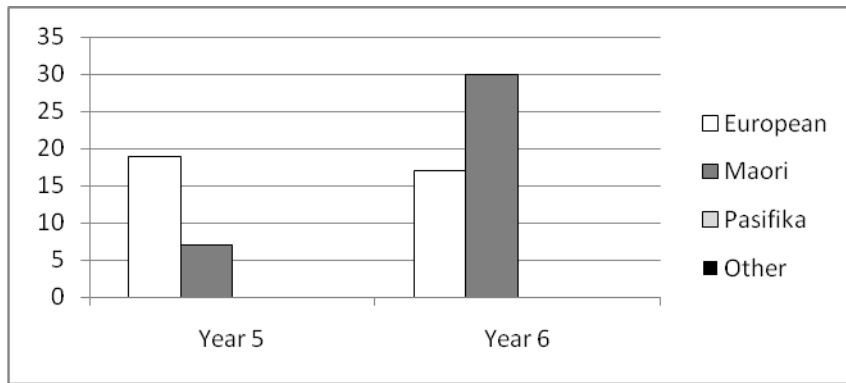


Figure 7: Students achieving below expectations - Term 1 2009

In Term 1 there were more European than Maori students achieving below expectations in the Year 5 cohort. However, the Year 6 data indicates that there were twice as many Maori students achieving below expectations compared with the European students.

Year 5	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/ Exceeding
European	49	8	49	37	6	92
Maori	12	25	58	8	8	74
Other	1	0	100	0	0	100
Year 6	Student Total	Below	At	Above	Outstanding	At/ Exceeding
European	43	9	37	35	19	91
Maori	22	18	55	27	0	82
Pasifika	2	0	50	50	0	100

Table 4: Year 5 and 6 PAT reading comprehension - Term 3 2009

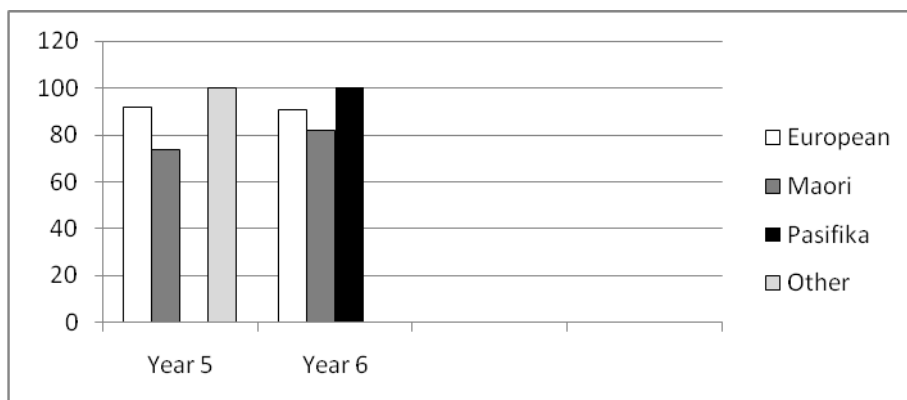


Figure 8: Students achieving at and above expectation - Term 3 2009

In Term 3, the majority of student were achieving at or above expectations in all ethnic groups. There was an increase in the number of European, Pasifika, and Other students achieving at or above expectations compared with the Term 1 data. While 64% of Maori students in the Year 5 cohort were meeting or exceeding expectations this was an 18% reduction in the percentage of Maori students that were meeting or exceeding expectations in Term 1.

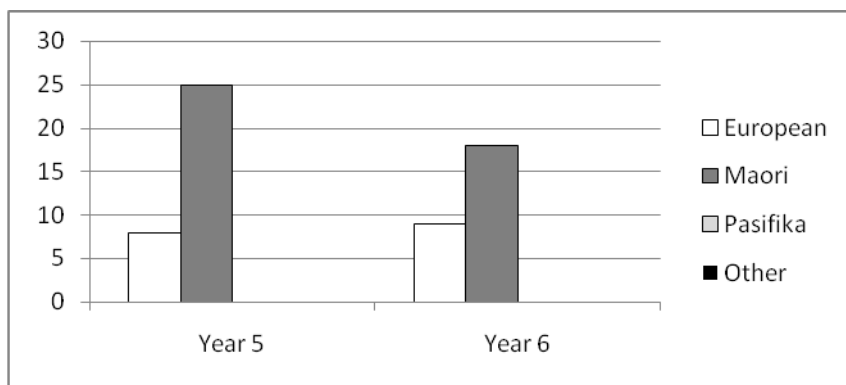


Figure 9: Students achieving below expectation - Term 3 2009

In Term 3, in both year groups there were more Maori than European students achieving below expectations. While there were less European students and less Year 6 Maori students achieving below expectations than there had been in Term 1, the percentage of Year 5 Maori students achieving below expectations had increased from Term 1.

### Running record data

Year 1	Student Total	Below	At	Above	At/Above
European	33	22	39	39	78
Maori	17	35	47	18	65
Year 2		Below	At	Above	At/Above
European	45	19	49	32	81

Maori	12	16	42	42	84
Pacific	2	50	50	0	50
Other	2	0	0	100	100
Year 3		Below	At	Above	At/Above
European	34	17	21	62	83
Maori	25	36	28	36	64
Pasifika	3	33	33	33	66
Other	3	33	33	33	66
Year 4		Below	At	Above	At/Above
European	50	16	33	51	84
Maori	22	23	32	45	77
Pasifika	1	0	100	0	100
Other	2	50	50	0	50
Year 5		Below	At	Above	At/Above
European	47	15	26	59	85
Maori	22	36	18	46	64
Other	1	0	100	0	100
Year 6		Below	At	Above	At/Above
European	44	25	18	57	75
Maori	23	17	35	48	83
Pacific	2	0	100	0	100
Other	2	0	0	100	100

Table 5: Running Record reading achievement data - Term 3 2009

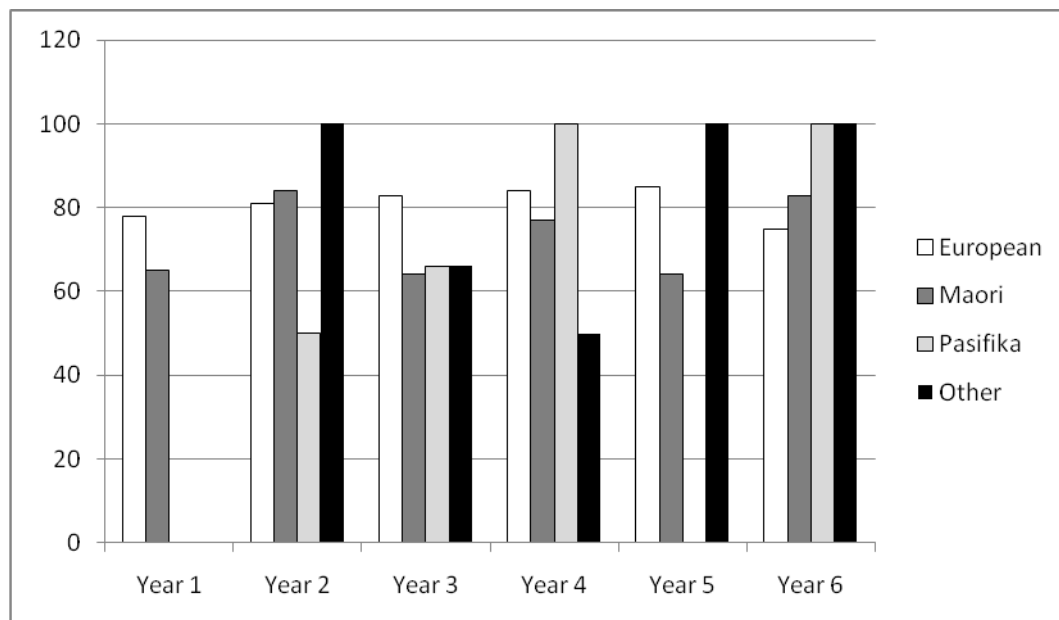


Figure 10: Students achieving at and above expectation - Term 3 2009

The reading running record data for each of the year levels indicates that the majority of all students at Kowhai School were achieving at or above national expectations in Term 3 of 2009. In most year levels European student achievement is slightly higher than Maori student achievement, however there are exceptions in the Year 2 and Year 6 cohorts where Maori student achievement slightly exceeds European student achievement. This data reflects either one, two or three Pasifika and/or Other students at each of the respective year levels.

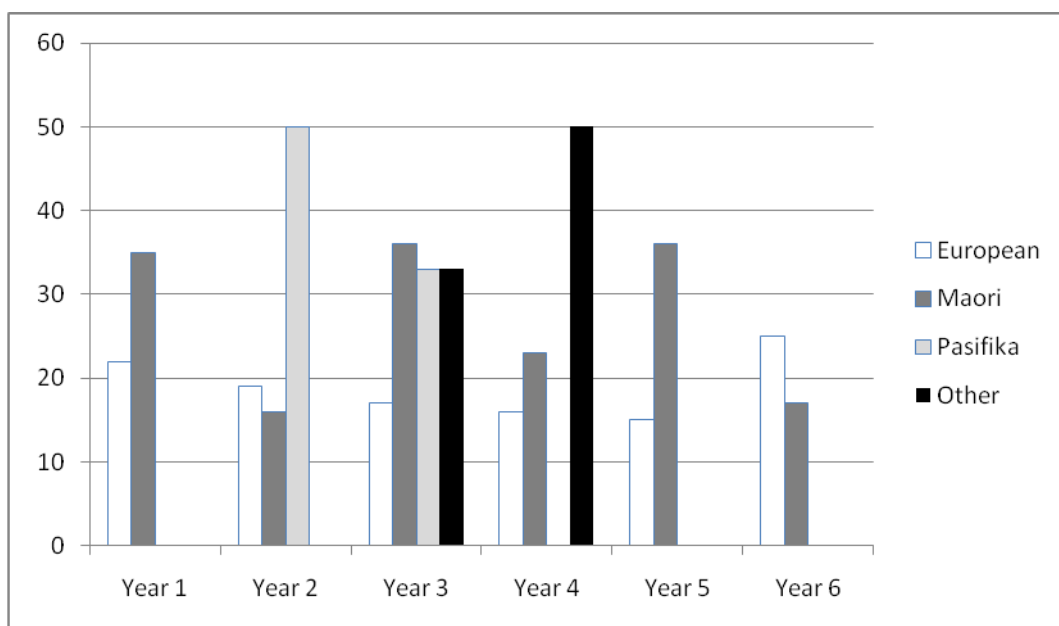


Figure 11: Students reading below expectation - Term 3 2009

The data for Term 3 in 2009 indicates that in Years 1, 3, 4 and 5, there were more Maori students achieving below expectations compared to European students, while the reverse situation is the case in Years 2 and 6. One, two or three students are reflected the data for Pasifika and Other students.

### Reading data analysis

In 2009 reading assessment data for the STAR test, the PAT comprehension test and reading running records indicate that majority of

all students, including Maori students were achieving at or above national expectations. With the exception of the Year 5 Maori student data, the trends in the STAR and PAT Comprehension statistics suggest that generally, student achievement improves between Term 1 and Term 3 as there was a greater percentage of students achieving at or above expectations in Term 3 than there was in Term 1. Conversely, there are less students achieving below expectations in Term 3 than there are in Term 1. The proportionally small number of Pasifika students and students who identify as Other, make it difficult to make comparisons and draw comprehensive conclusions, but the STAR and PAT data does indicate that all of the students from these groups that were enrolled in Term 1 were achieving at or above expectations in Term 3.

Of the 121 Maori students enrolled at Kowhai School, 87 of them (72%), were meeting or exceeding national reading expectations in Term 3 of 2009. While Maori student achievement is generally slightly below European student achievement, there are exceptions where Maori student achievement is slightly above European student achievement in the Year 5 PAT comprehension data (Term 1) and the reading running record data in Year 2 and Year 6 of Term 3. Another inference that can be drawn from the running record data, with a relatively higher proportion of students achieving at and above expectations in the senior levels of the school, is that on average the longer the students stay at Kowhai School, the greater their reading achievement.

## **Document analysis**

The document analysis involved a detailed examination of the most recent Education Review Office (ERO) report, and an analysis of school policies

and practice guidelines that were selected by the principal. The documents were discussed with the principal prior to the observation and interview phases of the research and she explained that the documents selected articulated the philosophical and pedagogical framework that leadership and school practices are based on.

The key school policies that were collected and analysed included the Curriculum Delivery policy and the Treaty of Waitangi policy. An examination of practice guidelines documents included the School Charter and Strategic Plan, the Team Charter, the Personalised Learning Target 2009 booklet, the school Term Handbook and the Appraisal and Attestation 2010 booklet.

### **Education Review Office Report**

An ERO review of the school was carried out in June 2008 with the report being released in August 2008. This report is relevant to this research because ERO evaluated aspects of the school's culture that contribute to raising school achievement in reading. This evaluation is consistent with the goals of this research, which is to examine leadership practices which ensure Maori students achieve. The ERO report had a formative function as it has also informed and supported the development of some school practice guidelines and professional development learning initiatives. At the time of the 2008 review, the school leadership team included the principal and one of the current assistant principals. For the purposes of this analysis the report has been summarised in four sections: Teaching practice, School-wide documents, Student progress and achievement and Principal's leadership.

### *Teaching practice*

The ERO report evaluation stipulated that since the last review teachers at Kowhai School now have a more consistent approach to teaching reading. In addition, teaching practice is supported by focused and rigorous performance management systems that provided teachers with ongoing feedback about their teaching. Teachers and management were developing their understanding of achievement levels, trends and patterns for groups of students and there have been developments in summative assessment procedures to strengthen teaching and planning. The classrooms reflected well organised and settled environments that support students to develop self-management strategies. Effective behaviour management in both the classroom and the playground settings have also contributed to the development of a cohesive school culture.

