Shifting the learning culture of a secondary school in Aotearoa New Zealand: An analysis of enacting a shared vision

A thesis

submitted in partial fulfilment

of the requirements for the degree

of

Doctor of Education

at

The University of Waikato

by

DEBORAH LEE GREENHILL

THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

2025

Abstract

Educational leadership frameworks and organisational literature have extensively documented successful leadership approaches, practices, change processes, and reform models. However, the literature lacks a nuanced understanding of how individual leaders, particularly middle leaders, make sense of and respond to implementing school-wide change. This study centres on how curriculum (middle) leaders in a traditional secondary school in Aotearoa New Zealand (AoNZ), interpret and translate a school vision into practice to shift their school's learning culture.

This interpretive study uses one school as a case study and six participants, five of whom are middle (curriculum) leaders and one senior leader participant. The findings are drawn from their transcripts from semi-structured interviews and associated documents they submitted for analysis. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to generate authentic insights into their lived experiences.

Key findings revealed that vision enactment involves a complex interplay between contextual realities and professional agency. While inclusive vision development fostered collective ownership, curriculum leaders were crucial intermediaries, having to translate aspirational language into concrete, student-centred strategies. Their agency was enabled through structured frameworks but constrained by contextual factors, including external performativity pressures and internal entrenched traditions. The study identified specific enablers (collaborative structures, embedded professional development, external expertise) and inhibitors (inadequate change management support, limited cross-faculty collaboration) affecting vision enactment. These findings demonstrate that meaningful educational change requires not only distributing leadership but also providing robust support systems that recognise the pivotal role of curriculum leaders as bridges between vision and sustainable learning culture change.

The study contributes to the field by offering insights into how curriculum leaders interpret a school vision and exercise professional agency to translate aspirational statements into classroom practices while navigating the complex contextual factors that enable and constrain their efforts.

Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been possible without the support of my research participants. I am deeply grateful to Chris, Joanna, Melanie, Rachel, Rhys, and Samantha for generously giving their time and candidly sharing their thoughts.

I acknowledge the support of my chief supervisor, Dr. Noeline Wright, who provided guidance, critique, and support throughout this research journey. I also acknowledge Dr. Sheralyn Cook, the late Professor Martin Thrupp, and Dr. Dianne Forbes, who provided support at various points along the way.

I acknowledge using Grammarly Pro as a writing tool to review grammar and style during the final stages of preparing my thesis. I critically reviewed all feedback generated and either dismissed suggestions or revised the writing in my own words and expressions.

I also thank my proofreader, Nikki Crutchley, whose careful attention to detail helped polish the final document.

I want to acknowledge my friends, especially my learning buddy, Cheryl, for their encouragement and support throughout this journey's ups and downs.

I am forever grateful to my family – Anna, David, Isabella, and Cameron – for their love, support, and faith in me throughout this endeavour.

Finally, I acknowledge with deep gratitude my late parents, who instilled in me the values of striving for excellence and perseverance. These guiding values empowered me to attain the academic opportunities that were unavailable to them in their time. I dedicate this thesis to my mother, who sadly passed away during the final year of my research journey.

Table of Contents

List of Abbreviations

AoNZ	Aotearoa New Zealand
BoS	Board of Studies
BoT	Board of Trustees
CoL	Community of Learning
CoL – WST	Community of Learning – Within School Teacher
ERO	Education Review Office
ETP	Effective Teacher Profile
HoD	Head of Department
HoF	Head of Faculty
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IEP	Individual Education Plans
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PBL	Project-based Learning
PD	Professional Development
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPTA	Post Primary Teachers' Association
SEI	School Effectiveness and Improvement
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
SOLO	Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes

Glossary of Terms

Ako	A reciprocal learning relationship in which the teacher is also the student and the student also the teacher.
Decile	A system used to classify schools based on the socioeconomic background of their students. It was used to determine funding, with lower decile schools receiving more funding to support students from socioeconomically disadvantaged communities. In 2023, the decile system was replaced by the Equity Index (EQI), which is now used to determine the amount of equity funding schools receive.
e-asTTle	**E**lectronic **A**ssessment **T**ool for **T**eaching and **L**earning used in Aotearoa New Zealand schools to assess student achievement and progress.
Kaitiakitanga	The responsibility to care for and protect the land, water, and other natural resources for future generations.
Manaakitanga	A core Māori value that embraces hospitality, generosity, respect, and care for others. It is also about reciprocal relationships and the well-being of the group.
Māori	Indigenous people of Aotearoa New Zealand
Pasifika	People who have migrated from or identify with Polynesian, Melanesia and Micronesian cultures in the Pacific.
Rahui	A temporary ban or restriction placed on an area, resource, or activity for various reasons, often for conservation, social control, or to acknowledge significant events.
Tangata Whenuatanga	Indigenous Māori people, particularly those who have a historical connection to a specific area of land. Provides contexts for learning where the identity, language and culture of all learners and their whanau are affirmed.
Te Kotahitanga	Unity, togetherness, and solidarity. A concept promoting a sense of community and collaboration and working towards shared goals.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi	Treaty of Waitangi, Aotearoa New Zealand's founding document, was signed on 6 February 1840 between the British Crown and 43 Māori chiefs. Additional regional signings February-November 1840.
Te Wānanga	An institution or organisation dedicated to education and learning, particularly in the Māori context.
Waananga:	A process of discussion, deliberation, and sharing knowledge to arrive at a deeper understanding. It is a way of engaging in meaningful dialogue with learners and the broader community.
Whānau	An extended family or community of related families who live together in the same area.
Whanaungatanga	The process of building respectful relationships through shared experiences and working together, which provides people with a sense of belonging.

Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

When I arrived at Braemar Academy (pseudonym) as a teacher over three decades ago, I had no idea I would witness and eventually help lead one of the most challenging periods in the school's history. Like many secondary schools across Aotearoa New Zealand (AoNZ), we were caught between the weight of tradition and the urgent need for change in an increasingly digital world.

The internet had already begun transforming how our students accessed information and interacted with each other, creating new challenges that our traditional approaches seemed ill-equipped to handle. Students could now access information independently, without it being mediated by teachers first, highlighting the crucial need for critical thinking skills to help them sift through information and identify what was reliable.

As someone who would spend the next 28 years at this school, moving from assistant teacher to senior leader, I had a prime position to observe how one school grappled with these pressures while trying to serve its diverse community of 1800 students. This is about one small part of that journey – not just how one school attempted to respond to these new pressures but also my own development as an educator as I grappled with fundamental questions about how a school responds to cultural, social and technological shifts.

1.2 Setting

Braemar Academy was an educational world that felt both familiar and distinctive when I arrived, with five years of teaching experience behind me. This large, urban, multicultural state school drew its students from a relatively affluent area and had built a solid reputation over the years as a successful school. Like all state schools in New Zealand, we were required to teach the national curriculum. However, the high level of devolution in our education system allowed us considerable autonomy in shaping that learning for our community. The school operated within the competitive environment that had emerged from the *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms of 1989. Originally designated as decile nine, our high socioeconomic profile provided certain advantages. We had a contested and expert-led Board of Trustees (BoT) that successfully navigated being a self-managing school, as it drew on a highly professional community for its members. From 1991 to 1998, we were able to control our enrolment criteria, maintaining a stable student demographic and strong academic reputation.

In those early years, I assumed various roles, including head of department (HoD), head of faculty (HoF), and staff representative on the BoT. At the same time, due to my business background, I was asked to lead an in-house committee responsible for allocating curriculum resources and developing our information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure. This last role sparked something in me that would prove significant later - a growing interest in how digital technologies might transform learning.

The school was traditionally structured in every sense. We had a clear hierarchical staff structure, a curriculum organised around distinct learning areas, and a timetable built on 60-minute learning episodes across a week, with subjects from learning areas allocated timetable space. National achievement targets were a key priority, with considerable resources allocated to tracking student progress. When one of my senior leadership colleagues collected student narratives about their earning experiences, they painted a picture of classrooms dominated by direct instruction. Specifically, it was clear that teachers dispensed knowledge, textbooks served as primary resources, and success was measured by students' ability to demonstrate, replicate, or retransmit what they had been taught through tests and national certificate standards.

The early 2000s brought shifts that would gradually reshape our school community. Government policy changes around enrolment processes led to the introduction of a revised enrolment scheme in 2003 that prioritised in-zone students. Our decile rating dropped, and our student body became more culturally diverse – changes I welcomed, even as they presented new challenges for our traditional approaches.

We implemented the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA) in 2003, and while initial concerns arose regarding internal assessments and moderation, the school maintained strong academic outcomes. Our results served us well when national league tables began appearing in the media. The introduction of the New Zealand Curriculum in 2007 marked another significant shift, though its full implications were not immediately evident.

Throughout the 2010s, our community continued evolving. We served students from increasingly diverse ethnic, cultural, and learning backgrounds while competition from other city schools intensified. For the first time, we needed to think strategically about marketing to attract and retain students. A key priority became redefining our identity as an *innovative* educational community committed to preparing students for an uncertain future.

1.3 Background

By the time I joined the senior leadership team responsible for school-wide teaching and learning, I was uniquely positioned to observe the gap between our aspirations and our reality.

My master's degree studies, from 2013 to 2015, exposed me to innovative ideas through international and national literature while also raising uncomfortable questions about whether traditional secondary schools were fit for purpose in a century characterised by constant change and disruption.

My initial attempts to drive change focused on e-learning, reflecting my belief that digital technologies could offer new learning opportunities and empower students to engage more actively in inquiry-based and collaborative learning. Between 2009 and 2016, we implemented several initiatives to build staff confidence and capability with digital tools, which included joining an ICT cluster with another secondary school. We provided opportunities for teachers to attend national conferences such as Learning@School and ULearn, which exposed them to innovative ideas about learning and advocated for a significant shift from teacher-centred to student-centred approaches.

Through these experiences, I learned a crucial lesson – meaningful change in classroom practices cannot be driven solely by senior leadership; it needs to be led by those closest to the classroom – the curriculum leaders who would translate initiatives into daily practice. This realisation would prove central to my later research interests.

Despite our best intentions, the reality of implementing change proved far more complex than I had anticipated. Alongside our focus on digital technology, we introduced a range of other initiatives, including the Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes Taxonomy (SOLO), the Effective Teacher Profile (ETP), teaching as inquiry, culturally responsive pedagogy, a new learning management system, and efforts to embed school values into daily life.

Our staff well-being surveys in 2017 and 2018 delivered a stark message. For many teachers, these initiatives felt fragmented and overwhelming. The pace of expected change post-2015 had left staff struggling to keep up. With their already heavy workloads, many treated these changes as mere compliance requirements rather than meaningful pedagogical shifts.

I began to understand that changing pedagogical practice is a challenging, long-term process that our implementation approach hadn't adequately accounted for. From my senior leadership perspective, bringing about a shift in teacher mindsets in a managed and coherent way represented one of the most significant challenges I encountered in my career.

During 2017-2018, I led a teaching and learning group of faculty representatives to examine how we could better prepare learners for work, citizenship, and life in our increasingly complex and rapidly changing world. Many group members had attended the professional learning conferences I mentioned earlier, as well as national conferences in their respective subject areas.

A key focus of our group was to examine the nature of learning, drawing on the key ideas presented in the condensed version of the practitioner guide *The Nature of Learning: Using Research to Inspire Practice* (Groff, 2012), an invaluable resource that some faculties began using to guide their teaching and learning approaches.

Around the same time, our school joined a Community of Learning (CoL) with six primary schools. This resulted in ten staff members, including some from my teaching and learning group, taking up positions as CoL leaders. Their inquiry-based projects on topics such as project-based learning, culturally responsive pedagogical practices, and curriculum integration exposed our group to new perspectives from local, national, and international thinkers.

I remember vividly the overwhelming feeling that our current positioning presented real impediments to preparing students for the world they would inhabit. We were particularly concerned by the school's emphasis on summative assessments as curriculum drivers and primary indicators of learning success, which seemed to stifle innovation and creativity for both teachers and students.

Our increasingly diverse student body, with very different backgrounds, starting points, and learning behaviours, constantly made us question whether their needs were being adequately met. I observed a small but increasing number of students who had become disengaged in their learning, which manifested in negative classroom behaviour and truancy. My colleagues and I were also concerned about the achievement gap, as measured by NCEA and e-asTTle data, which persisted between Māori and Pasifika learners and other learners in our school.

The most personally challenging aspect was the tension I felt between our school's vision, which aspired, among other things, to be innovative and prepare students for their place in an ever-changing world, and the day-to-day reality of the teacher-centred approach I observed throughout the school.

1.4 Research Journey

These discussions proved timely when, in 2018, our BoT undertook its three-year strategic review. The process began with a full-day professional development session facilitated by an external educational leader, followed by extensive community consultation involving online surveys and focus group meetings with parents, caregivers, Māori, Pasifika communities, and staff.

What emerged from this process was significant – a revised school vision that changed our aspiration from an innovative educational community to an *inclusive* one. For the first time, our

vision wasn't just a standalone statement meeting statutory requirements – it was positioned as the centre of our collective efforts moving forward.

This shift toward a more holistic approach, responsive to individual learner needs rather than a generic 'one-size-fits-all' academic results-driven model, was very encouraging. However, I was under no illusions about the scale of the challenge ahead. I was acutely aware of how our earlier initiatives had overwhelmed staff, and I knew we needed a fundamentally different implementation strategy.

Several deeply ingrained practices loomed as potential obstacles: our emphasis on academic results as the primary measure of success, our entrenched traditional structures and hierarchical organisation, our overreliance on direct instruction, the ongoing tension between local community needs and external government pressures, and perhaps most challengingly, the stability and long tenure of staff that might indicate resistance to change or preference for maintaining the status quo.

While our BoT had set out a compelling vision and strategic plan, I knew that bringing about the desired learning culture shift would require strong leadership, effective communication, extensive professional development, and a willingness to challenge established norms and practices. However, I also recognised that the real work of transformation would happen through the curriculum leaders - those middle leaders at the forefront of educational change who would need to make meaning of our shared vision and enact it in their daily practice.

As we concluded the strategic planning process and prepared to begin implementation, I made a significant personal decision. After 28 years at Braemar Academy, it was time for me to move on. The timing was both coincidental and, in hindsight, fortuitous for my research interests. Having been very involved in creating the vision and strategic direction, I left just as the real implementation work was about to begin.

This transition positioned me uniquely, no longer as an insider advocating for change, but an outsider curious about how change would actually unfold. I had helped craft the vision, understood the school challenges intimately, and witnessed the struggles with previous change initiatives. Now, I wondered how the curriculum leaders would make sense of this new direction. How would they translate an inspiring but broadly worded vision into the practical realities of their daily work with teachers and students?

These questions became particularly compelling because I understood both the size of the challenge and the critical role these middle leaders would play. They were the ones who would need to bridge the gap between community aspirations and classroom reality. They were the

ones who would face the daily task of helping teachers shift from familiar practices toward something new and uncertain.

Having experienced firsthand how earlier change initiatives had been perceived as fragmented and overwhelming, I was curious about whether this approach – starting with a community-developed vision – would feel different to those tasked with implementing it. Would curriculum leaders experience this as just another initiative to comply with, or would they find ways to make it meaningful in their specific contexts?

My research focus emerged from the following questions: How do curriculum leaders make sense of a school's vision for change? How do they navigate the complex process of translating that vision into practice during the critical first year of implementation? What enables some to move beyond compliance toward genuine engagement with new possibilities?

This thesis tells the story of the beginning of that journey. It examines the first year of implementation – that crucial period when vision meets reality, when inspiring words encounter entrenched practices, and when the real work of culture change begins. Through the experiences of curriculum leaders at Braemar Academy, it explores what happens when dedicated educators are asked to lead change in institutions that have long operated in traditional ways.

This is a story about beginnings, not endings – about the messy, uncertain, but ultimately hopeful work of educational leaders trying to create something better for the students they serve.

1.5 Structure of the Thesis

Having established the context and rationale for this research, I now outline how this story unfolds across the following chapters. This thesis is organised into five chapters. Chapter One has set the scene by describing my interest in this research area and the background and context of this research.

Chapter Two reviews the key literature relevant to my study. This review contextualises my research and is drawn from national and international sources. The chapter addresses five key areas: research perspectives on school change, the political and educational context in Aotearoa New Zealand (AoNZ) from 1989, the role of a shared vision, the affordances of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC), and leading for change. At the end of this chapter, I identify the research aims and questions developed from the literature review.

In Chapter Three, I provide a rationale for this study's ontological, epistemological, and methodological positions. I then explain my choice of case study and my research approach, including the ethical considerations associated with my position. The last section of this chapter assesses the methods employed for gathering, analysing, and presenting data.

Chapter Four reports the findings from the semi-structured interviews and document analysis, which are organised around vision work (creating, interpreting, and translating) and mediating conditions (inhibitors and enablers). Knowledge claims are supported by participants' verbatim quotes, which convey their perspectives in authentic voices.

Chapter Five presents the study's findings within the broader literature and in relation to the research questions. It also completes the thesis by summarising the research, drawing conclusions from the findings and discussion, and making recommendations for future research. The chapter acknowledges the strengths and limitations of the research.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

As highlighted in Chapter One (Section 1.6.1), I was interested in exploring how curriculum leaders at the forefront of educational change made meaning of their required school vision and enacted it in practice. Similar to Slater's (2011) observation about the scarcity of firsthand accounts from principals leading educational reform, there appears to be a notable gap in the literature capturing the personal narratives of middle (curriculum) leaders navigating educational change within specific school contexts. To contextualise my research, I examined literature across several domains, specifically: perspectives on school change and policy enactment, key influences on educational reform since 1989, the nature and function of school visions, affordances of the NZC, and leadership roles in change management. Through this exploration, I sought to identify critical insights into vision enactment and implementation processes during significant educational change. I will begin by examining broader perspectives on how school change is conceptualised and studied. Competing viewpoints have dominated the educational reform landscape, each with distinct implications for understanding vision enactment.

2.2 Perspectives on Understanding School Change

While the restructuring of education systems around neoliberal ideology in the late 1980s (see Section 2.3) saw School Effectiveness and Improvement (SEI) (or functionalist approach) emerge as a dominant reform approach from the 1980s (Blackmore & McNae, 2021), the impact of neoliberal ideology on education systems came under rigorous interrogation by several researchers writing about educational reform (e.g., Ball, 1994) and leadership (e.g., Blackmore, 1999; Grace, 1995; Smyth, 1989). Taking a critical position, these researchers were concerned with social injustice and the impact established power structures had on the lives and work of educators, students, and their wider communities (Gunter, 2001).

I will examine these two contrasting perspectives on researching education and its practice to determine what might be the most appropriate theoretical approach for my study. I begin with the functionalist approach, which has dominated reform efforts since the 1980s and provided the foundation for many contemporary approaches to educational change management.

2.2.1 Functionalist Perspectives

As signalled above, a functionalist approach on effectiveness and improvement in education emerged with the 1980s reforms, primarily intended to support the changes rather than critique

or understand them. The School Improvement Research Framework was developed during the 1970s and 1980s, although many early efforts were described as "free-floating" and lacking a systematic approach to school change (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001, p. 459). One notable exception was Caldwell and Spinks' (1988) work, which challenged centralised education management by proposing self-managing schools within broader policy frameworks. Their Collaborative School Management Cycle covered various aspects of school administration, including curriculum management, and argued for empowering local decision-making based on community needs, aligning with neoliberalism's principle of minimising state involvement.