### *School-wide documentation*

ERO referenced the range of supporting documents developed by the senior management team to provide clear directions for important aspects of school operations. The documentation outlined school expectations regarding classroom management, organisation, assessment and curriculum delivery and it was suggested that these documents supported senior management's endeavours to work with teachers to create a shared direction for the development of the school learning culture.

### *Student progress and achievement*

The reading data analysed for the 2008 ERO report indicated that in the first year of school many students make less than expected progress. However, the data also indicated that beyond Year 3 students make good

progress with achievement patterns for students in Year 3 - 6 being above national expectations. This data showed that the general achievement of Maori students in reading was slightly below non-Maori.

### ***Principal's leadership***

The principal's leadership is identified as an area of good performance. Her management style is described as being inclusive, collaborative, open and transparent and it is suggested within the report that it is these characteristics that have made a significant contribution to the development of the learning culture that is present in the school. It is also suggested that the principal's approach to leadership has empowered stakeholders (trustees and teachers) to grow as professional learners and that the free flow of information and the open door policy allows parents to feel valued and welcome to approach both senior managers and teachers.

### **School policies**

#### ***Curriculum Delivery Policy***

The curriculum delivery policy guides the implementation of curriculum and emphasises the importance of providing curriculum that is focused on motivating, challenging and inspiring students to learn. Learning programmes are to be based on children's needs, abilities, interests, community expectations, the changing nature of their respective society, as well as National Curriculum Statements.

Implementation of learning programmes needs to reflect consideration of a variety of learning and teaching styles and strategies and in this sense

the programmes must be appropriate to meet the needs of the students. Communication and consultation with the Maori community is highlighted within this policy as a mechanism by which to identify the needs of Maori students and to develop targets for improving achievement. There is an emphasis within the policy to build a supportive partnership between parents and the school, not to find fault with parenting practices.

### *Treaty of Waitangi Policy*

Recognising and understanding New Zealand's dual cultural heritage forms the rationale for the Treaty of Waitangi policy. The need to retain the language, acknowledging the empowering qualities of Te Reo for children and upholding the school's obligations to the Treaty are highlighted within the purposes of this policy. The policy also outlines the importance of enabling all children to understand and respect tikanga Maori (specifically values, attitudes and behaviour) and of providing opportunities for children to display their talents through Maori craft and cultural experiences.

The guidelines for implementing the Treaty of Waitangi policy reference the expectation that staff will develop and incorporate into their daily programmes Maori values, Te Reo Maori and Tikanga Maori. Maori students and parents have the opportunity of participation in Maori immersion education and the policy states that instruction for all Maori children at the school must cherish their unique identity and cultural values.

## School practice guidelines

### *The School Charter and Strategic Plan 2010*

The school charter and strategic plan for 2010 is described (in the title) as being a partnership document for the students, teaching team, community and the Ministry of Education. The charter outlines the goals and expectations for all stakeholders in the school, provides the rationale behind the expectations and is also described as being a 'living document' that can be changed and adapted when required.

Within the charter document the school mission statement reflects a commitment to provide a safe environment for learning where children are encouraged to grow as individuals and lifelong learners. The shared vision of the school is inspired by a Maori proverb that is based on aspiring to greatness and pursuing excellence - "*Ka piki ki te taumata pumanawa*". This ideology is articulated in the school motto that encourages students to step up to the crest to be an effective citizen. Additionally, the word crest provides an acronym for the values, goals and beliefs that transpire from this vision: Communication, Respect and Responsibility, Education and Endeavour, Self-esteem, Teamwork (CREST).

With regard to governance, the charter stipulates that the Board of Trustees will provide staff and students with the best conditions and resources to support learning for all. Teachers are required to ensure that the shared vision, values and beliefs of the school's community are realised and they are expected to engage in ongoing professional learning that will allow them to implement pedagogies to meet the learning needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century students.

The strategic plan reflected the school's strategic direction for the National Administration Guidelines. The strategic directions for curriculum emphasised the need to implement teaching and learning programmes that reflect personalised learning. The need to differentiate learning and the importance of providing quality assessment to monitor and evaluate student performance were also highlighted. Consultation strategies with the school's Maori community and the development of a team charter are also included within the curriculum goals. The strategic goals for school personnel included the implementation of professional development to ensure that teachers were performing at high levels and delivering quality teaching and learning.

### *Team Charter*

Kowhai School's Team Charter reflects the vision, values, beliefs and strategic plan that are encompassed in the school charter, but this document provides a more detailed account of the staff's explicit and expected ways of working together. The team charter outlines protocols and procedures in four areas namely; meetings, team work, acknowledging achievement, success and effort and dealing with conflict. This document was collaboratively developed in meetings by senior leadership and staff to articulate how staff members are expected to carry out their professional responsibilities. The team charter was not imposed from the "top" but rather reflects a "bottom up" process as it was developed *by* the staff and *for* the staff to guide and support positive and supportive interactions and relationships.

### *Personalised Learning 2009 Target Booklet:*

The Personalised Learning 2009 Target booklet describes an ongoing professional development programme that Kowhai School commenced in 2009. The initiative was developed within the school and was initially led (predominantly) by the senior leadership team. In 2009 the broad rationale for this professional learning was to improve student engagement and achievement in reading and the specified target was to develop deeper teacher understanding and application of personalised learning to increase student involvement, engagement and achievement.

The priority areas or goals of this initiative focused on teachers developing a sound understanding of personalised learning through:

- An appreciation that all students can learn.
- High expectations for every student.
- Accessing and using knowledge about how well students are achieving to determine future teaching and learning steps.
- Designing tasks that strengthen student's skills to work individually, and in groups where they can support each other's learning.
- Developing a wide range of teaching strategies, including the use of new technologies and applying them creatively to support students learning. (Kowhai School, 2009c, p.2)

The targets and objectives of the personalised learning initiative are directly linked to the school charter and strategic planning goals and the appraisal and attestation process.

In the initial phases of the professional development the teachers explored and discussed their understanding of personalised learning and what it

would look like, feel like, and sound like within the classrooms and throughout the wider school. As a staff they extending their thinking by engaging in professional readings and the teachers choose an aspect of personalised learning that they were interested in and formed interest groups – professional learning communities, to investigate, explore and implement their learning into their classroom practice. Again, this initiative was not completely imposed on teachers from that top as it reflects a “bottom up” approach, where teachers had complete ownership over both the research and implementation processes.

The research and exploration that was carried out by each of the interest groups was shared and discussed within the wider staff professional learning community. Teachers were asked to reflect on the initial understandings that they had of personalised learning at the beginning of the year and then articulate what learning in their classrooms looked like, sounded like, felt like in Term 2. Teachers were also challenged to consider what they would not see in the classrooms if personalised learning was being implemented effectively. This exercise produced lists of practices and conditions that articulate the learning contexts that the teachers in Kowhai School want to create for their students.

The Personalised Learning 2009 Target booklet summarises the collaborative staff learning journey for 2009. This document provides a reference point to guide and support the ongoing professional learning for teachers and leaders.

### *The Appraisal and Attestation Booklet*

The Appraisal and Attestation booklet outlines that school guidelines and procedures. The document stipulates that the objective of the process is to align the three areas of; School Target, which is linked to student achievement, Teacher Appraisal, which is linked to teacher development, and Attestation which is linked to performance management.

The appraisal and attestation process is linked to the school goal and also involves the establishment of an individual goal. Goal setting is guided by the school-wide philosophy that goals are not about staff doing the same things they have always done before, but rather about looking towards doing different and better things.

Following the establishment of the goals, walk-through observations are carried out by team leaders (senior teachers) and are focused on the goal orientated dimensions of best practice. Senior leadership personnel also conduct formal observational visits to classrooms with these observations focusing on both the professional standards of teaching and the teacher's goals. These visits are followed up with feedback meetings between the teacher, the principal and one of the assistant principals.

The process of monitoring teaching performance is ongoing with 'roadmap' meetings or dialogue sessions to discuss progress and development. It is also an opportunity to talk about celebrations, concerns and ideas as it allows the senior leadership team to discuss and explore possible pathways forward for the teacher and to consider future planning of the school-wide direction.

### *The Term Handbook*

The Term Handbook is developed each term by one of the assistant principals in consultation with other senior leadership personnel and teachers with extra curricula responsibilities. The handbook is an implementation document that contains information pertaining to the school goals and theme for the term.

Administrative information such as the term overview, meeting schedules, communication procedures and student and staff timetables are detailed within the handbook. The vision and targets outlined in the charter and strategic plan are also reflected in this document through the guidelines pertaining to curriculum implementation and teaching practice. Such guidelines include planning requirements, possible teaching contexts and ideas, classroom assessment procedures and requirements, the behaviour action plan and planning templates.

### **Interviews with the principal**

The research question asked the principal to consider how culturally responsive leadership practice ensures that Maori students achieve. This section of this chapter presents the findings of the research based on the spiral discourse that transpired out of the interviews as chats, the semi-structured interviews and the stimulated recall interview with the principal.

The first semi-structured interview was conducted in two parts. Questions in the first part required the principal to share her understandings of culturally responsive leadership practice and to consider how her own leadership practice (with regard to her conduct and

the school's systems and structures), reflected culturally responsive practice. The second part of the interview was a stimulated recall interview which referred to observations of the principal's interactions during the observation phase of the research. The second semi-structured interview allowed the principal to revisit and explain in more detail some of the points that were raised in the first interviews and to elaborate on ideas that were discussed in the interviews as conversations. The interviews as conversations took place between the principal and myself throughout the duration of the research and the discussion data generated from these discussions is incorporated in this analysis.

An analysis of the interview data saw two significant themes emerge in relation to the principal's theorising about culturally responsive leadership and her subsequent practice. The principal's responses are presented thematically and direct quotes are used to illustrate the co-constructed understandings, interpretation and implementation of her leadership practice.

### **Understanding relationships**

When asked to describe her understanding of culturally responsive leadership practice the principal explained that it was about recognising the diversity of her school clientele and subsequently considering the ways in which she approaches working with people. She believed that establishing relationships with stakeholders allowed her to regard pupils, teachers and members of the community as individuals. This process involved listening to people and providing an opportunity for people to listen to and gain an understanding of her:

I do my very best to build a relationship with them; to understand their needs, their wants, their aspirations, their dreams and to be able to respond accordingly. So for me it's – well I guess the first thing is to build relationships with people to let them know where I'm from, where I'm coming from but also to try and gain an understanding about themselves and what they bring and where they come from and work through from there.

### *Relationships with parents*

Understanding the importance of firstly establishing and then maintaining relationships with parents is central to the principal's leadership practice. She recognised the need to provide opportunities for engagement and relationship building from the time parents and their children enter the school environment:

The process would start when the children enrol and sometimes it even starts before they enrol - so if there's an opportunity for dialogue with parents before their 5 year olds come to school, whether they've come from kohanga reo, kindergarten, pre-school or day-care – that's the time when I would start this relationship building that I referred to in my first question. To sit down with the parents – I always tell them about our school and I tell them very broadly about what the expectations are how the school operates, the sorts of things their child would be learning but then I give them the opportunity to say to me – these are our aspirations, for our child so that we start building that partnership because it is a partnership profile for the child's learning.

Careful consideration of parents and nurturing the relationship between home and school is another aspect that has become a focus for the school with open evenings and consultation meetings with the community. At a recent numeracy evening the principal attributed the large turnout of Maori parents to the fact that the school had made the evening “do-able” for parents. Making this meeting accessible included providing kai (food),

childcare, support materials and resources for numeracy in the home and ensuring that the time was suitable for parents who worked. Considering parents in the planning and preparation of these occasions proved to be successful:

I think that it was appealing to parents; it made it non-threatening we have worked on building up that relationship with our parents so many of the parents have seen how the teachers operate within their syndicates they've actually been to a lot of things this year.....we are a pretty friendly school. We love to engage with parents.

With relationships established the principal feels that parents know and understand that they are welcome in the school:

Parents now feel that they want to be involved in their children's learning ..... they know that there is going to be a partnership between the school and home with regard to their children's learning and they are curious, they want to be able to help their child at home and I'm seeing that it's particularly prevalent with some of our younger parents. So there were quite a few young parents there – young Maori parents which I was delighted with you know, they are there because they want their children to do well and they want to be able to help them at home.

As well as providing formal forums for engagement within the physical school setting the principal deliberately seeks out opportunities to meet and connect with parents and extended whanau. Although the school community is not her family's community or her personal place of residence she understands the importance of being active and present within the neighbourhood and amongst the people:

If I'm out and about – I might see a parent, and that's another opportunity to have a quick catch up with a parent, talk to them about how their days is – is everything ok, if there's a baby or a toddler in the pram it's an opportunity to interact with a future pupil. Parents love that – so the sorts of things I talk with kids about I often talk about with parents as well and it's

establishing that relationship. In the whanau unit, if I can't actually go to a powhiri myself I'll just go down and touch base with them and welcome them and say "Great to see you", because often Nannies come and Koros and the whole whanau will come so it's a good opportunity to touch base with people. I like to be visible and that's just the way I do it.

Sometimes working beyond the school gates includes visiting the homes of children to check in with families who are open and receptive to her presence. This is particularly important when dealing with sensitive issues. Rather than making assumptions about what is happening (or not happening), home visits provide the principal with a powerful opportunity to gain a greater insight into how the school can work with parents and families to achieve a shared goal. She believes that these approaches support her to maintain relationships and keep families and students engaged with the school where alternative approaches could create barriers between the home and school.

### *Relationships between teachers and parents*

The importance of relationship building between staff and parents is also emphasised and articulated by the principal in a variety of ways. Following the enrolment process, the principal encourages classroom teachers to build relationships with the parents by welcoming them into the classroom and being available to answer questions. The principal asks teachers to be aware of how parents may feel with regard to responding appropriately if parents appear to be apprehensive and shy in the school setting. She also encourages teachers to consciously support parents by providing feedback that reflects recognition and an appreciation of the contribution that they are making to their child's learning.