During the early 1990s, the fields of school improvement (SI) and school effectiveness (SE) began merging (Hopkins & Reynolds, 2001), though distinctions remained. Creemers and Reezigit (2005) noted that SE focused on discovering “what works” in education and “why”, while SI was oriented towards practice and policy aimed at changing education in the desired directions. Hopkins (2001) differentiated SI by its qualitative orientation and “bottom-up” approach where improvement was owned by individual schools, suggesting context was an important factor. In contrast, Wrigley (2004, 2011) argued that SI ultimately adopted SE's quantitative outcomes, neglecting broader social influences and focusing primarily on internal school dynamics.

SEI processes emphasise planning, implementing, and evaluating educational reforms, viewing change as a manageable, linear procedure despite the complex and disordered reality of schools (Blackmore & McNae, 2021; Diem et al., 2019). This approach often results in top-down, centralised control over curriculum and teaching, reflecting a neoliberal, business-oriented view of education (Thomson et al., 2012). This aligns with critics like Smyth (2018), who highlighted the preoccupation with deliverability, targets and outcomes and the notion that educational productivity can be “managed” into existence. A feature of the SEI approach is that it measures school effectiveness through standardised tests, which can evaluate equity across demographics. As Thomson et al. (2012) observed, this may lead to unprincipled practices when testing becomes high stakes, such as inflating pass rates by excluding unfavourable results.

The use of data-driven accountability mechanisms supports the notion that quantifiable factors can only determine school performance. However, student learning encompasses diverse physical, social, emotional, and academic dimensions, not all of which are measurable. Blackmore and McNae (2021) argued that top-down approaches like SEI reduce education to "one-size-fits-all, recipe-like and formulaic prescriptions" (p. 240), neglecting schools' unique contexts and communities. Thrupp and Lupton (2006) reinforce this by emphasising the importance of understanding environmental and demographic factors beyond internal school

practices. In New Zealand, O'Connor (2018) observed that neoliberal schooling approaches increased inequality rather than lifting achievement.

Research on the SEI perspective identifies the following characteristic elements:

1. An outcome-oriented approach emphasising planning, implementing, and evaluating reforms
2. Views of educational change as manageable and linear
3. Measurement of effectiveness through standardised tests and quantifiable indicators
4. Data-driven accountability mechanisms
5. Focus primarily on internal school dynamics rather than broader societal influences.

The SEI (School Effectiveness and Improvement) perspective emphasis on structured implementation processes, outcome measurement, and accountability mechanisms (elements 1, 3, and 4) provides useful analytical categories for examining how vision enactment unfolds in practice. However, the functionalist assumption that change follows manageable, linear trajectories (element 2) sits uneasily with the complex realities of schools, where change processes are often recursive, contested, and shaped by unpredictable contextual dynamics.

While the SEI approach has significantly influenced educational reform globally, its limitations have prompted scholars to develop alternative frameworks for understanding school change, particularly critical perspectives that offer different lenses to examine educational policy, change, and leadership, which are addressed next.

2.2.2 Critical Perspectives

Over the past two decades, critical perspectives on and approaches to researching educational policy, change, and leadership have become more prevalent (Blackmore, 2006; Gunter, 2016; Niesche & Gowlett, 2019; Smyth, 2018). Courtney et al. (2021) argued that adopting a critical perspective is a way of thinking that goes beyond merely criticising the status quo or proposed policies. They provide guidance on understanding what a critical perspective entails and what critical approaches might look like by drawing on the three key elements of critical scholarship identified by Smyth (1989): context, power, and empowerment.

Courtney et al. (2021) highlighted context as fundamental to critical research, emphasising that knowledge exists within specific historical and geographical conditions shaped by ideological, cultural, and political factors. They argued that researchers must explicitly acknowledge these contextual influences and theorise their implications for educational processes and outcomes. The authors position power as central to understanding educational environments, recognising that all stakeholders operate within complex matrices of power relations that both enable and

constrain their actions. This agency-structure relationship requires explicit theorisation of how power dynamics shape what educational stakeholders do, think, believe, value, and embody in their daily practice. For Courtney et al., empowerment represents the core purpose of critical scholarship. By identifying inequitable power relations experienced by students, professionals, and other groups within educational settings globally, critical perspectives aim to transform these dynamics towards more equitable educational practices and outcomes.

However, critical perspectives and approaches to educational change are not without critics who have raised theoretical, methodological, and practical concerns. Teddlie and Reynolds (2000), well-known scholars in educational effectiveness research, have expressed concerns about critical approaches to educational change and leadership. They argued that these approaches rely heavily on qualitative methods, lacking the empirical rigour and generalisability of quantitative methods favoured in school effectiveness research. Critical approaches also neglect systematic measurement and evaluation, leading to less reliable and valid findings. They also focus more on localised, context-specific insights, which can limit the ability to compare and generalise findings across different settings. Furthermore, Teddlie and Reynolds argued that some critical approaches are overly theoretical and do not provide concrete solutions that policymakers and practitioners can implement.

Despite these critiques from effectiveness researchers, critical perspectives do offer valuable analytical frameworks for understanding the complexity of educational change. Based on the work of Smyth (1989), as interpreted by Courtney et al. (2021), critical education research focuses on a framework of three interconnected elements – context, power, and empowerment:

1. Context – acknowledges that educational knowledge is contextually bound, embedded within specific historical, geographical, and socio-political circumstances
2. Power – examines how the agency-structure dynamic shapes educational stakeholders' actions and beliefs within constraining power matrices
3. Empowerment – seeks to identify and disrupt inequitable power relations in educational settings for more just outcomes.

The focus of critical scholarship on context and power dynamics foregrounds how external factors and structural constraints shape educational actors' agency and decision-making authority. Ball's (2003) concept of "performativity" exemplifies this critical lens, highlighting how educational reforms create cultures of surveillance and accountability that shape the “soul” of teaching, positioning educators within systems where performative measures may overshadow authentic educational practices. This reveals that teachers, students, and leaders

navigate landscapes where their agency is simultaneously enabled and constrained by prevailing power relations.

Building upon these critical insights, frameworks that examine the interpretive and creative work of policy enactment can complement critical approaches by exploring how actors actively navigate structural constraints in practice. Ball et al.'s (2012) Theory of Enactment potentially offers my study such a framework. Developed from a critical theoretical tradition, it provides analytical tools for examining how policy actors creatively interpret and recontextualise initiatives within material, interpretive, and discursive dimensions. This theory appears to recognise both the constraining influence of structures and the creative agency of actors, making it particularly suited for examining how curriculum leaders navigate the complex process of vision enactment.

Examining vision enactment in the New Zealand context brings these theoretical considerations into sharp focus. Hood (2019) for example, characterises New Zealand schools as operating in a contradictory environment - enjoying relative autonomy in curriculum and pedagogical decision-making while simultaneously navigating external accountability requirements and performative pressures. Curriculum leaders in such a context do not possess absolute autonomy but must exercise agency within boundaries shaped by both external policy environments and internal school structures. Understanding how vision enactment unfolds requires examining the interplay between structural constraints, power dynamics, and the interpretive agency of educational actors. Ball et al.'s (2012) Theory of Enactment is an analytical framework specifically designed to examine these dynamics, and therefore will most likely suit my purposes.

2.3 Theory of Enactment

Ball et al.'s (2012) Theory of Enactment evolved from a study conducted in four secondary schools in England, focusing on how schools enacted three national policies: personalised learning, performance demands or standards, and behaviour management policies (p. 12). There are, however, key differences between Ball et al.'s study and the application of enactment theory to vision enactment research in the New Zealand context. Where Ball et al. explored how schools responded to government-mandated policies, my focus on examining school vision enactment involves analysing how schools interpret and translate locally generated visions. Although New Zealand schools are required to submit annual charters to the Ministry of Education, the content of these visions is determined by individual schools, potentially reflecting internal priorities rather than external policy directives. Furthermore, the New Zealand context differs from the English system studied by Ball et al. Research on New Zealand's Tomorrow's

Schools reforms suggests that New Zealand schools operate under a self-managing model with considerable autonomy in decision-making and practice (Hood, 2019; MoE, 2019; Openshaw, 2014). This contextual difference may raise questions about whether and how enactment processes might differ when the policy source is internal rather than external, and when cultural, legal and social practices across these two countries differ.

Ball et al.'s (2012) framework reconceptualises how educational change occurs, identifying the messy, complex nature of schools. Traditional change theories often positioned practitioners as either compliant implementers or resistors of externally imposed reforms. In contrast, Ball et al.'s theory recognises that change is an inherently interpretive and creative process where policy actors actively make meaning of initiatives and recreate them within their specific contexts. This has important implications for understanding organisational change; when schools attempt to shift their culture through new visions or policies, the intended change doesn't simply "happen" through communication and directives. Instead, change appears to emerge through the complex interplay of how actors interpret the vision (interpretive dimension), the contextual conditions that enable or constrain their capacity to act (material dimension), and the discourses and practices that become normalised within the school (discursive dimension), often through a trial-and-error process. By focusing on enactment rather than implementation, Ball et al.'s framework suggests why the same vision or policy initiative might produce different outcomes across contexts, not necessarily due to implementation failure, but potentially because change is fundamentally a process of interpretation, translation, and recontextualisation shaped by local conditions and actors' agency within constraining structures.

The authors describe policy enactment as "creative processes of interpretation and recontextualisation – that is, the translation of texts into action and the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualised practices" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 3). This point identifies three interwoven aspects that reflect the complex reality of school life – the *material,* the *interpretive*, and the *discursive*, which collectively may explain how policy is operationalised in school settings.

The *material* aspect, which Ball et al. (2012) argued is often overlooked, addresses the practical possibilities and constraints imposed by contextual factors, including situated contexts (e.g., locales, histories, demographics); professional cultures (e.g., values, teacher commitments, experiences, and policy management in schools); material contexts (e.g., staffing, budgets, buildings, technology, and infrastructure); and external contexts (e.g., degree and quality of learning area support, pressures and expectations from broader policy context, legal requirements, and responsibilities). Ball et al.'s Theory of Enactment focuses on how a school's

practices interact with these contextual variables rather than treating them merely as background. This aligns with Harris (2020) and Leithwood et al. (2020), who similarly argued that context is a dynamic force that successful school leaders must understand, navigate, and respond to appropriately in any improvement initiative. Such ideas are, I suspect, not country specific. Ball et al.'s material dimension therefore appears to direct attention toward examining how factors such as demographic characteristics, leadership stability, organisational structures, and competitive educational environments might shape vision enactment processes.

The *interpretive* aspect examines how individuals (policy actors) within schools make sense of and interpret policy texts, distinguishing between interpretation (engaging with policy language) and translation (putting policy into practice). Interpretation is seen as "a strategy, an institutional political process, a process of elucidation and explanation" (Ball et al., 2012, p. 45), while translation involves turning policy into action through meetings and creating plans and artefacts. Ball et al.'s framework acknowledges the diverse roles of policy actors, such as teachers, and how these interactions influence the final implementation of policy in practice (Ball et al., 2012). This dimension suggests the potential importance of examining not only curriculum leaders' interpretive work but also how other key actors, such as senior leadership team members, might support embedding vision into school practices and cultural norms through their own interpretive and translational activities.

The *discursive* aspect of enactment refers to the various artefacts, experiences, material resources, and in-service activities used to communicate policies in a school (Ball et al., 2012, p. 121), for example, textbooks, websites, newsletters, policy symbols, prize-giving ceremonies, meetings, and similar events. Such artefacts and activities shape and control meanings, reflecting beliefs and influencing social processes and policy enactments, which Ball et al. described as "ways of being and becoming – [in other words], forms of governmentality" (p. 122). They draw on Foucault's (1991) concept of governmentality, which describes how power operates on a micro level by internalising certain discourses, making them seem natural and unquestioned. This creates a form of non-coercive power where individuals self-govern. Ball et al. suggested that school artefacts and materials become tools and techniques of this self-governing process within the framework of policy work.

The three dimensions of Ball et al.'s enactment theory – material, interpretive, and discursive – seem to provide, therefore, a comprehensive understanding of how policies are enacted in schools, highlighting the interconnectedness and dynamics of different contexts and meanings. Also highlighted is the significant judgement exercised by policy actors and the crucial role of their interpretation and sensemaking in translating policy mandates into everyday practices. Consequently, these dimensions may become a valuable analytical lens for examining vision

enactment, potentially enabling me to explore how contextual conditions shape vision enactment (material), how different actors such as curriculum leaders interpret and translate vision in practice (interpretive), and how symbols, routines, and artefacts sustain or challenge dominant discourses within schools (discursive). Together, they might allow for a more nuanced understanding of how shared visions are operationalised in specific school settings, shaped by people, practices, and power relations.

Having established Ball et al.'s (2012) Theory of Enactment as a potentially valuable framework for examining how educational initiatives are interpreted and translated into practice, it seems essential to now examine specific historical and policy contexts shaping New Zealand schools. The emphasis of the critical perspective on context as foundational to understanding educational change, combined with the material dimension of enactment theory, highlights the importance of examining New Zealand's educational landscape since the major changes begun in 1989.

2.4 Educational Change and Influences since 1989

This section principally examines the influence of neoliberal reforms on New Zealand's education system from the late 1980s to the present. It discusses the initial implementation of neoliberal policies and their ongoing effects on schooling, highlighting various educational research perspectives on these changes. The discussion contextualises the case study school within New Zealand's policy environment and explores the broader implications of neoliberalism on education.

The past three decades' economic, social, and educational reforms in many Western and developing nations have often reflected a neoliberal political ideology (McMaster, 2013). Western nations typically refer to countries such as Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand, which are characterised by broad characteristics such as democratic governance, market-oriented economies, the rule of law, liberal values, and a focus on individual freedoms (The Economist, 2023; Wisevoter, 2023). Neoliberalism prioritises market growth and minimises government roles in public services like education to promote individual choices (McGinty & Fuller, 2021). Proponents argue that education is a private good, as free-market approaches lead to greater economic and social progress for individuals (Friedman, 2002). Critics contend that this focus on individual benefits neglects education's broader social and collective benefits, such as fostering social cohesion and reducing inequalities (Stiglitz, 2012).

In New Zealand, for example, there has been a longstanding commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi, which recognises the Māori and Crown partnership. Neoliberalism's focus on

individualism can undermine this partnership and the promotion of the collective good, which has been a central part of New Zealand's approach to education. Neoliberal reforms have led to privatising and outsourcing administrative and educational functions, introducing business practices in educational organisations (managerialism), marketising schooling through choice policies, and promoting entrepreneurialism at all educational levels (Thomson et al., 2012). This approach frames schooling as a means of developing students' individual human capital as economic units, focusing on hard skills needed for 21st-century workplaces, to maximise economic gain for private companies and national economies (Hastings, 2019; Rizvi & Lingard, 2009; Trujillo & Horsford, 2021). However, this emphasis on economic gain often ignores the importance of *soft skills* such as creativity, communication, teamwork, adaptability, emotional intelligence, problem-solving, and time management. These are skills for both life and work (World Economic Forum, 2016).

Despite the dominance of economic considerations in neoliberal educational discourse, strong counterarguments emphasise education's broader social and collective benefits. Organisations like the OECD argue that education should equip students with knowledge, abilities, and ethical principles for active and responsible societal participation (OECD, 2018). UNESCO advocates for a humanistic approach to education, emphasising respect for life and human dignity, which are crucial for social harmony in a diverse world (UNESCO, 2015).

Several educational models prioritise the public purpose of schools. For instance, Finland’s education system, governed by the Basic Education Act (1998), emphasises nurturing moral and intellectual development, societal advancement, equality, and equitable access to education (Future Policy.org, 2021). Scandinavian Folk high schools, like those in Denmark, promote civic engagement, lifelong learning, and community building, fostering democratic values and active citizenship (Rasmussen, 2013). Although the prevailing education model in the United States emphasises economic purposes, less common models prioritise the development of citizens' abilities to engage in a democratic society, highlighting the importance of the collective good (Trujillo & Horsford, 2021). Recognising these models highlights the need for an education system that balances economic productivity with social responsibility and cultural awareness.

Like other Western nations, New Zealand embarked on a programme of free-market, neoliberal reforms under the Fourth Labour governments of 1984 –1990. The reform agenda aimed to address a severe economic crisis by boosting economic growth, increasing labour productivity, cutting government spending and public debt, enhancing the effectiveness and transparency of government organisations, and reducing reliance on welfare (Boston & Eichbaum, 2014). This so-called “New Zealand experiment” (Kelsey, 1997) affected all sectors of society, leading to the corporatisation and restructuring of many government departments into commercially oriented

organisations, some of which were sold to private investors (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023).

Initially, the education system was not a primary focus of the government's restructuring efforts. However, during the government's second term (1987–1990), neoliberal reforms were extended to the education sector to align it with market principles. This was driven by the belief that increased competition in education would improve the quality of educational services and student achievement (McMaster, 2013).

2.4.1 Tomorrow's Schools

The reform of the education system in New Zealand came with the introduction of Tomorrow's Schools in 1988. This followed the release of the 1988 Picot Report, *Administering for Excellence: Effective Administration in Education*. This report identified five main issues of concern in New Zealand's education system: "over-centralisation of decision-making; complexity; lack of information and choice; lack of effective management practices; and feeling of powerlessness among parents, communities and practitioners" (Schöllmann, 2017, pp. 2–3). The report recommended a whole new structure, beginning with replacing the Department of Education with a Ministry of Education and abolishing regional education boards. The Picot Report further suggested, as Roger Openshaw noted, that

> all schools [are] to become autonomous, self-managing learning institutions, controlled by locally elected boards of trustees, responsible for learning outcomes, budgeting, and the employment of teachers … [and] … produce a charter outlining the school's mission in relation to its clientele and community, incorporating centrally prescribed requirements of safety, equity and national standards. (2014, para. 1)

The Post Primary Teachers' Association (PPTA) also provided a perspective on the key features of the Picot Report, saying schools were to enter a new world of mandated mission statements, priorities, objectives, and accountability, all of which would make them efficient and effective. They would be kept up to the mark by "consumers", who would choose to send their children elsewhere if dissatisfied, and by the review and audit agency monitoring performance (PPTA, 2008, pp. 1–2).

The PPTA appeared alert to the language prevalent in neoliberal thinking, as the quote uses neoliberal language. For example, the terms *efficient* and *effective* imply that schools are expected to operate like businesses, focusing on maximising outputs (e.g., test scores) while minimising inputs (e.g., costs and resources). This reflects the neoliberal emphasis on performance metrics and outcomes. The word "consumers" promotes the idea that parents and

students can choose alternative educational institutions if dissatisfied. This suggests that competition between schools, driven by consumer preferences (which may not be about education), will incentivise institutions to improve their performance and meet the demands of their "customers", reflecting a neoliberal economic perspective. On the other hand, very little of this aim appears to connect with learning or teaching principles that support flourishing students. Using such language in the quote is possibly designed to alert the reader to using market-based principles as the driving force behind improving education services.

In response to the findings of the Picot Report, a report prepared under the chairmanship of a businessman, not an educator, the Fourth Labour government adopted most of the recommendations for reform through changes to the Education Act 1989, initiating the era of Tomorrow's Schools. This saw a leaner MoE replace the Department of Education, and the regional Education Boards were abolished (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2023). Schools became autonomous, self-managing, and competing statutory Crown entities responsible for a wide range of functions, such as budgeting, employing staff, developing school policies, and writing their charters (MoE, 2019).

Schools were now governed by elected BoTs, which gave parents a much more central role in the governance of schools, including the appointment of the school principal. The principal was responsible for implementing board policies and had three roles: management, pedagogical leadership, and governance (Alliston, 2019). All at once, every school now had to manage all financial, budgeting, and administrative responsibilities for their non-teaching functions, thus replicating the same tasks that were once centrally managed. This had significant implications. For example, principals had to spend more time fulfilling their management and governance roles at the expense of educational leadership. Administration staff did not necessarily have the skills, knowledge, or time to carry out the new responsibilities and additional resources (e.g., staffing, PD, workspaces) were required. Furthermore, it assumed that the BoT members had the necessary cultural capital to understand, among other things, the difference between governance and management and their legal obligations under the Education Act and other relevant acts such as finance and health and safety.