### *Relationships between administration staff and parents*

The principal recognised that administration staff are an important point of contact in the school for parents and she believes that the way in which they interact with parents is crucial to relationship building for the school. In her weekly meetings with the office administration staff the principal frequently describes the ways in which she engages with parents and feels that modelling the way that she wants administration staff to interact and communicate with parents is an effective means of demonstrating her expectations. She also acknowledges that at times, administration staff need to negotiate difficult situations with parents and feels that modelling and sharing her experiences and practice provides the guidance that they need to maintain good relationships:

I model the way I want them to be able to interact with parents and I know that they actually follow through with that. It's letting them know that I'm as human as they are and I do share with them the times when I do have difficult conversations with parents, but at all times the parents leave with their dignity intact. There is a way that we work with all of our parents and it's a sort of restorative approach – taking the time to explain to people carefully, knowing that sometimes they get upset, they get grumpy, they get short with us – there are ways that we respond to them and the way that we respond to them is always restorative so that they feel that they have been listened to, the problem has been addressed and they feel that the school understands them and that they are certainly going to be able to come back and face us again the next day.

The principal believes that the open door policy as well as her widely used catch phrases “come in and see us” and “come in and talk to us” facilitates a situation that allows for open, transparent and free-flowing communication between parents and the school. She suggests that this approach compliments her endeavours to build and maintain positive

relationships when things are going well, and it also supports the school to negotiate solutions in conflict situations:

The most important thing for us is that ongoing dialogue with our parents and our community on all levels and building that relationship – for the good times, but also for when things aren't so good! So the first thing we do when we do have an issue is we phone parents up and we say "Hey come on can you come in and we can have a talk about it?" We encourage that face to face dialogue with parents for every opportunity – the good and the bad. Some parents do feel a little shy, a little angry, sometimes when they get one of those phone calls but, we have a restorative approach, we say "Come in, let's have a cup of tea, let's have a talk about it, let's see what we can do to rebuild relationships and partnerships together." That face to face contact with parents where they can come in and often just vent, is really, really important and in some cases I'm just the listener and the parent will come in and say "This is how it is for me" – and you know I listen, because their perception is their reality. If it's something that can be talked through over a cup of tea between the two of us – with me then following up with the teacher then we do that otherwise I will say "I'd like to bring the teacher in and we'll have a chat about it together – how do you feel about that?", often that's the way it goes.

### *Relationships with students*

The principal prioritises making time to be visible to students and making the effort to communicate and connect with them. She related this practice back to her classroom teaching experiences stating that it was important to her to establish relationships with students on an individual basis when she was a classroom teacher and this philosophy had carried over into her role as a principal:

When I established relationships with the children I taught it was always on a bit of a personal level. I use to tell them about myself, where I came from, who I lived with, my husband's name and the cat and that sort of thing, and it encouraged them to just see you as a person you know – you are the teacher but you are also a person. I've found that it is no different when

you are principal. Children love you to be able to make a comment about their new hairdo or their jersey that Nana knitted. It helps me to make a connection with them and I can't do it any other way. It's just one of the ways I think that I interact with people generally so it's getting to know the whole child if I can and on all sorts of levels.

Exchanging and sharing personal information with students assists the principal to develop personal relationships and she feels that this is also supported by the school CREST model, specifically the corresponding values of responsibility and teamwork. The principal uses the CREST model to discuss and demonstrate the school expectations with both teachers and students. The notion of teamwork is about working with and for each other - "we are all in this together" and responsibility relates to understanding the part that they have to play in the team to achieve the shared vision. The principal has found using the CREST model to be an effective way of giving students protocols for their participation in the school and the model also helps to define the role of staff as part of the team, which is to listen to and accept what students have to say. Consequently children frequently approach the principal to share concerns that they have:

It is part of our overall school culture where we accept just in a quiet unobtrusive way, the child that comes and lets us know that something is not ok. We will be continually building on that because we like all of our children to feel quite safe and secure about coming and telling us about anything that is happening that is concerning them. We are aware that there are a number of children who may never disclose things or are just too afraid to but we hope that on the whole everybody would feel that it is a school you can come and have a quiet conversation with somebody you trust and something gets done about it.

The principal was also asked to explain the impact that she felt relationships between the teacher and students had on achievement. She suggested that in the classroom setting relationships were hugely important because if the teachers did not “know their students”, she did not believe it was possible for them to provide students with the learning opportunities that were going to support achievement. Teachers were also expected to be able to articulate their knowledge of individual learners during their appraisal interviews which allowed the leadership team to gauge the quality of the relationships and connection between teachers and their learners.

### *Relationships with staff*

In discussions with staff about aspects pertaining to classroom practice, the principal frequently referred to her own teaching practice and the challenging circumstances that she had personally experienced while she was a classroom teacher. The principal felt that it was extremely important for her to relate to her teachers as a classroom teacher, for them to see her - not just as the principal, but also as a teacher. Consequently sharing and articulating her classroom teaching experiences helped her to demonstrate that she understands what they are going through and also assists her to develop supportive relationships with teachers:

I like teachers to know that I appreciate the pressures of a classroom, I don't ever want for them to think: “Oh she doesn't know she's in an office how does she know what I'm going through?” I do know and I do get it! I know exactly what it is like when it's a wet day and you've got kids at you, things happen. I also just like to gain a bit of common ground with somebody who is struggling – so that suddenly they can say – “Yeah it is like that for me too, my reading group did fall apart,” so it encourages them to just open up and not feel

defensive about the things that are going wrong in their classroom.

The principal recognised a need to change a rigid management structure and develop an inclusive and cohesive school culture immediately after she was appointed principal and this has become an important part of her leadership practice over the past 8 years. Acknowledging the importance of relationships between staff members and how this influences school culture prompted the principal to work with staff to develop the team charter, described earlier in the documentation analysis. The team charter again highlights the CREST ideal of teamwork as it articulates protocols and expectations pertaining to the way staff relate to and work with each other. These guidelines have assisted the leadership team and classroom teachers to maintain supportive and constructive relationships and have also been particularly helpful when negotiating sensitive and potentially threatening situations:

It's an area of our leadership that we have all had to practice and develop. One of the aspects of our team charter is that when there are situations of conflict, how do we agree to deal with them, and one of our number one ways is to always have the face-to-face conversations, not the gossip, not the talk behind somebody's back - if you've got an issue with a person you meet them face-to-face and you deal with it in a respectful way. I think that that is one of our guiding principles when we have these conversations they can be of a sensitive nature but we like the teacher to leave with their dignity intact. They may be upset, but they've still got their dignity so the door is always open so that they can always come back.

The principal was asked to elaborate and describe why she felt that relationships were such an important component of her leadership practice. She suggested that this was grounded in the high value that she places on respect; "I like to be respected and I like other people to know

that I respect them.” She made frequent references to genuinely caring about how people feel and the importance of demonstrating that care and respect through verbal acknowledgement, smiling and physical gestures (handshakes and hugs). She believed that this helped her to gain trust and develop a connectedness which supported her endeavours to work with people.

Negotiating externally imposed systems and structures also provided the principal with an opportunity to reflect on her leadership practice and the philosophical framework that she has tried to foster and develop in the school. She believed that culturally responsive leadership practice is largely about using your knowledge of people to work respectfully and conscientiously with them, “It’s about caring about how people feel, walking in their shoes and being there for them.” She stated that she felt particularly challenged when she was required to work within legislation and guidelines that did not reflect her understandings of a culturally responsive process and essentially prevented her from engaging and connecting with people in a face-to-face forum. Working within such fixed parameters contradicted and compromised what she believed and how she preferred to lead and this was a source of a significant internal struggle for her.

While the principal prioritised the development of relationships as part of her leadership practice and acknowledged that relationships between the all school stakeholders were vitally important, she also recognised that relationships in isolation were insufficient in terms of ensuring that Maori students achieved. She felt that student achievement was a result of a fundamental combination of relationships and quality teaching practice and consequently she accepted the important role that she has in ensuring

that the teaching practices within the school are grounded in pedagogies that reflect best practice.

### **Understanding pedagogy**

The principal recognised herself as a “learner” within her school learning community and welcomes the opportunity to learn *with* and *from* others. Prior to the appointment of one of the school’s associate principals, the principal felt that as a learning community, the school was not doing as much as they could be doing in terms of providing alternative and exciting learning opportunities:

We had developed a form of tunnel vision where we knew that there were different ways that things needed to be done, but we couldn’t actually see the wood for the trees. Appointing an associate principal who had come from a fairly innovative school and who had a passion to work in a school like ours was a catalyst for change.

Drawing on the strengths and experiences of other leadership personnel has supported the principal to develop and implement professional learning for staff such as the ‘personalised learning’ initiative. Professional reading pertaining to current research, reports and literature also provide a forum for professional learning. She suggests that her motivation for reading is about being proactive and not wanting to miss out on anything and although she does not get a lot of time to read, she is particular in what she targets as she prefers material that is relevant to her school context, her learners and more specifically her Maori learners:

When I do read I like to read about schools that are similar to us, I will go online and read ERO reports, or in TKI look for curriculum stories that are about schools that are similar to us – because I always like to check out what we’re doing with another school and question – can we do it better? Or is there an idea that I’ve thought about but never implemented and

then there is a school that's using it – I can hook into that and have a look. So I'm always on the lookout for anything like that – any particular article, if it relates to Maori student achievement I read that, there has been quite a few in the gazette lately because I'm always interested in checking out how are other Maori students doing throughout the country and how are ours doing in comparison? Are our current approaches appropriate for those students?

In terms of working with external personnel the principal ensures that she is aware of how support agencies are working within the school and likes to involve herself in interventions. This allows her to be part of the problem solving, part of the learning that is occurring and it also supports her endeavours to be close to learning and what is happening in classrooms for both students and teachers:

So for me as a principal I always like to keep a bit of a finger on the pulse - particularly on what I call my hot spots, so that's rooms where things aren't going as well as they might, where there's a teacher who needs some support or a number of children who need some support. I'm fairly proactive in terms of making sure I know what's what so that if a decision needs to be made, it's not a knee jerk reaction it is something that I will have a really good understanding of and I can make a really considered response.

The principal spoke about two areas of learning and development in the school that have guided (and continue to guide) the philosophical and pedagogical framework that leadership and school practices are based on. These two areas reflect the development and implementation of the school vision and an in-depth focus on learning – namely personalised learning and linking learning and leadership.

### *The school vision*

The school vision was analysed and unpacked two years ago when the revised curriculum was introduced. The principal felt that this was an excellent opportunity to work with staff to develop a vision that reflected their school priorities and gave them clear direction for their learning journey as a school. She also felt that it was important to develop a succinct statement that was accessible to the whole school community so that everyone could understand it and recite it:

I remember when we sat down with the staff we talked about what was important to us in terms of values and goals and where we were heading. I remember saying to the staff – “we need a one liner” we need something that we can all remember - that is easy for a 5 year old – up to a 95 year old to be able to remember. So we talked and we had a lot of dialogue around learning, what it can feel like, what it looks like.

Ideas generated in the staff forum consistently reflected a whakatauki (Maori proverb) that the school had adopted, which translated to stepping up to the Crest to face life’s challenges and acknowledging that some challenges are extremely difficult to overcome. The principal felt that this sentiment reflected the journey of learning – for staff and students and also highlighted the role teachers have with regard to equipping students to negotiate the challenges they encounter on their learning journey:

We talked around that because we all agreed that the pathway of learning isn’t smooth, that there are going to be mountains, in the way and for our children at our school we actually need to be able to have some tools and some skills to cope with those mountains and scale them, so stepping up to the crest for us epitomised the learning journey, that it is onwards and upwards and along the journey there are going to be some troughs and bumps and we need to be prepared for that we need to actually be able to help our children through the CREST.

The principal felt that the CREST model that encourages everyone within the school to step up to be an effective citizen supports her to communicate the philosophical ideology that school practices are based on. She believes that it is a powerful way of telling people what her school is about and she ensures that she incorporates the CREST into her introductory meetings with new parents, “the crest model, the climbing up to the crest is a wonderful, tangible analogy that the parents can actually understand.”

### *Personalised learning*

Addressing the revised curriculum also provided a forum for the principal to explore staff perceptions and understandings of learning. In particular, the leadership team wanted to gauge what staff understood about personalising learning:

We realised that as teachers, we weren't really too sure as a whole, I'm talking collectively, about what learning really was.... so we realised that if we were going to be talking about learning at this school, and in particular, personalised learning, we really needed to unpack that just to see what it did consist of.

### *Personalised learning for students*

While the initiative was called personalised learning, it was necessary to clarify with teachers that personalised learning did not refer to an individualised learning model, with individual planning and programmes for each student to work through as individuals. At Kowhai School personalised learning reflected a move away from prescribed and generic learning programmes and teaching practices that did not differentiate between, acknowledge or reflect the personal needs and aspiration of

students as both individual and collective learners. The process of defining and unpacking personalised learning developed into a significant professional development initiative that saw the staff engage in professional reading and further discussion. Gradually teachers began to understand that personalised learning was about how learners learn:

Teachers actually bought into that – nobody was saying to them – there is one size fits all, nobody was saying we all believe that learning at this school looks like this (one way), and as our dialogue went on through staff meetings teachers were saying “Yeah actually there is more than one way to learn, there a lots of different ways to learn and this is how some learners learn.” For instance: multiple intelligences, VAK – visual, auditory, kinaesthetic, Maori pedagogy, boys learning, curriculum integration, a whole host of them.

Within their own classrooms teacher were encouraged to implement personalised learning initiatives and practices that reflected the interests and needs of their learners:

That started to embed itself in the type of practice that we started to see in classrooms because teachers were exploring their own notions around an aspect of learning. So last year it was a year of braveness I suppose because we weren't too sure, how it was going to go, in a nutshell we gave teachers permission to play around an aspect of learning under the umbrella of personalised learning – that they wanted to explore and apply to their classroom practice, and in some classrooms we saw little steps, in some classrooms things were transformed.