Stronger national accountabilities were introduced to mitigate potential excesses of autonomy, such as individual schools or teachers having too much freedom to make decisions without clear standards or oversight. These measures were also intended to encourage market-oriented thinking, such as efficiency, competition, and choice, to better guide decision-making in education as outlined above. This reflects the neoliberal belief that market mechanisms alone may not ensure quality and efficiency, hence the need for regulatory bodies to enforce standards and hold institutions accountable for their outcomes.

New agencies were set up, for example, the Education Review Office (ERO), which monitored schools' performance through regular, data-driven and published school evaluations; the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), which quality assured schools' assessment policies and practices; and the Teacher Registration Board (TRB), which was responsible for teacher registration and regulation (Wylie, 2009). For schools, the additional paperwork required to meet the compliance requirements of ERO and NZQA consumed principals' and teachers' time, detracting them from quality educational leadership and sound pedagogical practices. An unintentional "by-product" of accountability, which became a feature post-2003, was publishing annual league tables by the media (e.g., *NZ Herald*; *Stuff*), ranking schools based on their students' performance in the NCEA. The publication of ERO reports and league tables produced information intended to enhance accountability and inform school choice, even when the information was inadequate or not comparable (Haque, 2014; Thrupp & Alcorn, 2011). While these measures might have influenced some parents' choices of school, the inequalities of the tables were never acknowledged for many schools. These included the cultural and economic capital of the community a school could draw on for its population. In others, the tables exacerbated the divide between the haves and have-nots.

A key feature of neoliberal ideology was managerialism and the related culture of performativity, which introduced the importance of system, school, and leader "effectiveness" in bringing about change. This was measured through established targets, evaluation, and accountability mechanisms (Service, 2016; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003). UNESCO's (2017) *Global Education Monitoring Report 2017/18* recommended that governments create supportive and constructive systems for school and teacher accountability, steering clear of punitive measures, particularly those reliant on narrow performance metrics. They cautioned that using student test scores to sanction schools or evaluate teachers can promote an unhealthy competition-based environment, narrow the curriculum, encourage teaching to the test, demotivate teachers, and disadvantage weaker students, undermining overall education quality and student learning (p. 54). Furthermore, the report highlighted "extensive evidence" (p. 4) that high-stakes tests based on limited performance criteria can incentivise attempts to manipulate the system. For example, one New Zealand school was at the centre of a public fiasco when it manipulated the NCEA assessment credit system. Under the guise of an "achievement recovery programme", the school removed failing students from class and embarked on an intensive "catch-up credits" programme which was supervised by ancillary staff. Put simply, the programme failed to meet the accreditation requirements (Dye, 2004).

The impact of the neoliberal reforms of Tomorrow's Schools has been commented on by many academics and observers (e.g., Barker, 2023; Dobbins, 2010; Haque, 2014; Harris, 2017;

Openshaw, 2009; O'Connor, 2018; O'Neill, 2023; PPTA, 2008), particularly the way that they created winner and loser schools. This research indicates that the reforms produced both opportunities and constraints for schools. Self-management provided schools with greater flexibility in resource allocation, enabling investment in infrastructure, equipment, and specialised programs. However, these benefits were accompanied by significant challenges. The documentation requirements for NZQA quality assurance processes intensified considerably after NCEA's introduction, while ERO and MoE's focus on compliance and data-driven performance measures redirected teacher time and energy away from instructional activities. The publication of league tables comparing schools' NCEA results exacerbated competitive dynamics between schools. As McMaster (2013) noted, competition and choice have been shown to affect schools serving the poorest communities negatively, while also inhibiting cross-school teacher collaboration and knowledge sharing.

Before the Tomorrow's Schools reforms, New Zealand's educational system allowed significant freedom, with schools maintaining close connections with inspectors, local advisors, and education experts (Wylie, 2012a). Teachers collaborated, experimenting with new approaches supported by these connections, facilitating the sharing of best practices and talent. However, Wylie (2012a) argued that Tomorrow's Schools reforms' self-management model dismantled these vital connections. She noted that self-managed schools lacked well-informed support, collaborative knowledge-building, and a shared purpose, operating instead as "standalone islands" (Wylie, 2012b, para. 2), with their boards responsible for appointing principals and lacking structural ties with one another. Additionally, government agencies maintained a distant relationship with schools, overseeing and regulating them without collaborating. Wylie's findings highlighted deficiencies within the system, which has led to a significant imbalance between the pressure for accountability and the need for responsible, adaptable pedagogy.

Despite concerns expressed by Wylie and others (Gordon, 1994; O'Neill, 2010; Thrupp, 2007), the neoliberal reforms of Tomorrow's Schools have mainly remained in place and reflect how the compulsory school sector still operates today. This is the context in which the case study school was situated at the centre of this study.

2.4.2 The School Charter

A key outcome of the Tomorrow's Schools reforms in AoNZ was the annual requirement for BoTs of schools to prepare and submit an annual charter to the Secretary of Education and make it available to the school community. The charter would outline the school's mission, goals, objectives, and strategies, which needed to align with the national education guidelines set by the Government and the board's priorities. It served as a basis for assessing the board's

performance against its stated intentions (Education Act of 1989). At the time of data collection for this study, the Education Act of 1989 was the legislation in force. However, this has now been replaced with the Education and Training Act 2020, and changes in terminology relating to reporting requirements are evident. For example, the mission, aims, objectives, purposes, and directions that made up the "charter" requirement of the Education Act of 1989 have been replaced with vision, objectives (meaning the board's primary objectives), strategic goals, and strategies under the Education and Training Act 2020. While having a shared "vision" was not a legal requirement under the Education Act of 1989, the expectation that it would form part of the "charter" was implicit in the documentation of key government agencies. For example, ERO (2016) regarded the development of a community-shared "vision" as a key indicator and example of effective stewardship practice (p. 20). Thus, for many schools, including the case study school, developing and revising a shared vision became integral to the charter.

It is not difficult to see how neoliberal reforms have influenced education policy by borrowing heavily from business practices where strategic management and vision setting have long been foundational principles for driving competitiveness and accountability (Bryson, 2018; Hargreaves & Fink, 2012; Kotter, 1996).

As stated earlier, the impact of neoliberal reforms is also evident in the SEI literature, where the processes of planning, implementing and evaluating – all key features of strategic management – were emphasised in relation to managing educational change (Blackmore & McNae, 2021). However, I would argue that requiring schools to engage in strategic management processes involving having a clear, shared vision and strategic plan is crucial in bringing about coherence in educational reform. Furthermore, I contend that a shared vision should be at the centre of a school's strategic management processes because it unites all key school community members around common goals and aspirations, fostering a sense of purpose and direction.

2.5 Shared Vision

While this thesis focuses on the "enactment" of a shared vision rather than a "shared vision" per se, it is essential to provide some background about its purpose, attributes, and limitations. This is because a shared vision was at the centre of the case study school's attempts to shift its learning culture – it was a local "policy" to be enacted.

Developing a vision is a fundamental task associated with many international leadership models (Hitt & Tucker, 2016). In AoNZ schools, the responsibility ultimately lies with the BoT. While the BoT, in conjunction with senior leadership, may define the outline of a school's change vision, it is important that they seek stakeholders within and external to the organisation as key

contributors to it (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kools & Stoll, 2017; Wylie & McKinley, 2018). Thus, creating or revising a change vision should be inclusive and participatory to be successfully implemented. This premise links to my research focus. I will review how the wider literature discusses a shared vision's purpose, attributes, and limitations.

2.5.1 Purpose

The concept of a shared vision is widely recognised by many scholars as essential for guiding and shaping organisations, including schools. It provides direction and inspires individuals to pursue ambitious goals (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Fullan, 1999; Senge, 2006). Scholars argue that a shared vision can energise and motivate individuals to achieve personal and organisational goals, acting as a sustained motivating force (Kools & Stoll, 2017; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005). Furthermore, Fullan (1999) contended that for a vision to be genuinely embraced and owned by all members of the school community, it must encompass a moral purpose by making a positive difference in the lives of all students. This means focusing on each student's well-being and holistic development, ensuring that the educational environment promotes equity, inclusivity, and the community's common good. Similarly, Bezzina (2007) and Kose (2011) emphasised the importance of a shared moral purpose in driving change and improving student learning. Kose advocated for a transformative vision that promotes inclusivity and equity, generating significant change at multiple levels within the school. These scholars agreed that a shared vision is crucial for guiding schools, providing direction, and inspiring individuals to achieve ambitious goals.

Other scholars describe a shared vision as a detailed and practical image of the desired future. For example, Caldwell and Spinks (1992) referred to a shared vision as a “mental picture … an image of the way [community members] would like the school to be in the future (p. 37). Pekarsky (2007) described the notion of a vision as a “conception of the kind of person and community that one hopes to cultivate through the educational process” (p. 426). While he acknowledged that a vision needs to be “sufficiently specific to offer practical guidance” (p. 427), Pekarsky warned that it is more than a slogan. He contended that a vision represents a detailed image that enables stakeholders to see where they are heading, what they are about, and how they will know when they have arrived. Gurley et al. (2015) defined a vision statement as a “preferred future for the organisation” (p. 224), distinguishing it from a school’s mission, which focuses on purpose. They contended that a vision provides stakeholders with an image of what “their” school and students will look like if school leaders and teachers can realise the vision. These scholars agree that the detailed and practical image of the desired future gives a vision its power to create a sense of purpose that unites and motivates a school community towards a common goal.

In summary, a shared vision is important in several ways. It provides a sense of purpose, direction, and coherence for a school community: where it sees itself in the future and how it will get there. A clearly articulated vision can be a key motivating force, binding key school community members together as they work towards enhancing the learning of all students. When underpinned by a moral purpose centred on making a difference in the lives of all students, a shared vision potentially provides a platform for building equity and inclusiveness.

2.5.2 Attributes

While every school community is unique, and a school's vision will reflect this, some common attributes are evident from the general and educational organisational literature. Various researchers suggest that powerful and effective visions have the following characteristics. Firstly, they inspire by engaging and motivating members to commit to shared values and beliefs. Kouzes and Posner (2017), in their influential work on leadership challenges, emphasised that an inspiring vision breathes life into the organisation's aspirations, conveying enthusiasm and confidence about the future. In their analysis of teacher vision statements in Israeli elementary schools, Kurland et al. (2010) also noted the importance of "inspirational" attributes for generating enthusiasm and motivating action. Secondly, effective visions are future-focused, describing a desired future that prepares the school for long-term success, as Fullan (2020) discussed. This was also highlighted above by Caldwell and Spinks (1992), Pekarsky (2007), and Gurley et al. (2015) in their description of a vision as being a detailed and practical image of the desired future. Thus, effective school visions must be inspirational enough to encourage community commitment to shared values and sufficiently future-focused to create a practical roadmap for long-term success, requiring school leaders to balance emotional engagement with strategic foresight when developing their vision statements.

A range of researchers argue that powerful school visions are centred on the learning of all students, prioritising student learning and achievement. Kools and Stoll (2017), for example, claimed that a school's vision should commit to making a difference in the learning of all students, particularly the most disadvantaged, and that a focus on teaching and learning should be "front and centre" (p. 35). Earlier, Hargreaves and Fink (2012) stressed the importance of ensuring high-quality learning experiences and outcomes for all students, echoed in Kools and Stoll's view, while Gurley et al. (2015) argued that "effective" visions not only need to be concise but also "provide lofty, yet measurable, language" (p. 223). This, they contended, helps internal stakeholders, such as school leaders and teachers, know whether they have achieved the vision and can identify future changes.

Some scholars in the field claim that compelling visions also provide specific direction to shape decision-making while being appropriately broad to allow innovative strategies. For example, Collins and Porras (1996), in their research on business organisations, described how visions guide decision-making and actions. Senge (2006) highlighted the need for visions to be broad enough to foster innovation and creativity. Finally, effective visions need to be articulated and well-understood by all key community members. For example, Kurland et al. (2010) discussed the significance of a clear and widely understood vision in promoting organisational learning and leadership effectiveness within schools. Kools and Stoll (2017) argued that a school's vision should be communicated and understood by all stakeholders to ensure alignment and commitment to the school's goals, while Fullan (2020) highlighted the need for clear articulation of vision to guide change processes and ensure that all members of the school community are moving in the same direction. However, while the cited literature identifies what makes visions effective, it does not offer concrete strategies for creating and implementing them in real school contexts.

It appears that compelling school visions share several key attributes. They need to be inspiring by engaging and motivating stakeholders to commit to the community's shared values and beliefs, focused by describing the desired future and centred on the learning of all students and learning outcomes. Furthermore, they must provide specific direction to shape decision-making but be appropriately broad enough to implement innovative strategies. They must also be articulate and well-understood by all key stakeholders. These principles will be helpful to remember for my study as I seek to understand how middle leaders lead curriculum area changes to address a new school vision.

2.5.3 Limitations and Challenges

While the attributes of effective school visions discussed above are compelling, it is important to consider the potential limitations and challenges associated with some of these claims. The emphasis on inspiration and motivation might lead to overly ambitious visions that are difficult to implement practically. Cuban (1988) emphasised the need for practical leadership that balances inspirational goals with achievable, concrete actions. Without this balance, there is a risk that an inspiring vision could become a form of rhetoric without substantial grounding in achievable goals.

While being future-focused is important, it might lead to the neglect of immediate issues that need urgent attention. Darling-Hammond (2010) highlighted the importance of addressing immediate educational inequalities and challenges while planning for the future. Schools, they

argued, often face immediate challenges that require prompt solutions, and a strong focus on the future might detract from successfully addressing current problems.

Prioritising student learning and achievement is crucial, but other aspects of schooling, such as emotional well-being, social skills, and extracurricular activities, are equally important. Noddings (2005), for example, argued for a holistic approach to education that includes emotional and social development, not just academic achievement. An excessive focus on measurable learning outcomes might lead to a narrow definition of success, potentially neglecting holistic development.

The insistence on measurable outcomes could stifle creativity and innovation (Robinson, 2011a). Innovative strategies often involve experimentation and risk-taking, which may not always yield immediate measurable results. This could create tension between achieving measurable outcomes and fostering an environment where innovative practices can thrive. Perhaps these points and practices have affected how my case study school's middle leaders undertake their roles as change agents.

Assuming all stakeholders can easily align with the school's vision may be overly simplistic. Bryk and Schneider (2002) discussed the complexities of building trust and achieving stakeholder alignment in schools, highlighting the challenges of gaining genuine buy-in. Diverse perspectives and potential conflicts of interest can make achieving unanimous support and commitment to a single vision difficult. Even if a vision is well-articulated and understood, implementation can be challenging. Spillane et al. (2002) explore the cognitive challenges of policy implementation in education, emphasising the gap between the theoretical aspects of a vision and the practical realities of enacting it in everyday school operations. Barriers such as limited resources, resistance to change, and varying levels of commitment among staff can impede effective implementation.

While effective school visions are crucial in guiding educational reform and inspiring progress, they are not without their challenges. The potential for overly ambitious goals, neglect of immediate issues, narrow definitions of success, and the stifling of creativity highlight the need for a balanced approach. Schools must strive to align inspirational visions with practical actions, address long-term and immediate concerns, and foster holistic development alongside measurable outcomes. Additionally, the complexities of gaining stakeholder alignment and navigating the practical realities of implementation highlight the importance of thoughtful and adaptive leadership. Acknowledging and addressing these limitations is essential for schools navigating the intricacies of enacting their visions and working towards more effective and responsive educational environments.

I will next explore the NZC, the official policy document that guides teaching and learning approaches in English-medium schools across AoNZ. Its primary purpose is to establish the direction for student learning while guiding schools in developing and reviewing their curriculum (MoE, 2007, p. 6).

2.6 Affordances of NZC

The NZC of 2007 created a framework balancing national consistency with local flexibility. This analysis examines the NZC's key features, influences, and opportunities for schools to customise the curriculum to address local contexts, interests, and needs.

2.6.1 Overview of the NZC

Structure and Key Features

The NZC is characterised by a distinctive two-part structure that Hipkins (2010) described as a curriculum of two halves. The “front-end” focuses on future-oriented education outcomes, including a vision for students to become "confident, connected, actively involved lifelong learners" (MoE, 2007, p. 8), values, principles, and five key competencies. It also includes learning area statements articulating each area's unique contribution to overall learning (MoE, 2007, pp. 18–30). The “back-end” contains revised achievement objectives for eight curriculum learning areas. This structure creates what Hughson (2022) calls a "complex document which carefully assembles a variety of heterogeneous discourses" (p. 55) that schools must integrate into their local curriculum design.

Influences on Development

The NZC's development was influenced by multiple factors, including international trends in education, particularly OECD initiatives around key competencies (Rychen, 2004, cited in Hipkins, 2010). The curriculum reflects what Benade (2011) identifies as a “Third Way ideology”, embraced by New Zealand’s fifth Labour Government, that "attempts to bridge the gap between aims of education that have a principles-driven and social outcomes agenda and those that stress preparation for successful participation in the economic life of the country" (p. 152). As noted by Hughson (2022), this balancing act is evident in the curriculum's emphasis on values like "diversity" and "community participation" alongside "excellence" and "enterprise" (MoE, 2007, p. 10). As Benade (2011) noted, values like excellence “imply competitiveness and presuppose that differentiation will be an outcome” (p. 156). The NZC also incorporates knowledge economy discourses prioritising skills and competencies over specific disciplinary knowledge (Wood & Sheehan, 2012) while maintaining a nationally defined vision of biculturalism (Hughson, 2022).

The development of the NZC reflected broader educational trends that continue to shape its implementation. Key concepts within the curriculum, such as inclusiveness, equity, and excellence, have become central to educational evaluation frameworks, including those used by ERO (2016). These concepts represent core sociopolitical aspirations in AoNZ's education system and align with longstanding policy efforts to address social inequities (Bolstad et al., 2012).

Evolving Perspectives on Diversity and Inclusion

Contemporary educational literature has witnessed a significant paradigm shift in perspectives on diversity. Rather than viewing diversity as a deficit or challenge to be overcome, more recent approaches recognise diversity as a strength to be actively cultivated (Bolstad et al., 2012; OECD, 2023). This shift emphasises preparing students to engage with diverse cultural, linguistic, and ideological perspectives in increasingly globalised contexts. Such ideas appear to have influenced my case study school as it developed its vision statement.

Research highlights the value of collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities in addressing diverse educational needs (Boutte & Johnson, 2014; Kools & Stoll, 2017). These partnerships are increasingly recognised as vital for fostering student success across diverse populations (Kose, 2011; Torre & Murphy, 2016). However, translating these theoretical insights into school-level practices remains challenging, with many schools primarily focused on managing rather than leveraging diversity (Bolstad et al., 2012). The tensions between theoretical ideals and practical implementation create important considerations for understanding how schools translate contemporary perspectives on diversity into vision development and enactment processes.

Contesting Definitions of Equity and Excellence

Equity in education has generated international debate, with varying interpretations of how equitable education should be conceptualised and implemented (Levinson et al., 2022; OECD, 2018; Sahlberg, 2022). While some approaches emphasise differentiated support and opportunities, others focus on fairness and equal access. These competing interpretations reflect broader cultural tensions about the meaning of equity in diverse educational contexts.