In terms of evaluating the personalised learning professional development initiative the principal felt that teachers had gained a deeper understanding of personalised learning. This was particularly evident when the staff presented their personal learning at an evaluation meeting at the end of the year:

I can only describe it as the wow factor because we just saw the evidence of that powerful shift in teachers understanding about learning – now they would be able to explain exactly what personalised learning means to them in their classrooms and better still you would even get some children now who would be able to tell you what it looks like.

At this early stage the school did not have any hard data to illustrate the impact of the personalised learning initiative on student achievement. However, the principal felt that based on her observations to date she has seen a significant change in teacher's thinking about their own practice and beliefs:

What I think it has made teachers do is they are very reflective, they focus far more on explicit acts of teaching than they use to because, not all teachers, but most of them have a sort of philosophy related to the way that they are teaching in their classroom, therefore their expectations are quite high, so there is stuff that they simply won't accept, that they won't even engage their children in such as worksheets and busy work that type of thing has dropped off remarkably from a lot of classrooms. I think in terms of children's engagement with their learning, the children are far more involved in dialogue and have hands on inquiring, having a go designing, guessing, - really involved in their learning rather than sit down, pens, paper, quiet activities – which we use to see a fair bit of.

### *Personalising learning for staff*

Self analysis of teaching practice was another notable result of the personalised learning initiative. The principal felt that teachers were really looking at what they are doing in their classrooms and why:

It's gathering momentum so we've sort of developed a critical mass now I think of teachers who have really grasped the personalised learning concept but it's going further now they are actually enjoying their teaching, but they are also being quite critical of looking at the results of their teaching so they are becoming more data literate, willing to sit down and

analyse on their own, and then with their colleagues the achievement data that has come out of their classrooms.

In addition to this the principal commented that as a collective of teachers they take ownership of non-achievement and ask themselves what are they as teachers missing for the students, what do they need to do? This ideology stands in contrast to the position teachers may have taken in the past, "Traditionally people have put up barriers and said "Well you know they just can't learn." That's not something you hear now – it's not an accepted part of practice." Deficit thinking and deficit comments about students are unacceptable and staff who make remarks that reflect a deficit position are spoken to and reminded that it is not acceptable.

Ensuring that the leadership team are in tune with each other and that their practice is consistent with and supports the school learning goals is a priority identified by the principal. Distributing leadership roles and responsibilities promotes shared ownership within the team and providing opportunities to discuss and share where they are going and what they are doing is an important component of their leadership practice:

Because I'm the principal I carry a lot of responsibilities, but I do share those responsibilities with my assistant principals so in sharing those responsibilities, having the dialogue where we can all talk about how we are managing those responsibilities ensures that we are all travelling down the same pathway. If one of us isn't – then the other two can make that person accountable by saying "Can you just explain your thinking behind doing that the way that you are doing it?" Just to remind that one of us, whoever it may be, that we may have just strayed from our pathway of what are expectations, are, of what our values are, of what our vision is, and it helps us to sort of realign and get back on that pathway again.

Dialogue within leadership meetings frequently reflected the learning that was occurring in classrooms. The principal felt that this is an aspect of the team's leadership that had developed and evolved over time and now characterises the way they work as a team:

I think it's arisen and it's become stronger because we are aware of what's happening in classrooms.....the three of us we actually have our ear to the ground, we know what's happening in classrooms, and we're interested! So when there is something that's really great happening – there's nothing better than the three of us we love to talk about it and we love to explore it a little bit more.

Keeping leadership practice close to classroom practice an important part of the principal's approach. She views teachers and the leaders (herself included) as learners and applies the personalised learning framework to her leadership practice by making the time engage with and understand teachers. She appreciates that teachers, like students are at different stages along the learning continuum and therefore she understands the need to differentiate how she works with and supports her staff.

The leadership team conduct regular informal visits to classrooms, participate in professional development and are involved in team meetings and formal observations through the appraisal and attestation process. This allows the leadership team to gain a good understanding for how both students and teachers are progressing towards the learning goals. Having this insight and information has been particularly useful when the leadership team has had to address issues of concern:

When something isn't working well or when we know that somebody is struggling, kids are struggling, teachers are struggling, again we talk about it and we try and talk about it constructively and supportively so that we've got a plan in place to support that teacher or to put in an intervention for that teacher or that pupil or some scaffolding. We're finding

that it's helping us to actually not have a deficit idea about our staff and about our children because "we're all in this together." We say that quite frequently so if somebody's data is not where it should be we say "Let's go and see what's happening in that classroom", because it may not be just the teacher being lazy that teacher may need some support and assistance, that teacher may not know how to take running records, that teacher may not be able to manage groups very well - its up to us – if we recognise that, to put some supports in place, to help that person.

For this reason the principal believes that having a firm idea and understanding of what is going on in the school is vital. She ensures that she is regularly present in classrooms and around the school and refers to this aspect of her practice as "taking the temperature":

If you want to make sure that we are all you know – stepping up to the crest to be an effective citizen, you've just got to get out there and you know – take the temperature – check that things are happening the way they should be.

The past two years had been a significant period of growth for the school in terms of defining their philosophical pathway (in the form of the school vision) and in developing a greater degree of depth and understanding around how to engage their students in learning. The principal's vision, looking toward the future, included building on what they have already established with the personalised learning initiative. In previous years the teachers had engaged in intense professional development in the area of reading and the principal felt that good achievement results in reading had provided an excellent platform for the school to embrace writing in greater detail and mathematics which have been identified as target areas for 2010. Improving Maori achievement is also on her agenda with the goal of having all students achieving at or above national expectations:

Tracking the achievement of our Maori students – all of our students but paying particular attention to our Maori students

and making sure that tail – the difference that we had between Maori and non-Maori is reducing, or – we’re not getting one – that’s what we would really love to have is not a tail at all – to have all of our students achieving where they should be.

When asked in the second semi-structured interview why she felt Maori student achievement was important, her response was; “there’s no excuse I believe, for us as a school to have a tail of low achievers that are mainly Maori or have a tail of low achievers – whatever nationality they are.” She referred back to the importance of ownership and teachers taking responsibility for ensuring that their Maori students are achieving:

If we’ve got a tail of non-achievers and they’re mainly Maori students then there is something that we are not doing right here. If they’re not achieving – it’s not their fault, I say to myself and to my staff, “So what are we missing? What aren’t we doing that we should be doing?”

She felt quite strongly that personalised learning journey had provided them with the pedagogical framework to raise all student achievement which is why she was reluctant to accept cohorts or groupings of non-achievement.

An understanding of relationships and effective pedagogy were identified by the principal as key components to her approach to leadership of the school. She feels that within her current staff there is a critical mass of teachers who understand relationships and have really grasped personalised learning and she suggests that she now expects and looks for evidence of these characteristics in potential employees:

The types of teachers we recruit for the future – we know the type of person who works well in our school and that’s the type of person we are looking for – somebody who’s got a good sense of humour, their own vision, passionate about teaching, who’s innovative, who’s done a little bit of research –

understands children, has a willingness to work in a school like this - so it's not just closing your door, but being open, being able to meet and greet the parents, get that holistic viewpoint so it's not just the principal that goes out and asks the child who knitted their jersey but everyone does that sort of thing.

The principal has implemented a variety of practices that characterise the way that she leads and supports learning for students and staff Kowhai School. This leadership practice will be discussed in greater detail, in relation to culturally responsive pedagogies and culturally responsive leadership practice, in the discussion and conclusion sections.

### **Interviews with the leadership team and classroom teachers**

The principal is the primary leader of the school and represents the first level of school leadership. The leadership team is made up of the principal, two assistant principals and four senior teachers. Although classroom teachers do not hold formal leadership titles, in this school they are recognised and referred to as leaders of learning in their respective classroom contexts.

Both the leadership team and a group of classroom teachers were interviewed (without the principal) as two separate focus groups in a semi-structured interview situation. The purpose of interviewing these two groups was to gain an insight into what both the formal school leaders and the classroom teachers understood about culturally responsive leadership practice and how it is interpreted and implemented in their school. Having gathered data that reflected the principal's theorising and practice with regard to culturally responsive leadership, I was also interested in finding out whether or not her theories and practice

were consistent with what the school leadership team and classroom teachers understood about culturally responsive leadership practice.

One assistant principal and three senior teachers were available to participate in the leadership team interview and four classroom teachers from each level of the school (including the rumaki unit) participated in the classroom teacher's interview. Two questions formed the basis of both interviews. The first question required the interviewees to consider and share their understandings of culturally responsive leadership practice and the second question required them to suggest how culturally responsive leadership is practiced within their school and the impact of this practice.

An analysis of both sets of interview data revealed consistencies between both focus groups. There were three main themes that emerged and two of the themes reflected the priorities identified by the principal. The responses from both the leadership team and the group of classroom teachers are combined and presented thematically to illustrate the consistencies between the groups. As with the principal's analysis, direct quotes are used to exemplify participants theorising and experiences pertaining to how culturally responsive leadership practice in their school ensures Maori students achieve.

### **Acknowledgement of Maori culture**

Both the leadership team and the group of teachers spoke extensively about the provisions that the school makes for staff and students (Maori and non-Maori) to engage with and participate in Maori cultural practices. The importance of acknowledging and understanding culture and a

willingness to learn about and participate in tikanga Maori were highlighted as key components of culturally responsive practice.

A range of Maori cultural practices and experiences were identified to illustrate the acknowledgement of Maori culture at the school. Such experiences include the powhiri at the beginning of the school year which has the dual purpose of welcoming new staff and students and formally opening the school year for the whole school community. Powhiri is a regular ritual throughout the year to welcome new students and visitors and in the senior school this year powhiri process and protocol become a specific learning focus as described by one of the senior teachers:

The seniors learnt about powhiri, because we did it on the first day and some of the kids didn't quite understand why we did it..... what is a karanga, why do we do it, all of the parts of the powhiri and we brought it all together in a real context. We used children from within the mainstream because we wanted our kids to know – that's what we do here, why do we do it and why is it important? You know the values of it so we used a whole team approach.

Participants felt that it was important to provide opportunities to acknowledge and promote Maori. The development of a kapa haka group for the mainstream classrooms was referenced as powerful forum for learning tikanga, waiata, haka and kawa. Instigating tuakana / teina relationships within classrooms and between classrooms had also become a widespread practice throughout the school. Both teachers and leaders believed that providing these opportunities had been beneficial, particularly for Maori students as observed by one of the teachers; “ I can see a lot of the Maori children in mainstream they're walking around that they've got this beautiful aura about them – it's like “Hey I'm ok, I'm fine – I'm comfortable now”.

The classroom teachers felt the strong presence of Maori culture in the school was a result of school leadership encouraging and supporting teachers to be culturally aware. One teacher felt that the expectation that Maori culture be embraced and celebrated within the school gave her and her colleagues confidence to “have a go” at teaching aspects of Maori culture which stood in contrast to her previous experiences in other schools, “Some schools don’t “do Maori” which is you know – is some schools, but this school encourages you to develop your own knowledge of it and be confident with it.” Members of the leadership team also felt that the emphasis placed on culture within the school and the encouragement provided by school leadership assisted teachers in their leadership roles within their own classrooms with regard to creating contexts that enable Maori students to feel proud:

I think you see in every single classroom here an element of culturally responsive leadership at that level because those children who are Maori know that it’s ok to be Maori, and being proud of that and walking tall – you know “I’m Maori and it’s cool” not – oh no I’m a minority in this class – none of that sort of stuff. It’s really positively encouraged and it’s a celebration.

The teachers felt that from their perspective culturally responsive leadership is reflected in the way that many of the Maori practices and protocols are the accepted as normal practice in mainstream education:

We don’t stand back and say “whanau unit do this,” we all do this – it’s our school and its part of our culture within our school, right through. Yeah it’s just natural because it’s just part of what goes on here. It just happens.

Teachers felt that acknowledging Maori culture provided a starting point to help them to develop a deeper understanding of the students and this

understanding extended to developing personal relationships with the students, their families and the whole community. The participants felt that culturally responsive leadership is not just about speaking Maori or embracing Maori rituals it was also about establishing relationships with people both within and beyond the school perimeter. This sentiment is explained by one of the teachers:

The leadership needs to show not only us .... it involves the whole community as well because they are seen to not just talk the talk, but walk the talk as far as - Maori students .... also involving the families as well and the community so it's not just a one flag ship, it's a many flag ship. Well it's all to do with whanau and it's that triangle you know that we're all working together, the school, the community and the whanau together.

### **Understanding relationships**

The participants in both groups identified the development of relationships as being paramount and a foundation of how they function at their school. They suggested that the acknowledgement and implementation of Maori cultural practices within the school supported their endeavours and provided a platform to connect with parents, work supportively with each other and to build relationships with students.

#### ***Relationships with parents***

Acknowledging and welcoming parents and families into the school provided a means by which leadership personnel and teachers could gain a holistic awareness of students and develop a mutually supportive partnership. The notion of bringing the community into the school setting to develop relationships with parents is based on the premise that family members make a vital contribution to learning as described by one of the teachers; "family dynamics are very different and very strong in Maori

families..... the learning is everything - it's not just pencils and pens and books, it's everything, it goes back to that holistic stuff."

Establishing good lines of communication helped to keep parents involved. Both groups believed that it was important that parents did not feel threatened by them as individuals or by the school as a whole, so they focused on creating an environment where parents did not feel judged or harassed, but rather an environment that celebrates and values them as partners, as described by one of senior leaders:

I like the idea that we have parents coming up here.... we say nau mai, haere mai, come in it's good to see you, come in and have a chat...they are coming in because they feel comfortable – they feel they can.

### *Relationships with staff*

All participants at some stage in each of the interviews referenced the support and cohesion they experience working in the school as a community of teachers and learners. Support for each other was characterised by the sharing of knowledge, expertises and resources and the development of a complimentary culture where individual and collaborative achievements were continuously acknowledged and celebrated.