Similarly, the notion of excellence appears to be a fluid concept. The NZC defines *excellence* as "aiming high and persevering in the face of difficulties" (MoE, 2007, p.10). Nevertheless, in practice, it is commonly linked with NCEA and Scholarship results, perhaps reflecting Benade's (2011) earlier observation that excellence-focused values inherently promote competition and differentiation. Internationally, excellence is often equated with PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) performance, as seen in Canada (O'Grady et al., 2019),

Australia (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2019), and Singapore (Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2019). Schleicher's (2014) OECD reporting reflected this narrow academic focus. However, Niyozov and Hughes (2019) highlighted PISA's limited scope in measuring only mathematics, science, and reading skills, overlooking broader capabilities needed for future citizenship. The narrow scope of PISA, which is divided into measurable items, highlights the narrowness of what often counts in schools, too. However, there is growing interest in expanding the definition of excellence to include non-academic dimensions (Bjorklund-Young, 2016; Boon-Falleur et al., 2020; Egalite et al., 2016; Garcia, 2014). These competing conceptualisations of excellence create implementation challenges for curriculum leaders attempting to interpret and enact vision statements while balancing holistic aspirations with measurement-focused demands.

Capabilities and Competencies for Future Learning

Recent educational discourse has increasingly emphasised the development of capabilities or competencies that prepare students for uncertain futures. Hipkins (2017) noted New Zealand's shift towards capabilities, defined as learners' ability to integrate knowledge and skills with key competencies to meet future needs. The OECD (2018), however, favours *competencies* instead of *capabilities*, describing competencies as mobilising knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to meet complex demands. Despite these terminological differences, both approaches emphasise applying knowledge and skills in unfamiliar situations and align with the NZC's focus on preparing adaptive, resilient learners. Essential competencies frequently identified in the literature (OECD, 2018; Peterson-Badali et al., 2023) include problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, aligning with the NZC's values (MoE, 2007). Schools attempting to implement these capabilities face the challenge of balancing holistic student development with more easily measurable academic outcomes. These competing priorities create important contextual pressures that may influence schools' vision development and revision processes.

Opportunities for School Customisation

One of the features of the NZC is that it provides significant opportunities for schools to customise their curriculum through its framework approach. This high-autonomy model represents a high-trust approach to education (Hipkins, 2010), allowing schools to design and shape their local curriculum to reflect the needs and aspirations of their student communities. This localised version of the curriculum framework made it easier for teachers to tailor their instruction to address the specific needs, curiosities, and abilities of individual students and groups within their classrooms.

The flexible nature of the achievement objectives, which specify skills rather than detailed content knowledge (Hughson, 2021), provides schools with considerable latitude in determining how to meet these objectives in meaningful ways for their students. While some teachers in specific curriculum disciplines (such as Arts, Languages, and Social Sciences) may have relished this creative space to make decisions about the nature of the content used to meet the objectives, others may have preferred a more structured, imposed framework to follow. This curriculum flexibility extends to the senior secondary years through NCEA, which has a modular structure that allows local curriculum design right through to the end of schooling (Hipkins, 2010). The NZC further supports this customisation through its "School Curriculum: Design and Review" section (MoE, 2007, p. 41), guiding coherent learning pathways as students transition from early childhood to secondary education. This approach allows schools to develop curricula honouring their unique contexts while maintaining national consistency through the achievement objectives framework.

Accountability Measures

Despite this flexibility, the NZC incorporates several accountability measures. Schools must engage in planning and reporting cycles of self-review documented annually for MoE scrutiny (Hipkins, 2010). The teaching-as-inquiry model embedded in the effective pedagogy section establishes one method for individual teachers to be accountable for student learning. At the same time, strategic assessment information must be gathered to set targets and adjust subsequent curriculum plans. These measures ensure that while schools have autonomy in curriculum design, they remain accountable for student outcomes.

2.6.2 From Curriculum Policy to Practice

The NZC (2007) represented an ambitious attempt to create a flexible framework that balanced national consistency with local responsiveness. Its framework approach provides significant opportunities for schools to customise their curricula to meet the needs of diverse communities while maintaining accountability through various mechanisms. The professional agency that needs to be exercised at all school levels in implementing the NZC is particularly relevant to my study. School leaders exercise this agency as they design an overall framework for the school's curriculum that reflects the vision, principles, values, and key competencies underpinning the national curriculum. This agency then extends to faculty/department leaders and their teams as they interpret specific curriculum aspects and to individual teachers as they design learning programmes in their classrooms. However, implementing the NZC is no easy task. Implementation challenges had emerged from the outset, with *Curriculum Implementation Exploratory Studies* (Cowie et al., 2009) finding that successful integration of the curriculum's

front-end and back-end elements "calls for considerable sophistication in curriculum thinking" (Hipkins, 2010, p. 9).

Translating curriculum documents into action requires tactical work to transform policy statements into tangible practices, routines, and actions (Ball et al., 2012). Schools' responses to enacting the NZC will likely vary significantly depending on their contexts, histories, and strategic priorities. This tactical work becomes particularly complex for existing schools like Braemar Academy (pseudonym), which face unique challenges. As noted by Hipkins (2010), existing schools "cannot stop, take stock, redesign and then start again [but] have no option but to 'build the plane while flying' if they perceive that significant change is required" (p. ix). This metaphor captures the inherent tension facing established schools. They must simultaneously transform their pedagogical thinking, shift institutional direction, and evolve deeply embedded cultural practices while maintaining the stability and continuity that allows current students to continue achieving success within existing frameworks.

Understanding how existing schools like Braemar Academy have engaged with the NZC's vision requires more than examining structural or procedural changes. It also involves considering how the curriculum's core concepts are interpreted and enacted within a single school. The following section draws on the literature to explore how key ideas embedded in the NZC, such as equity, excellence, competencies, values, diversity and inclusion, have been understood and implemented across different educational contexts.

Equity and Excellence

Research on equity and excellence in education emphasises the creation of student-centred learning environments where all students can succeed academically regardless of their backgrounds or starting points (Bolton, 2017; Schleicher, 2014; Varadharajan et al., 2022). Achieving equity and excellence requires multifaceted approaches combining structural, pedagogical, and assessment strategies.

A key element in supporting equity and excellence is careful curriculum design that balances core content with opportunities for deep learning. Research suggests that structural changes, such as reducing subject content to allow students to master foundational skills, can significantly support student success (McTighe & Wiggins, 2012). This approach aligns with the deep learning framework developed by Fullan et al. (2017), which emphasises the development of global competencies rather than focusing solely on content acquisition. By emphasising the quality of learning over the quantity of content, Fullan et al.'s approach supports a more inclusive and meaningful education that better prepares students for the complex demands of life beyond school.

Pathways that uphold academic depth while supporting student autonomy can be provided by structured frameworks like the SOLO taxonomy, developed by Biggs and Collis (1982) and contextualised for New Zealand classrooms by Hook and Mills (2011). SOLO taxonomy enables students to recognise and map their journey from basic recall to complex synthesis, thus providing a structured pathway that upholds academic depth while supporting students to become more autonomous learners. This aligns with Hattie's (2009) emphasis on the power of clearly defined learning intentions and success criteria in improving student outcomes. By making learning progressions visible, SOLO supports what Hattie describes as "visible learning", where students know what they are learning, how they are progressing, and what they need to do to improve. Together, these approaches promote equity by enabling all students to engage with learning in a structured, meaningful, and empowering way.

Culturally responsive pedagogical approaches have been found to demonstrate how equity and excellence can be mutually reinforcing rather than acting as competing priorities. They engage students by drawing on their identity, language, and culture to create meaningful and contextualised learning experiences (Berryman et al., 2018; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; ERO, 2016). As Gay (2000) observed, students may learn more easily and thoroughly when academic knowledge and skills are situated within their lived experiences and frames of reference, making learning simultaneously equitable and rigorous. This perspective is reinforced by Ladson-Billings (1995, 2014), who emphasised that culturally relevant pedagogy promotes academic success while helping students maintain cultural competence and develop critical consciousness. In the AoNZ context, research by Bishop et al. (2009), through the Te Kotahitanga project, demonstrates the practical application of these principles by showing significant improvement in educational outcomes for Māori students. This and other research (Berryman et al., 2018; Morrison et al., 2019; Schlanger, 2018) highlight how valuing diverse cultural perspectives can enhance student learning and outcomes.

Structured frameworks like the *Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile* (Bishop & Berryman, 2009) facilitate a critical examination of teaching and learning through culturally responsive lenses that validate and reflect students' diverse identities and experiences. Timperley (2015, p. 52) argues that successful teacher PD around such frameworks relies on professional conversations that develop relationships characterised by "trust, openness, challenge and mutual respect", which, she found, are most likely to enhance participants' sense of agency to improve practice.

Implementing individualised learning plans is another pedagogical approach demonstrating how targeted support promotes equity and excellence. Research by Florian and Black-Hawkins (2011) showed that inclusive pedagogical approaches that respond to individual differences

without creating separate educational tracks can promote equity and high achievement. This aligns with Mitchell's (2020) evidence-based strategies for inclusive education by emphasising that combining student autonomy with targeted support creates an educational environment where all students can succeed academically. When successfully implemented, personalised learning approaches have been shown to increase student engagement and academic outcomes (Prain et al., 2013).

The approaches outlined above – thoughtful curriculum design, structured frameworks, culturally responsive pedagogy, and personalised learning – collectively create educational environments that appear to support equity and excellence while establishing foundations for capability development.

Deliberately cultivating students' capabilities to thrive in an increasingly complex and changing world requires intentional design that builds on inclusive pedagogical practices while supporting students' capacity to apply their learning in authentic contexts. For schools seeking to shift from traditional approaches to more contemporary pedagogies, this transformation represents a significant challenge requiring substantial changes in teacher practice and institutional culture.

Developing Capabilities

A growing body of literature suggests that prioritising capabilities alongside specific content knowledge is essential for preparing students to be future-ready (Bolstad et al., 2012; Reimers & Chung, 2016; Scott, 2015; Wagner & Dintersmith, 2015). This approach recognises that capabilities complement rather than replace traditional subject knowledge, with the two working interdependently to support comprehensive student learning.