The teachers in particular discussed in great detail the overwhelming sense of belonging and unity that they feel within the teaching staff and suggested that this subsequently filters through to the whole school. One teacher attempted to describe her own perspective of this phenomenon; "Everyone is one! You can almost breathe it, and the kids have got it, the teachers – there's an essence in the school – it's amazing." In support of

her colleagues comment the teacher from the rumaki unit verified that this sense and essence was *whanaungatanga - kotahitanga*.

### *Relationships with students*

In the classroom context, the practice of acknowledging and celebrating Maori culture provided a framework for teachers to acknowledge and celebrate all cultures and connect with students on a really personal level as described by a member of the leadership team:

We really encourage those kids to share their knowledge and what they know, and when we've had Fijian and Tongan – it's about building those relationships and making sure that you make that connection with those kids, you know talk to them one on one, because you know some of the kids are a bit shy about their culture so you know make sure that you make an effort every morning and I know that lots of teachers do, about talking to them and you know building up their self esteem and they become proud of who they are and what they are and what they've got to offer.

Both the teachers and the leadership team talked about taking the time to ask children questions and really find out about who they are as individuals, what they do, what happens in their home and in their families. One teacher described this form of connection as “hooking them in”. Again looking beyond the academics to really get to know and understand the students was fundamental to ensuring Maori students achieve. The link between acknowledging culture, building relationships with students and the subsequent influence this has on teaching pedagogy is illustrated in this comment, made by one of the teachers:

Well it's like even just little things that go beyond the pen and paper of the classroom, things like cultural things you know - like we have school rules where you're not allow to share food, well in the Maori community that's what they do they sit there and you know – that's how it works, so if we're sitting there

and saying you know - no you're not allowed to share your food, but they want to sit next to their cousin and share out of each other's lunch boxes if we show them that that's ok and we're making allowances - if you're allowed to say that, or say to them you know, that's ok, because we know that that is what you do, they feel you know respected and that it's ok and that then transfers into the classroom. It's ok - you know - we know that you like to learn like this ...so we're making allowances and changing your teaching to accept cultural difference, it makes a huge difference and we've seen it over and over in our classrooms.

### **Understanding pedagogy**

The school leadership team suggested that the development of learning programmes is negotiated initially within a cultural framework to acknowledge and incorporate Maori perspectives. Following the planning process of establishing the term themes and big ideas, the teachers then work with their students in the classroom context to negotiate what the learning will be and how the learning objectives will be achieved. They refer to this process of negotiation as 'personalising the learning'.

The leadership team believed that personalising learning reflected responsive pedagogy in the sense that their teaching practice was grounded in their knowledge and understanding of the learners. One of the leaders explained the connection between personalising learning and responsive pedagogy:

personalising learning links directly to that in a very proactive way - so understanding that the children have different needs, and some of those needs aren't just a cognitive learning need or a social need, but it's a cultural need. I think as a school we're open to that and we're aware of that at a range of levels....we're responsive to feedback.

The teachers talked about the importance to knowing their learners, understanding their strengths and weaknesses and making sure that their students themselves develop an understanding of how they learn best. Sharing and discussing the learning with students and developing a partnership as described by one of the teachers:

You might notice with things that they might mention from home whatever and if you acknowledge that and say to them “oh I know that you like this – how about we make your learning today through this” I’ve notice that my kids that I’ve done that with – one Maori boy in particular if you really tailor it to something that comes from something that he can relate to – he’s engaged way more than if I sit there you know saying “This is the way that we are all going to do it!” I’ve just noticed more engagement really with the kids and better results from there.

The teachers felt that their endeavours to ensure Maori students achieve were supported by school leadership with regard to the leaders sharing Maori student achievement data. The processes of data analysis provided them with opportunities to discuss the data and if there are issues, they could collectively formulate strategies to address the issues and within this forum they could also unpack and discuss areas of strength for Maori students.

With regard to their how they approach teaching and learning in their classrooms, the teachers all emphasized the personal responsibility they feel about ensuring that their students achieve. They understand the vital role that they have in the learning partnership as stated by one of the teachers, “it’s me as a teacher that’s going to make a difference with those children and if I’m not making a difference then I have to have a look at myself – I’m constantly critiquing myself.” This comment was supported and reinforced by another teacher:

You've got to be a really good reflective teacher, and if there's kids in your class that are from another culture and they're not quite it's not quite working for them well, you know you have to step back and have a look – you know “What am I doing that's not quite right for them?” And it's not only for culture, ...it's just another part of what you do and how you do it.

### **Summary:**

The student achievement data analysis, document analysis and interview data constitute the findings presented in this chapter. The student achievement data analysis indicates that majority of students, including Maori students, were achieving at or above national expectations in reading in 2009. The principal's interview data provides insight into her theorising about culturally responsive leadership and her subsequent practice which prioritises the development of relationships and quality teaching and learning. The theories generated from the interviews with the leadership team and teachers are generally consistent with those of the principal. Furthermore, the school documents articulate the systems and structures that reflect the school stakeholders' shared and evolving understandings, vision, goals and expectations.

The next chapter will discuss these findings in relation to the research question and the literature.

## **CHAPTER FIVE - DISCUSSION**

### **Introduction**

This study set out to investigate how one primary school leader provides culturally responsive leadership practice to ensure that Maori students in her school achieve. Following an analysis of student achievement data, this main question was broken down into two broad questions. The first sought to investigate what the principal understood about culturally responsive leadership and the second explored how these theories about culturally responsive leadership were implemented in practice (in terms of the systems and structures within the school). This chapter presents a discussion of the research findings in light of these questions and it will also discuss the findings in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

### **Prioritising relationships and quality teaching and learning**

The principal believed that culturally responsive leadership practice involved developing quality relationships and providing quality teaching and learning. Since being appointed to the position of principal, she had worked hard to provide leadership that fostered a cohesive and inclusive school culture that was focused on providing the best learning opportunities for all learners.

### **Developing face to face relationships**

Prioritising face-to-face relationships between herself, parents, students, teachers and the wider community was identified by the principal as being a key component of culturally responsive leadership practice. As

well as ensuring she personally developed quality relationships *with* school stakeholders, she also felt that as a leader it was her responsibility to ensure that quality relationships were developed and maintained *between* school stakeholders, that is; between teachers and students, between teachers, administration staff and parents and between teachers and administration staff as a community of professionals.

Respect and care were the values identified that served as broad guidelines for how the principal developed relationships and a commitment to gain mutual trust, maintain dignity and engender a sense of collaboration (teamwork) governed the way interactions occurred within the school. This focused effort to develop caring, quality relationships and build relational trust is consistent with aspects of pedagogical and transformational leadership highlighted in the literature and the characteristics of culturally responsive leadership (Bass, 1985; Bishop et al., 2010; Jacobson et al., 2005; Johnson, 2006; 2007; Leithwood et al., 1996; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robinson et al., 2009; Sergiovanni, 1998).

Paying particular attention to people and recognising and valuing them as individuals also reflects the concept of Manaakitanga, which is included in the Effective Teaching Profile (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007) and refers to teachers caring for students as culturally-located human beings. For the principal in her role as a school leader, Manaakitanga included care for students and extended to care for parents, extended whanau, family and professional colleagues (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Glynn et al., 2006; Smith, 1997).

While the principal recognised that developing and fostering relationships with and between stakeholders was a component of her role she did not view the development of relationships as being a separate and distinct task, but saw it as being intertwined with everything that she did in her role as a leader (Bishop et al., 2010; Jacobson et al., 2005; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). Consequently the nature of relationships and interaction patterns within the school were taken into consideration in the development of the philosophical and pedagogical frameworks.

### **Developing quality teaching and learning**

The principal recognised that quality relationships are part of quality teaching and learning practice. This position is in line with Robinson's (2007) assertion that "successful leadership influences teaching and learning through both face-to-face relationships and by structuring the way that teachers do their work" (p.10).

Prior to the development of the current school vision the principal had some concerns about some aspects of teaching practice at the school which were highlighted in the ERO review of 2004. These concerns and the requirement (by the Ministry of Education) to re-evaluate the school's vision and to develop the school's curriculum, provided the motivation for the principal and teachers to examine pedagogy within the school. The school consulted with the community to access their ideas and aspirations with regard to the schools' vision and goals. Within a series of meetings the leadership team and teachers discussed and considered new ways of approaching teaching and learning and set about reforming and redesigned the school's philosophical and pedagogical framework (Bishop

et al., 2010; Day et al., 2007; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004).

### **Establishing goals and expectations**

The establishment of specific and measurable goals and expectations to set the direction of the school is a core practice of effective leadership (Bishop et al., 2010; Day et al., 2007; Jacobson et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2009). This is addressed by the principal through the school vision which articulates the moral purpose for the school. The school vision is the philosophical goal that guides the development of relationships and interactions by specifying the expectations pertaining to communication, respect and teamwork. The strategic direction statements (pedagogical goals) provide a framework to guide teaching and learning and the practical implementation of these pedagogical goals materialised in the form of an internally designed professional development initiative termed 'Personalised Learning.'

### **Developing a learning community**

The role of leaders in the developing schools as learning communities and communities of practice is emphasised within the literature as a means of engendering collective responsibility and accountability for achieving the shared vision and established goals (Day et al., 2007; Fidler, 2000; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2009; Sergiovanni, 1998; Timperley, 2003; Wearmouth et al., 2009; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). The school vision and the strategic direction statements in the school charter were developed in consultation with all stakeholders and through this engagement in collaborative practices

(listening, sharing and responding) the principal fostered acceptance of these group objectives (Leithwood et al., 2004).

The interview data from all of the research participants indicates that within the school learning community, there are high levels of relational trust and mutual support (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2009). It is also important to point out that the principal applies a distributed leadership approach which means that she works closely with her senior leadership personnel to make decisions and collaboratively plan, develop and monitor teaching and learning and therefore, leadership is found at all levels of the school. She also recognises skills and expertises within the teaching team and encourages all teachers to contribute to the learning community and support their collective endeavours to achieve the goals (Bishop et al., 2010; Robinson et al., 2009).

Additionally, the principal acknowledges the importance of inclusive and responsive to the parents, whanau and community members in the school, therefore, she extends the school learning community to encompass these stakeholders and effectively creates a community of practice (Wearmouth et al., 2009; Wenger, 1998; Wenger et al., 2002). In this sense she shares and spreads (Bishop et al., 2010) the pedagogical learning and development of the school reform. Significantly, this distributed and pedagogical approach to leadership is understood and embraced by Maori as indicated by the comment from the rumaki teacher who described the learning culture that connected the teachers, students, parents, and whanau to the school and to each other as being *kotahitanga* – *whanaungatanga* – united as one.

The personalised learning initiative provided the leadership team and the teachers with a forum to explore how their learners learn, to critically examine teaching and learning practices and to research, trial and implement (based on evidence) alternative teaching and learning strategies. The practice of critically examining practice and curriculum content with the intention of building powerful forms of teaching and learning reflects characteristics of effective leadership (Alig-Mielcarek & Hoy, 2005; Bishop et al., 2010; Day et al., 2007; Hallinger, 2005; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009; Serigiovanni, 1998). The means by which the school vision and the strategic statements are implemented are explained in the next section of this chapter.

### **School systems and structures**

The principal worked with her leadership team and teachers to establish systems and structures to support the development of face-to-face relationships and to support the development of quality teaching and learning. The principal believed that to work effectively with people she had to get to know them as individuals and allow them to get to know her, thus reflecting her understanding of the need to connect with her community (Fullan, 2005; Tomlinson, 2002). Her endeavours to establish clear lines of communication *with* stakeholders and *between* stakeholders resulted in the development of a range of systems and structures to support the development of face-to-face relationships.

## **Developing face-to-face relationships with stakeholders**

Effective school leaders develop people within schools by providing individualised support and by modelling behaviour that is consistent with the shared values and goals (Day et al., 2007; Jacobson et al., 2005; Leithwood et al., 2004). As well as developing goals and shared understandings within the school pertaining to relationships, the principal and the leadership team developed a variety of school documents to articulate these expectations. The principal also reinforced these expectations by modelling them in her own interactions with all school stakeholders.

Practices that support the development of face-to-face relationships with stakeholders included the principal conducting enrolment meetings, attendance at powhiri for new students in the rumaki unit, home visits, maintaining a high level of visibility in and around the school, and ensuring that she was present and available to talk with people at school and at community events. When the principal could not attend enrolment meetings or powhiri she endeavoured to arrange another time to introduce herself to students and their families and to welcome them to the school. An “open door policy” that she applied to all doors in the school, including her own office also encouraged parents to come in and see her with concerns or issues. Additionally, this policy enabled the principal to make herself accessible to the staff as she prioritised being available to speak with and listen to both teachers and administration personnel.

The establishment of these systems and practices that support the development of face-to-face relationships in the school reflect the Maori metaphors that represent an appropriate pedagogy for Maori in

mainstream schools (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Smith, 1997). The concept of *Tino rangitiratanga* – the right to self determination, is acknowledged and addressed through the process of *powhiri*. The principal engages in formal ceremonial *powhiri* for new students in the rumaki unit and the enrolment meetings that she conducts within her office also represent a formal means of introduction. Both of these forums provide families with an opportunity to share who they are and to share their goals and aspirations. The principal shares information about herself and the school and based on these exchanges she allows the family to contribute to decision making (regarding class placement) by asking the parents to make comments and suggestions about their child's strengths and learning preferences. Meetings with staff reflect a similar pattern of engagement with regard to listening to and sharing perspectives to address issues and solve problems. In this sense the principal addresses self-determination with stakeholders within interactions that characterise *hui* processes. Ensuring that she is available and regularly meets with students and their families both formally and informally, supports her to build strong partnerships between the home and school which reflects *kia piki ake I nga raruraru o te kainga – mediation of socio-economic and home difficulties*, and it also enables her to foster *whanau* relationships. Additionally, both formal and informal encounters of engagement serve as opportunities for family, community members and staff to contribute to the development the school *kaupapa – collective vision* for ensuring Maori students achieve.

### **Developing face-to-face relationships between stakeholders**

The principal expects teachers and administration staff to develop quality relationships with students and their families and achieves this by

regularly articulating the school goals and values in formal and informal meetings. The previously mentioned open door policy also applies to all classrooms and provides an opportunity for parents to come into school and engage with teachers (particularly in the mornings before school starts and/or in the afternoons). Open (information) evenings, consultation meetings and special events are also strategically planned throughout the school year to encourage parents and whanau to participate in and celebrate the learning that is occurring within the school. These practices reflect the principal's commitment to create educationally powerful connections, build collaborative practices and build strong partnerships between the school and the community (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al, 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Day et al., 2007; Johnson, 2006; 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson et al., 2009).

### **Linking relationships and pedagogy**

A concerted effort to develop and foster relationships within the school is grounded in the principal's belief that all school stakeholders need to feel safe (cared for), valued and respected (Bishop et al., 2003; 2010; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Johnson, 2006; 2007; Macfarlane et al, 2007). She believed that relationships represent the key to teachers (in particular) really knowing their students and knowing their learners which was essential if they were to going to provide them with responsive learning experiences that were going to affirm their cultural identify, engage them and ensure that they achieved (ERO, 2010; Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Gay, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; 2007; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

## **Creating a culture of learning**

Effective school leaders attend to the task of developing their schools as learning organisations by creating high performance expectations, involving themselves in planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum and by participating in teacher learning and development (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009). In 2008, ERO suggested that the principal's inclusive and transparent leadership approach and her ability to empower trustees and teachers to grow as learners had contributed to the development of Kowhai School's cohesive learning culture.

The principal and her leadership team prioritise collaborative learning and consequently immerse themselves as leaders and learners in all aspects of pedagogical learning and development within the school. In engaging in learning with her staff the principal is effectively providing intellectual stimulation and within professional learning meetings and appraisal and attestation dialogue sessions she challenges staff to examine their assumptions and encourages them to critically reflect on their teaching practice (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004).

## **Developing a culturally responsive pedagogical framework**

Highlighted within the school policies is the expectation that the school will recognise the dual heritage of New Zealand and ensure that Maori culture and language are acknowledged within the school and incorporated into learning programmes. Consequently, Te Reo Maori is used extensively throughout the school and students and staff regularly participate in Maori cultural practices (powhiri and kapa haka). These observable examples of how Maori culture is acknowledged within the

school reflect the visible behavioural aspects of culture that exist at the surface level of Hall's (1976) cultural ice berg model. Although the principal did not discuss these particular examples of visible aspects of culture that exist within the school, the leadership team and the teachers believed that their engagement in the Maori cultural practices exemplified some of the ways that they endeavoured to connect with Maori children. Furthermore, all of the research participants agreed, that culturally responsive teaching practice was not just about providing Maori students with cultural experiences, as it required teachers to inquire about their students and find out about who they are as individuals on a range of levels (Gay, 2000; Earl et al., 2009; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; 2007; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995;).

The personalised learning initiative is an example of a professional development programme that was initially conceived by the leadership team, and then explored and developed by and through all members of the learning community. This initiative was provided as an example of the systems and structures that operate within the school that ensure Maori students achieve because the priority areas or goals of the personalised learning initiative require teachers to develop a deep understanding of students (including acknowledging culture) and then based on this knowledge, respond accordingly through co-constructed teaching and learning practices. The framework emphasises that teachers need to have high expectations for all learners and that they need to demonstrate knowledge of their learners by engaging in learning interactions and assessment practices that reflect the strengths, needs and aspirations of students as individuals and as collective groups of learners. This requires teachers to probe beneath the surface level of Hall's (1976)

cultural ice berg and really consider their own underlying beliefs and values.

The priority areas are essentially the goals of the initiative and the resulting framework is virtually identical to the Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile discussed in the literature (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007). The similarities are presented in the following table:

Kowhai School: Personalised Learning Initiative	Te Kotahitanga: Effective Teaching Profile
Teachers will develop an appreciation that all learners can learn.	<p>Teachers explicitly reject deficit theorising as a means of explaining Maori students' educational achievement levels.</p> <p>Teachers take an agentic position in their theorizing about their practice and express a professional commitment to bring about change</p> <p><i>Manaakitanga:</i> Teachers care for the students as culturally located human beings above all else.</p>
Teachers will have high expectations for all students.	<i>Mana motuhake:</i> Teachers care for the performance of their students
Teachers will access and use knowledge of students through formative practices and use this knowledge to determine future teaching and learning steps.	<p><i>Wananga:</i> Teachers are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Maori students as Maori. Learning involves a rich and dynamic sharing of knowledge.</p> <p><i>Kotahitanga:</i> Teachers promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Maori students.</p>

<p>Teachers will design tasks that strengthen student's skills to work individually and in groups where they can support each others' learning.</p>	<p><b>Whakapairingatanga:</b> Teachers are able to create a secure, well-managed learning environment by incorporating pedagogical knowledge with pedagogical imagination: teachers need to organise classrooms so that all the individuals are able to contribute to their own learning and to support the learning of others.</p>
<p>Teachers will develop a wide range of teaching and learning strategies, including the use of new technologies and apply them creatively to support students learning.</p>	<p><b>Ako:</b> Teachers use a range of strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners.</p>

**Table 6: Culturally responsive pedagogical framework**

The leadership team coordinates regular professional development meetings to collaboratively consider and reflect on teaching and learning. In meetings to consider the impact of the personalised learning initiative the teachers were asked to reflect on how they were approaching teaching and learning in their classroom contexts and how students were engaging with the learning programmes. The responses generated from this discussion reflect the teaching practices, learning interactions and outcomes that the teachers and school leadership personnel have observed in classrooms since implementing the personalised learning initiative. Such practices include teachers; engaging with students' prior experiences, prior knowledge and cultural knowledge to make learning experiences relevant and meaningful, developing strong connections between the class, home and wider community, sharing ownership in the classrooms and allowing students to lead so that learning is reciprocal, negotiating curriculum planning and assessment and providing ongoing feedback and dialogue about students' strengths, points for development and acknowledging achievement. The teaching practices described

replicate the practices that characterise culturally responsive pedagogies (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Earl et al., 2009; Gay, 2000; Glynn et al., 2006; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; 2007; Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995).

In addition to identifying practices that reflected what personalised learning looked like in action in their school context, the leadership team also asked teachers to consider what would *not* be occurring in their school if personalised learning was working in classrooms. This particular task generated a list of potential issues and teaching practices that have essentially become unacceptable in this school context. The issues and practices include; ongoing behaviour problems, unmotivated children and attendance issues, standardized classroom learning programmes including spelling tests, handwriting, worksheets, meaningless homework and large quantities of copying from the board, a totally teacher centred class - 'Teacher up the front', parents who do not understand the purpose of the learning in classrooms, and an atmosphere of demoralisation, disrespect and comments about children that reflect deficit thinking. Many of the issues identified resonate with transmission practices detailed in traditional method classrooms (Young, 1991) and contradict discursive, interactive approaches to teaching and learning (Berryman, 2008; Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

In articulating unacceptable practice, the leadership team and the teachers have crystallised the goals and what is expected in terms of providing quality teaching and learning within Kowhai School. Approaching

learning discussions in this manner promotes agentic thinking (Bishop et al., 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007) by assisting teachers to take ownership of potential pedagogical concerns and issues and by providing them with collaborative learning and problem solving experiences.

The personalised learning initiative essentially mirrors the Culturally Responsive Pedagogy of Relations and Effective Teaching Profile discussed in Bishop et al. (2003) and Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy (2007). In developing their own version of an appropriate pedagogy, the leadership team and teachers have created a school learning culture which reflects an expectation that teaching and learning practices will acknowledge and engage with students as culturally located individuals. This has subsequently resulted in a situation where deficit theorising is intolerable within the school and the notion that teachers have the agency and responsibility to ensure Maori students achieve is emphasised and promoted (Day et al, 2007; Bishop et al, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007; Bishop, 2008).

### **Monitoring and evaluating performance**

Effective school leaders engage in reflective practices to monitor and evaluate teaching practice and curriculum content in relation to school performance and subsequently facilitate constructive problem talk (Day, 2003; Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robertson, 2005; Robinson et al., 2009). Recording and documenting the professional learning that occurs within the school provides the leadership team and teachers with tangible reference points to consider and reflect on teaching practices and

the leadership practice and the subsequent impact that these practices have on student outcomes and the school goals.

Student achievement is the starting point for evaluation and self review within the school. Student achievement data is analysed and discussed in relation to teaching practices and programmes, particularly with regard to the personalised learning initiative. The ongoing discussions in meetings and regular observations of teaching practice by leadership personnel and amongst teachers have served to de-privatise practice (Jacobson et al., 2005) and create a community of critically reflective practitioners. Based on summative and formative evidence (student achievement data and attendance data), teachers regularly critique themselves individually and collectively with leadership personnel (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004). Based on these discussions and these meetings the leadership team also engage in dialogue about what they have observed in classrooms in relation to student achievement and the school goals.

The teachers, the leadership team and the principal view student disengagement and underachievement as a failure on their behalf to provide the students with what they need to engage and achieve (Leithwood et al., 2004). Essentially the teachers at Kowhai School have discursively repositioned themselves, because where they would formerly attribute underachievement to deficiencies in students they now refer to their own theorising, teaching practices and learning programmes as a means of explaining poor student performance (Berryman, 2008; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; Bishop et al, 2003; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, Teddy, et al., 2007). When there are issues and concerns that need to be addressed, teachers seek advice and support from colleagues and leadership personnel.

Additionally, when teachers are successful in ensuring students achieve they also share and celebrate within the collaborative forum and the dialogue and interactions facilitate the pathway for building the shared body of knowledge within this community of practice (Wearmouth et al., 2009, Wenger, 1998; Wenger, et al., 2002).

The attestation and appraisal processes have also supported the leadership team to create and foster this community of critically reflective practitioners by providing another forum to articulate the school goals and expectations and to engage in dialogue (feedback and feed-forward) based on the best practice pedagogy. Within this forum the leadership team and teachers measure the progress that they have made towards achieving the teachers' individual and school goals of improving student achievement. The process also allows both teachers and leaders to collaboratively plan and develop future goals for student and staff learning (Bishop et al., 2010; Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004).

Significantly, leadership practice mirrors the culturally responsive teaching practice that the principal expects to see occurring in classroom contexts. Deficit theorising about staff is unacceptable, the principal takes responsibility for guiding and leading teacher learning and the learning context that she creates for teachers (goals and strategies for support) are based on her knowledge of teachers' prior experiences and needs. She effectively personalises learning for teachers and her fellow leaders. Additionally, this model of monitoring and evaluating school performance is consistent with the 'bottom up' approach to school reform described by Elmore (1996; 2004) because it is teachers' classroom practice that informs and guides the adaptation and development of school systems and structures.

## **Student achievement**

While there are many factors that contribute to student outcomes, many theorists contend that school leaders can and do have an impact on student achievement either directly through their own actions, and/or indirectly through the way in which they influence teachers and teaching practice within classrooms (Day et al., 2007; Leithwood et al., 2004; Leithwood & Reihl, 2003; Robinson, 2007; Robinson et al., 2009). This research has identified that, in association with the intensive professional learning, development and changes in pedagogy that have occurred at Kowhai School since 2004, there has been a dramatic shift in student achievement statistics. Five years ago reading achievement data indicated that a significant number of Maori students were underachieving and that Maori student achievement levels were significantly lower than those of non-Maori. In October of 2009, the majority of Maori students at Kowhai School were meeting or exceeding national expectations in reading and furthermore, Maori student achievement was only slightly below that of non-Maori students as opposed to being significantly below in 2004, which signifies that disparities have been reduced.

The data indicates that 72% of the Maori students who attend Kowhai School were achieving at or above national expectations in 2009 and were essentially succeeding as Maori in a mainstream primary school setting. This provides evidence that the school is making progress towards achieving the strategic intent of the Maori Education Strategy - Ka Hikitia (Ministry of Education, 2008b ) and that the school principal is also addressing to the challenges highlighted in the Ministry of Education

literature pertaining to raising the levels of Maori student achievement (ERO, 2010; Ministry of Education, 2006; 2008a; 2008b).

The principal is acutely aware of the fact that Maori student achievement remains slightly below that of non-Maori and eliminating the 'gap' has become a school goal. The principal believes that there is absolutely no excuse for Maori not to be achieving as well as non-Maori and the progress the school has made to date serves as evidence that the leadership team and the teachers are creating culturally responsive learning contexts that ensure that most Maori students achieve (Bishop et al., 2003; 2010; Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop & Glynn, 1999). Additionally, given that most of the students from other ethnic groups (Pasifika and Other) are also achieving at or above national expectations also reinforces the position that teaching practice that benefits Maori will also benefit others (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007; Bishop et al, 2010).

While reading at Kowhai School has been a specific focus area for staff professional development in previous years, writing and numeracy are learning areas that are targeted for 2010 within the personalised learning initiative. As the school works to refine and develop their assessment practices, (particularly in writing) they will be closely monitoring and evaluating Maori student achievement in these areas and expecting to see improvements.

### **Culturally responsive leadership**

School leaders who are culturally responsive create culturally responsive learning contexts where teachers: have high expectations that students

will achieve, use evidence of student achievement to inform change, care about and affirm the cultural identity of students, facilitate the development of supportive relationships and interactions within classrooms and throughout the wider school, create strong partnerships between home and school, and take ownership for achieving the school vision and goals (Bishop et al., 2010; Johnson, 2006; 2007; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003;). Based on her understanding of culturally responsive leadership, the principal of Kowhai School has worked with all of the stakeholders in her school community to develop supportive relationships and ensure that school policies, practice guidelines, goals, systems and structures reflect a commitment to ensure that Maori students achieve. In this sense she could be described as being a social activist (Johnson, 2006; 2007) as from the time she was appointed to the position of principal she has worked with her stakeholders to institute changes and systemic reform (Bishop, 2010; Day et al, 2007; Leithwood et al, 2004).

The reform at Kowhai School has been ongoing over the period of the principal's principalship and has encompassed a number of professional development initiatives that have been guided by external reviews (ERO) and informed by student performance and the goals and aspirations all school stakeholders. The principal recognises the need to continually monitor and evaluate her own performance and the performance of teachers and students and is committed to engaging in the pedagogical learning and development that will enhance and sustain Maori student achievement.

## **Summary**

This chapter reviewed the findings of the research in relation to two broad questions and the literature reviewed in Chapter Two and has provided an insight into how a primary school principal works with her school stakeholders to create a context that ensures Maori students achieve. The development of relationships with and between school stakeholders to inform teaching and learning is prioritised by the school principal. Her subsequent practices have resulted in the establishment of systems and structures to support the development of quality relationships and quality teaching and learning. Aligning the vision and goals with the systemic infrastructure and having a clear and succinct focus on pedagogy has created a culture of learning where the underachievement of students, particularly Maori, is unacceptable and where members of the community of practice share ownership of the performance of students, themselves and each other.

## CHAPTER SIX – CONCLUSION

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to identify how one primary school leader provided culturally responsive leadership practice that ensured that Maori students achieve. The intention of this research was to provide an exemplar of leadership theorising and practices that enabled Maori students in a mainstream primary school setting to succeed. This chapter summaries the key findings of the research, outlines the limitations of the study and provides recommendations and suggestions for further research.

### **Summary of key findings**

There have been major changes in both leadership and teaching practices at Kowhai School since 2004 when a significant number of Maori students were underachieving in reading. The changes in practice have occurred in conjunction with considerable improvements in Maori student achievement and in 2009 majority of Maori students (72%) attending Kowhai School were achieving at and above national expectations in reading.

The principal attributes the improvements in Maori student achievement to shifts in the philosophical and pedagogical understandings of leaders and teachers within the school. This research has identified three distinct and interrelated strategies that encapsulate the principal's leadership practice and how she has worked with her school stakeholders to develop

Kowhai School's current philosophical and pedagogical framework. The three strategies include:

- prioritising the development of face to face relationships
- establishing systems and structures to support the development of relationships
- creating a culture of learning within the school community.

By focusing her efforts in these key areas the principal has demonstrated that she understands the fundamental point made by Robinson et al. (2009) that effective school leaders simultaneously focus on relationships with people and the organisational tasks of teaching and learning. Encompassed within the three strategies are the elements advocated by Bishop et al. (2010) in the GPILSEO model that describe what culturally responsive leaders do. Such elements include establishing goals, using evidence of student achievement to inform institutional changes, including all stakeholders in the development of a new school culture and ensuring that leaders and teachers accept responsibility for the performance of students, particularly Maori students.

Furthermore, it is the shared ownership of the performance of students that binds the stakeholders together and illustrates how the school has evolved into an example of Wenger's (1998) community of practice. Leaders, teachers and students are all learners at Kowhai School and the teachers in particular, interact regularly to build the body of knowledge (the pedagogical framework) that enable them to provide learning contexts that ensure Maori students achieve. Consequently, teachers endeavour to implement culturally responsive learning programmes for their students, while leaders work to develop professional learning forums that reflect the same principles for their teachers. It is this collaborative

endeavour that connects the community of learners with each other and gives them a common sense of identity. The resulting pedagogical framework is a school culture of learning that is understood by all stakeholders including Maori. Additionally, each of the strategies that describe how the principal has approached leadership can be defined in terms of Maori cultural metaphor and principles. The concept of *whanau* refers to extended family and encompasses the notion of developing relationships. *Tikanga* and *kawa* reflect organisational systems and structures and the term *akoranga* captures the concept of learning.

## **Limitations**

The limitations of this study are related to size and the nature of the sample. The research focused on the leadership practices of one principal, thus compromising my ability to make generalisations. Another limitation is the singular focus on Maori student achievement in reading. Examining the leadership practice of a larger number of principal participants and an analysis of Maori student achievement data from a range of curriculum areas would enable broader and more comprehensive conclusions to be drawn.

In retrospect the timeframe in which the research has been completed could also be considered to be a limitation because while the research has concluded, the principal's culturally responsive leadership practice continues to evolve and develop alongside the development and evolution of Kowhai School's culture of learning.

Despite the limitations of this research, the study has provided an insight into the leadership practices that are implemented in a mainstream

primary school setting where majority of Maori students are succeeding. While it is not possible to make generalisations to other principals in other mainstream school contexts, Bishop (1997) suggests that it is the role of the qualitative researcher is to tell the research participant's story for others to reflect on from their own perspective. The following section explains how the principal implements the three strategies identified in this research and provides a model of her leadership for others to consider.

## **Recommendations**

Corresponding with each of the three strategies that the principal has worked to develop are practices which have been instituted within the school. These practices can be distinguished in two ways, or more specifically at two levels. The first level practices refer to procedures and protocols within the school that relate directly to the principal's roles and responsibilities. The second level practices reflect the procedures and protocols that are relevant to the other stakeholders within the school, particularly teachers. The first level of prioritising the development of relationships, for example, involves the principal making a concerted effort to develop personal relationships *with* her school stakeholders. Through modelling and verbalising her expectations she sets the platform for the second level practices which are the patterns for relationships and interactions *between* school stakeholders.

The following table presents the three strategies and provides examples of the corresponding practices.

Leadership Strategy	1 <sup>st</sup> Level Practices	2 <sup>nd</sup> Level Practices
<p><b>Whanau:</b> Prioritise the development of face-to-face relationships.- <b>LEADER</b></p>		
<p><b>Tikanga/kawa:</b> Establish systems and structures to support the development of face-to-face relationships.</p>	<p><i>School Documents:</i> School Policies: Curriculum Policy Treaty of Waitangi Policy <i>Pattern for immediate and direct contact:</i> Enrolment meetings with parents and involvement in powhiri. Weekly meetings with leadership team, teachers and admin staff. Formal consultation meetings with parents. Attendance at community events.</p>	<p><i>Teachers' Documents:</i> Team Charter Attestation &amp; Appraisal Bk Personalised Learning Bk <i>Pattern for immediate and direct contact:</i> Teacher interactions with students before and after school. Open door policy for parental interaction between teachers and parents. Open evenings for parents to come into school and be involved.</p>
<p><b>Akoranga:</b> Create a culture of learning.</p>	<p>Collaboratively sets goals expectations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• School Charter &amp; Strategic Plan</li> <li>• Appraisal - classroom observations and feedback</li> </ul> <p>Supports teachers to be learners and participates in teacher learning. Includes parents and whanau in learning. High expectations. Rejects deficit theorising about students and teachers. Accepts ownership of teacher learning and student learning.</p>	<p>Personalised Learning - Culturally responsive teaching practices are interactive and reflect knowledge of learners. Teachers have high expectations that all students can achieve. Teachers critically reflect on their practice Teachers use evidence of student performance to inform their practice. Teachers reject deficit theorising about students Teachers accept ownership of student learning.</p>

Table 7: Leadership strategies and practices

While these strategies are presented in a linear arrangement it is important to acknowledge that they are not necessarily operationalised in a sequential manner. Relationships, for example, inform the development systems and structures within the school, and they also inform how learners engage and participate in the culture of learning. Additionally, systems and structures can be modified and adapted as a result of the knowledge that is generated within the learning forum. Rather than viewing each strategy as a distinct and separate phase it is perhaps more appropriate to consider the strategies in terms of 'layers' of the environment such as the ecological systems theory presented by Bronfenbrenner (1986).

Bronfenbrenner (1986) proposes that a child's environment is structured in a series of layers or systems namely; the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem and the chronosystem. While the three strategies that characterise the principal's approach to leadership at Kowhai School are not an accurate representation of Bronfenbrenner's (1986) entire theory, consideration of the microsystem, mesosystem and macrosystem in relation to the strategies does reveal notable similarities.

The microsystem reflects the child's immediate environment such as the family and school setting and encompasses relationships and interactions (Berk, 2000). The mesosystem provides for connections between individuals within the microsystem (Berk, 2000) which is essentially the function of the systems and structures at Kowhai School. The macrosystem is a larger system that represents the cultural context that influences how individuals carry out their relations (Bronfenbrenner, 2005), which is consistent with the principal's endeavours to create a school culture of learning. Bronfenbrenner (1990) further suggests that

bi-directional influences occur within and between systems which can effect a child's development, just as relationships, systems and structures and the school culture of learning at Kowhai School are interrelated and influence the way all learners (leaders, teachers, students, parents and whanau) contribute to and participate in the community of practice.

This framework is presented in the diagram below:

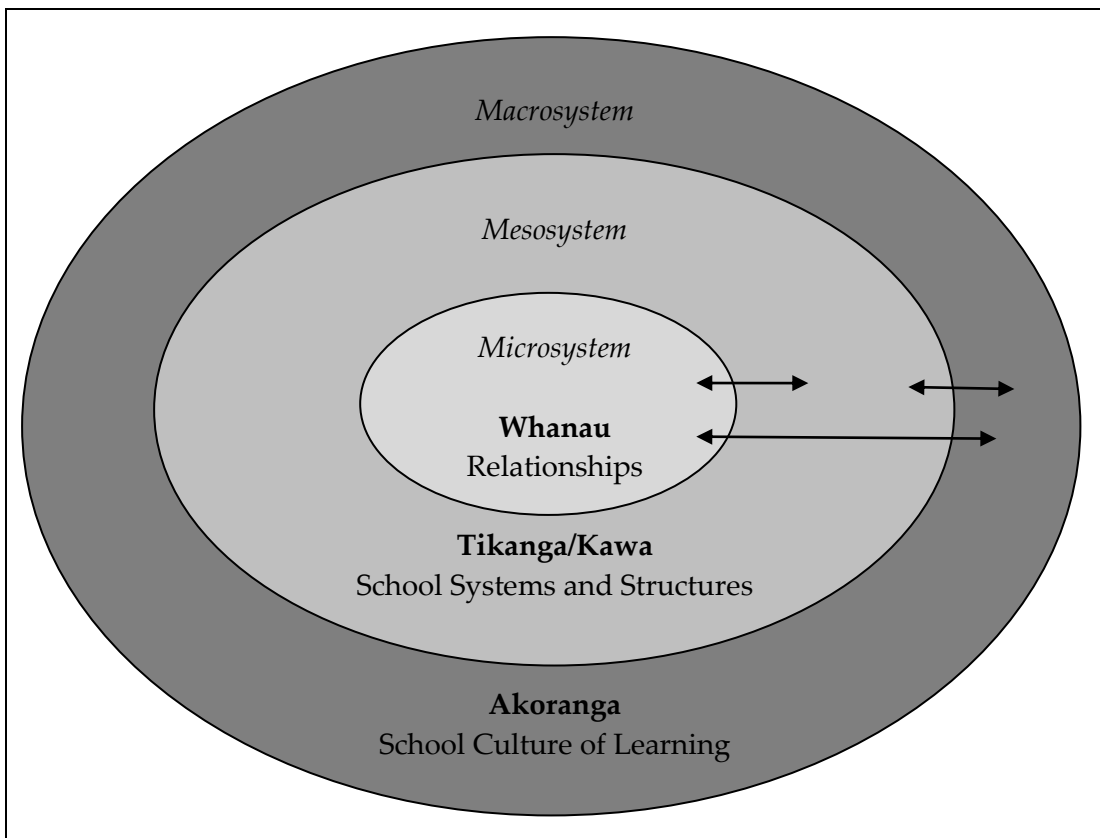


Figure 12: Potential model of culturally responsive leadership

### Further study

While this narrative of one school principal's culturally responsive leadership practice may provide an interesting and useful framework for educational leaders, administrators and policy developers to consider, it is unrealistic to suggest that this model represents the supreme solution to

the achievement disparities that currently exist between Maori and non-Maori within mainstream primary schools.

Further research is needed to explore the concept of culturally responsive leadership in mainstream primary school settings. A larger and broader principal participant base from across New Zealand could include principals that are male and female, Maori and non-Maori, as well as principals who work in rural and urban settings and across the decile spectrum. Investigating and comparing between leadership practices in a primary school settings and secondary school settings may also be a worthwhile endeavour. Such research could provide a more comprehensive representation of what culturally responsive leaders do in the New Zealand context to ensure Maori students achieve. A long term study that examines a principal's leadership practice over a period of years and monitors and evaluates this practice in relation to the performance of Maori students may also result in different and (or) more substantial conclusions about culturally responsive leadership than the current study.

## **Conclusion**

On a personal level, this research has assisted me to answer the original question I contemplated back in 2007 about what culturally responsive leaders *do* to ensure that Maori students engage with learning and subsequently achieve, although I acknowledge that a larger scale investigation is required in order to gain a more comprehensive answer. Nevertheless, this small scale study has provided some interesting and valuable insights, into school leadership practices which could potentially address the fundamental leadership challenges in New Zealand, posed by

Robinson et al. (2009), to raise achievement, reduce disparities and provide responsive education to Maori.

The statistics indicate the challenges are relevant to both primary and secondary school leaders. While the government is providing support and opportunities to develop culturally responsive leadership in some secondary schools (Te Kotahitanga and He Kakano), primary school leaders must take the initiative and be proactive in seeking out the research and support they need to close the unacceptable achievement gap and provide teachers with the pedagogical understandings, practices, systems, structures and school learning cultures that will ensure Maori students enjoy educational success as Maori. This will require leaders to be courageous - to challenge and change the current discourse, to ask questions of themselves, of their teachers, of fellow leaders and of the powerful politicians and policy makers who determine where and how educational funding is prioritised and allocated.

Achieving the changes and the reform that is necessary will take time and a concerted effort, but if these endeavours result in a more equitable education system, this could potentially lead to a more equitable New Zealand society, therefore, these efforts would surely be a worthy investment.

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<sup>1</sup> Kowhai School is a pseudonym used to maintain confidentiality. Contact me to gain permission to access these documents. My contact details are fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz

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## APPENDIX 1 – Interview information sheet

*How does one school leader, in a mainstream primary school provide culturally responsive leadership to ensure Maori students achieve.*

Researcher: Therese Ford

1. This project is part of a Masters thesis being undertaken in the School of Education at the University of Waikato. This research project has also been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education.
2. In light of the concerns about Maori student achievement, the development of culturally responsive pedagogies (particularly in secondary schools with Te Kotahitanga) and Ministry of Education expectations that school leadership practice reflect culturally responsive leaders, I would like to conduct my research in your school. I am seeking to observe and interview the principal about his/her experiences and understandings of providing culturally responsive leadership to ensure Maori students achieve. I would also like to interview a group of the senior teachers and classroom teachers to discuss their understandings and experiences of providing culturally responsive leadership to ensure Maori students achieve. Finally I would be hoping to view and analyse the school policies and practice guidelines and literacy achievement data.
3. I would like to record the interview so that I have an accurate record of what you share. You will have control over how long or short you want the interview to be, and can choose to end the interview whenever you think appropriate. Interviews can vary in length, and usually take at least an hour to an hour and a half. Usually there is no set time limit, but this may be something that you might wish to consider before the interview takes place.
4. When I am not using them, the recordings and any written excerpts or quotes taken from it will be stored in a locked filing cabinet at my home. No-one apart from myself and my supervisor will have access to them. They will be stored for the duration of the research after which they will either be archived in a location of your choosing, or destroyed if you so choose.
5. The name and location of the school will not be disclosed and you may choose to remain anonymous in this research project if you wish.

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

7. I would like to use the data collected in this research in presentations to academic conferences, and as the central data for my Masters thesis. I also hope to publish from this thesis in the future.

8. The process with the principal will involve observations of his/her school duties for one week, followed by one interview, and/or a second interview if required. The process with the senior teachers and classroom teachers will involve a group interview session with each group. The interviews will be performed in the environment of your choice, in your home, at your school, or I could arrange a location if you wish. The quality of sound is always an important issue in this respect, and also the need to be free from distractions.

9. It is hoped that the interview will give you the opportunity to tell share your experiences and understandings about culturally responsive leadership. This means that I will try to keep my questions as open as possible to allow you to direct the interview in a way that feels comfortable for you.

10. A copy of the recording will be made for you, and the master copy will be kept in my office during the project, and on completion at a location also of your choosing.

11. You will also be given the choice as to what access you will allow to the recordings by other people after this research project has been completed. These options will be outlined in more detail in the consent form that you will need to sign before the recordings can be placed in an archive.

12. If there is anyone else that you think I should be consulting with I would welcome your suggestions.

13. If you agree to take part in this interview, you have the following rights:

To refuse to answer any particular question, and to terminate the interview at any time

To ask any further questions about the interview or research project that occurs to you, either during the interview or at any other time

To remain anonymous should you so choose – anything that might identify you will not be included in conference papers, academic articles or any other report about the findings of the research

To take any complaints that you have about the interview of the research project, in the first instance to my supervisors: Russell Bishop or Mere Berryman (details below).

I will contact you in the next week to see if you might be willing to take part in this project. If you are, then we can discuss how this will be done. If you have any queries please feel free to contact either myself or my supervisor via the contact details listed below.

Therese Ford: [fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz](mailto:fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz)

Work Ph: (07) 575 3497

Home Ph: (07) 572 4082 or 027 612 6678

Primary Supervisor: Professor Russell Bishop: [rbishop@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:rbishop@waikato.ac.nz)

Secondary Supervisor: Doctor Mere Berryman: [mere@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:mere@waikato.ac.nz)

## **APPENDIX 2 – Individual letter to potential principal**

126 Gloucester Rd  
Mount Maunganui

Tena koe,

My name is Therese Ford and I am currently undertaking research to complete my Masters of Educational Leadership thesis at the University of Waikato. As part of this project I would like to carry out a case study of your school which would involve observing your leadership practice for one week, an interview with you about my observations, a group focused interview with your senior teachers and an analysis of your school policies and practice guidelines and Maori student literacy achievement data. Accompanying this introductory letter is an 'Information Sheet' which will give you some basic information about the project and what would be involved if you decided to participate. Please take time to read it so that you will be comfortable with and aware of the process and the details of the research. I am happy to answer any questions you may have to help clarify the process or any issues you are unsure of.

The overall aim of this research is to collect and record the experiences and understandings of a primary school principal with regard to providing culturally responsive leadership to ensure Maori students achieve. You will have control over how long or short you want the interview to be, and can choose to end the interview whenever you think appropriate. Such interviews can vary in length, and usually take up to at least an hour to two hours. Usually there is no set time limit, but this may be something that you might wish to consider before the interview takes place.

I hope that the interview will prove to be a useful experience for you as it is my intention to provide research that will support primary school leaders in their endeavours to develop and provide culturally responsive leadership. I really appreciate that you might be willing to give your time and energy to assist with this research. I will contact you to arrange a suitable time and date for the interview, and also to discuss any other questions or concerns you may have.

In the meantime, if you have any pressing concerns, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Sincerely,

Therese Ford

Therese Ford: [fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz](mailto:fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz)

Work Ph: (07) 575 3497

Home Ph: (07) 572 4082 or 027 6126678

Primary Supervisor: Professor Russell Bishop: [rbishop@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:rbishop@waikato.ac.nz)

Secondary Supervisor: Doctor Mere Berryman: [mere@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:mere@waikato.ac.nz)

## **APPENDIX 3 – Individual letter to potential participants**

126 Gloucester Rd  
Mount Maunganui

Tena koe,

My name is Therese Ford and I am currently undertaking research to complete my Masters of Educational Leadership thesis at the University of Waikato. As part of this project I would like to carry out a case study of your school which would involve am carrying out a series of interviews including interview you and your fellow senior teachers in a focus group interview, if you are willing and able. Accompanying this introductory letter is an 'Information Sheet' which will give you some basic information about the project and what would be involved if you decided to participate. Please take time to read it so that you will be comfortable with and aware of the process and the details of the research. I am happy to answer any questions you may have to help clarify the process or any issues you are unsure of.

The overall aim of this research is to collect and record the experiences and understandings of primary school principals with regard to providing culturally responsive leadership to ensure Maori students achieve. You will have control over how long or short you want the interview to be, and can choose to end the interview whenever you think appropriate. Such interviews can vary in length, and usually take an hour to and hour and a half. Usually there is no set time limit, but this may be something that you might wish to consider before the interview takes place.

I hope that the interview will prove to be a useful experience for you as it is my intention to provide research that will support primary school leaders in their endeavours to develop and provide culturally responsive leadership. I really appreciate that you might be willing to give your time and energy to assist with this research. I will contact you to arrange a suitable time and date for the interview, and also to discuss any other questions or concerns you may have.

In the meantime, if you have any pressing concerns, please feel free to contact me or my supervisor.

Sincerely,

Therese Ford

Therese Ford: [fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz](mailto:fordcartwright@xtra.co.nz)

Work Ph: (07) 575 3497

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Primary Supervisor: Professor Russell Bishop: [rbishop@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:rbishop@waikato.ac.nz)

Secondary Supervisor: Doctor Mere Berryman: [mere@waikato.ac.nz](mailto:mere@waikato.ac.nz)

## APPENDIX 4 – Informed Consent

126 Gloucester Rd  
Mount Maunganui

### CONSENT FORM

*Please sign this form to protect your privacy and interests*

**NAME OF PROJECT:** *How does one school leader, in a mainstream primary school provide culturally responsive leadership to ensure Maori students achieve?*

**FULL NAME OF INTERVIEWEE**.....

**ADDRESS OF INTERVIEWEE**.....  
.....

**DATE OF INTERVIEW**.....

**INTERVIEWER:** Therese Ford

#### 1. PLACEMENT

..... of ..... born on ..... agree that the recording of my interview and accompanying material will be held in a locked filing cabinet in the home of the interviewer, Therese Ford during the course of the project. On completion of the project I require that the recording be archived, or destroyed, subject to the conditions I have indicated in section 4 of this consent form.

#### 2. ACCESS

I agree that the recording of my interview and accompanying material may be made available to researchers at ....., subject to the conditions I have indicated in section 4 of this consent form.

**3. PUBLICATION**

I agree that the recording of my interview and accompanying material may be quoted or shown in full or in part in published work and/or broadcasts, subject to the conditions I have indicated in section 4 of this form.

**4. RESTRICTIONS**

a) No access is allowed to the recording/s of my interview and the recording/s are not to be quoted in full or in part, without my prior written permission.

**YES**            **NO**            (Please circle your choice)

b) I wish to remain anonymous and any information that may identify me be excluded from any published work and/or broadcast resulting from the interview.

**YES**            **NO**            (Please circle your choice)

If the answer to 4 b) was **YES**: It has been explained to me that it may not be possible to guarantee my anonymity and I am satisfied with the interviewers explanation of what she will do to try and secure my confidentiality.

**YES**            **NO**            (Please circle your choice)

I require that the interview recording be archived at the archive of my choosing (identified in section 2) on completion of the project.

**YES**            **NO**            (Please circle your choice)

I require that the interview recording and copies be destroyed on completion of the project.

**YES**            **NO**            (Please circle your choice)

**5. PRIVACY ACT**

I understand that under the terms of the Privacy Act 1993 I may have access to this interview and request amendment of any information about me contained within it.

**6. COPYRIGHT**

Copyright in recordings and accompanying material generated by this project is held

by.....

**7. COMMENTS**

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**Interviewee:**

**Interviewer:**

**Date:**

**Date:**

**This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of the School of Education. Any questions about the ethical conduct of this research may be sent to the Committee, postal address: Human Research Ethics Committee, School of Education, University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, 3240.**

## APPENDIX 5 – Stimulated Recall Interview

Interactions with staff:

Observation	Questions
<p>Leadership Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- “What’s on top?”</li> <li>- Shared parent compliant and follow up with the teacher.</li> <li>- Suggested home visit to follow up absenteeism rather than notification</li> <li>- Discussed wrap around support for both students and teachers re: touching base with students and meetings with teachers.</li> <li>- 7 year net suggestion – reference to current reading and research</li> <li>- Reflection on pedagogical framework within the school with regard to culture and attitudes</li> </ul>	<p>What is your rationale behind the format of this meeting?</p> <p>What was your thinking behind the home visit rather than the notification? What were you hoping to achieve?</p> <p>Can you explain the Personalised Learning initiative – where did it come from, what is it about, where do you see it taking the school?</p> <p>Current reading and research – why read it and why share what you read?</p>
<p>Teacher Meeting:</p> <p>Follow-up discussion with AP and a classroom teacher based around overcoming the “chat culture”. Dialogue was about improving aspects of classroom practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Shared personal experiences</li> <li>- Suggested strategies and experiences were</li> </ul>	<p>Describe how you approach these meetings which could be potentially uncomfortable and threatening for teachers?</p> <p>You kept coming back to and talking about your own personal experiences as a classroom teacher – why?</p> <p>What is the rationale behind the appraisal</p>

<p>shared and discussed</p>	<p>process with regard to involving your senior leadership team in observation and meetings?</p> <p>How have the staff received this ongoing approach to appraisal – how have you negotiated the implications and what has been the learning for you and the leadership team?</p> <p>What have been the observable outcomes – how does it link back to improving teacher practice and improving student achievement?</p>
<p>Senior Leadership Team Meeting:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion around the Term book – lead by AP</li> <li>- Open floor to discuss “what’s on top”</li> <li>- Reinforcement of expectations with regard to practice guidelines re: assessment – encouraging teachers to develop “depth” in the learning context/theme for the term</li> <li>- “Come and see us”</li> </ul>	<p>What is your rationale behind this meeting format and the resulting dialogue?</p> <p>Can you explain the background behind the development of the term handbook?</p>
<p>Meeting with Support Staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Discussion about the conversations with parents and community personnel – specifically what was said to them and how and why you said it.</li> <li>- “What’s going on in the school?” re: communication of</li> </ul>	<p>Why did you feel it was necessary to describe your interactions in this much detail – what were/are you hoping to achieve?</p> <p>What is the rationale behind this meeting format?</p>

trips, dates etc - "What's on top?" - Principal catch up day to catch up with other principals and catch up with what is happening in education	Why share details of your professional learning with support staff?
Meeting with RTLB: - In depth discussion about teaching practice the a teacher - <i>"I'm just going to tell you how it is and then we're going to dialogue around it"</i> - Open-honest dialogue about the "learning culture" and then the formulation of the support programme that honours and respects the dignity of the students and teacher	Do you normally have this level of in depth discussion with an RTLB - why?  You involve yourself in the problem solving and support programme – why do you do this as opposed to passing this responsibility onto your SENCO or the senior teacher?

Interactions with children:

Observation	Questions
Meeting and greeting students and parents: Directing students as they arrived at school	You were the face at the front of the school - why were you at the front of the school this morning coordinating the re-direction operation amongst all the construction?
Presence in classrooms and playground	Why do you spend so much time in the playground and in the classrooms?  You know many of the children's names –and you frequently ask personal questions of them ie: how's keyboarding going, how's your Mum? You appear to know many of the students in a very personal way – how has this come about?

	Why is it important?
Students approach the principal in the playground and/or visit her office.	Why do you make yourself so accessible to the students – and why do you think they approach you to share information and to share their learning?

#### Interactions with parents

Observation	Questions
Phone call from parent re: compliant. Come in and see us	Why do you make yourself so accessible to parents? What do you do and how do you do it?
Enrolment meeting with parents:	Why do you do the enrolments?  What was your rationale behind making suggestions to parents who were enrolling a new entrant child?
Numeracy evening for parents  What would you like – come and see us.	Why do you think so many parents attended this meeting?  What will you do in the future based on this experience?