The early work of the OECD (DeSeCo Project 1997–2003) on competencies has influenced curriculum design globally, for example, Deep Learning Competencies (Quinn et al., 2019), OECD's Future of Education and Skills 2030 initiative (2019) and Pan-Canadian Competency Frame (Peterson-Badali et al., 2023). In AoNZ, including key competencies in the NZC highlights the expectation that they will be explicitly taught and integral to all teaching and learning (MoE, 2007). However, New Zealand and international research also acknowledge that barriers exist to implementing the competencies into classroom practice (Fadal et al., 2015; McDowall & Hipkins, 2018).

PBL represents a pedagogical approach integrating capabilities with subject knowledge through authentic problem-solving experiences. Trilling and Fadel (2009) identified five essential characteristics of effective project learning: outcomes tied to curriculum goals, driving questions leading to central concepts, investigations involving inquiry and knowledge building, student

responsibility for designing and managing learning, and authentic real-world problems (p. 109). These characteristics align with the 4Cs principle (critical thinking, communication, collaboration, creativity), which Scott (2015) suggested underpins 21st-century education. Multiple studies confirm PBL as an active student-centred approach characterised by learner agency, productive investigations, goal setting, collaboration, communication, and reflection within real-world contexts (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Mergendoller, 2018; Scott, 2015).

Research demonstrates PBL's effectiveness in developing capabilities alongside content knowledge. For example, Hixson et al. (2012) found that students in PBL classrooms demonstrated significantly higher proficiency in critical thinking, collaboration, and self-direction compared to traditional classrooms. Chen and Yang's (2019) meta-analysis reported moderate to significant positive effects on capability development across diverse educational contexts. Strobel and van Barneveld (2009) concluded that PBL was superior to traditional instruction for long-term retention and skill development. At the same time, Kingston's (2018) large-scale study found that PBL developed transferable capabilities valued by employers without sacrificing academic achievement.

Despite its benefits, implementing effective PBL presents challenges. Teachers often struggle balancing guidance and autonomy, potentially resulting in uneven learning outcomes (Hmelo-Silver et al., 2007). The time-intensive nature of projects can create tension with curriculum coverage demands, particularly in assessment-driven contexts (Condliffe et al., 2017). Teachers may feel uncomfortable shifting from a traditional teacher-centred role to a facilitator role, which PBL requires (Woods, 2014). Structural constraints, including rigid timetabling, resource limitations, and assessment systems focused on content knowledge rather than capabilities, can further inhibit successful implementation (Tamim & Grant, 2013; Trilling & Fadel, 2009).

PBL represents a pedagogical approach that strongly aligns with the NZC's emphasis on key competencies and future-focused learning. It offers schools like Braemar Academy a structured framework for translating curriculum aspirations into authentic learning experiences while navigating the tensions between innovation and maintaining academic standards.

It will be interesting to explore how ideas related to PBL find their way into my participants' thinking and practices. However, while PBL supports deep learning in specific project contexts, pedagogical approaches that enable students to make coherent connections across multiple learning areas are also needed. This is where curriculum integration becomes particularly valuable.

Curriculum integration offers a complementary approach that systematically connects capabilities across multiple learning areas and disciplinary boundaries. While McPhail (2017)

acknowledged that varied interpretations of curriculum integration necessitate clarity in theory and practice, the approach represents a promising strategy for making deeper connections across subjects and fostering student inquiry into more authentic, relevant, and interconnected topics that are more connected, authentic, and relevant to their lives, interests, and passions (McDowall & Hipkins, 2019; McPhail, 2020; Trilling & Fadel, 2009). Multiple sources argue for refocusing curricula on “big picture” themes and problems, as reported in a review of 21st-century learning literature (Scott, 2015). When implemented successfully with clear theoretical frameworks and practical approaches, engaging with these big-picture themes through curriculum integration can deepen student learning experiences across disciplines while avoiding conceptual ambiguity and ensuring meaningful knowledge connections.

The development of capabilities provides students with powerful tools to navigate complex challenges, but these tools require an ethical compass to guide their application. Values education complements capability development by establishing the moral framework through which students determine how, when, and why to apply their capabilities. Capabilities and values form the complementary dimensions of student development that the NZC seeks to foster, creating an educational approach where competence is paired with ethical behaviour. This integration reflects international research suggesting that the most successful education systems simultaneously develop technical competence and ethical judgement (Berkowitz et al., 2017; OECD, 2021).

Values Education

Meaningful values education requires intentional embedding across all curriculum areas and school practices rather than treating values as isolated concepts taught in specific lessons (Halstead & Pike, 2006). Research consistently shows that this holistic approach significantly benefits students' development. For example, Berkowitz et al. (2017) demonstrated that integrating values education throughout the curriculum enhances academic and personal growth, while the OECD (2021) asserted that such integration is vital for shaping positive lifelong learning outcomes and contributing to a more equitable society.

The NZC (2007) exemplifies this research-based approach by defining values as "deeply held beliefs about what is important or desirable" that are "expressed through how people think and act" (p. 10). It recognises that values permeate all aspects of school life and outlines a developmental framework that engages students in progressively sophisticated interactions with values. This framework moves students from learning about values and exploring different value systems to developing capacities for expression, empathy, critical analysis, and ethical decision-making. This multidimensional approach aligns with contemporary educational theory, suggesting that successful values education must simultaneously engage students' cognitive,

affective, and behavioural domains to foster individual development and societal cohesion (Lovat & Toomey, 2009; Arthur, 2020).

Implementing equity and excellence practices, capability development, and values education requires cohesive leadership and professional agency across all school levels.

As Ball et al. (2012) emphasised, translating curriculum policy into authentic practice demands strategically navigating a school's unique context. This professional agency operates across multiple tiers, from senior leadership designing overarching curriculum frameworks to middle leaders facilitating implementation within faculties/departments and individual teachers crafting specific learning experiences. Harris (2013) suggested cultivating this agency throughout the organisation builds collective capacity for sustainable change and innovation. Given the complex nature of implementing the multifaceted elements described in previous sections, it is appropriate to address elements of leadership in educational contexts when there is significant change afoot.

2.7 Leadership for Change

Research literature suggests that educational leadership is about "influencing" others in educational settings to advance the vision, values, and goals centred on "learning" (Connelly et al., 2017; Leithwood, 2012; Kools & Stoll, 2017; Wylie & McKinley, 2018). However, the mechanisms through which leaders influence are often indirect and multifaceted (Cardno et al., 2018; Leithwood et al., 2020; Robinson, 2011b). This is frequently the case in secondary schools where the impact of role expansion, school size, and departmentalised structure on the practices of school leaders, particularly principals, has meant that middle leaders, such as HoFs/HoDs, have a significant role in improving teacher practice. While principals and senior school leaders still oversee those with such delegated responsibilities, their focus is on creating the conditions for optimal teaching and learning rather than directly improving the quality of teaching, as is the case for middle leaders. The following sections consider the respective roles of senior and middle leadership in the context of leadership and change.

2.7.1 Role of Senior Leaders

Principals and senior school leaders exercise their influence indirectly by working through and with others. Applying key strategies, such as articulating vision and values, goal setting, building capacity, and strategic resourcing, as well as creating policies, procedures, and structures, can be seen as enabling optimal learning environments rather than interventions in classroom practice (Bassett, 2016; Bendikson et al., 2012; Cardno et al., 2018; Gurr-Mark et al., 2010; Wright, 2018). While the literature has established that school leadership influences student outcomes

primarily through these indirect means, researchers have developed various frameworks to identify and categorise the leadership practices of school leaders that contribute to enhancing quality teaching and learning.

Researchers use a range of different frameworks to identify and categorise such practices. For example, Hitt and Tucker (2016) developed a Unified Leadership Framework which synthesised three prominent frameworks – the Learning-Centred Leadership Framework (Murphy et al., 2006), the Essential Supports Framework (Sebring et al., 2006), and the Ontario Leadership Framework (Leithwood, 2012) – to identify the five most effective leadership domains that influence student learning. In New Zealand, ERO (2016) developed a comprehensive set of indicators for and examples of effective leadership practice in schools framed around Robinson's (2011b) student-centred leadership model. More recently, Wylie and McKinley (2018) developed a Leadership Capability Framework, identifying nine core capabilities characteristic of effective educational leadership practices.

A key feature of most of these frameworks is the focus on leadership *practice* rather than, for example, competencies. Leithwood (2012) describes *practice* as "a bundle of activities/actions/behaviours exercised by a person or group of persons which reflect the particular circumstances in which they find themselves and with some shared outcome(s) in mind" (p. 5). Implicit in this description is the notion of situatedness (context where leadership is exercised), relationships (central to the work of leaders), responsiveness (applying leadership practices to specific contexts), and shared (distributed nature of leadership work).

Several themes across the frameworks suggest common leadership practices. For example, Hitt and Tucker (2016) identified the following domains (pp. 543–544) in their Unified Leadership Framework:

- Establishing and conveying the vision
- Facilitating a high-quality learning experience for students
- Building professional capacity
- Creating a supportive organisation for learning
- Connecting with external partners

Two of these domains seem particularly relevant when reflecting on the early stage of a vision enactment process, which is at the heart of my research. They are:

- Establishing and conveying the vision
- Building professional capacity

Each of these is addressed in turn next.

Establishing and Conveying the Vision

Developing a shared vision that centres on the learning of all students is a fundamental leadership responsibility across the leadership frameworks identified above. Building on the previously discussed vision attributes, leadership models emphasise how school leaders must actively facilitate the vision development process. For example, Hallinger's (2011) leadership model for learning positions vision and goals as the most significant way leaders can impact learning. This positioning of vision work as the "essence of leadership" is a common theme throughout the literature (Gurley et al., 2015; Kose, 2011; Kurland et al., 2010; Mombourquette, 2017; Murphy & Torre, 2015). Robinson (2011b), in her seminal work, further validates this perspective, identifying vision and goals among the most impactful dimensions of student-centred leadership. While these earlier perspectives remain relevant, more recent research has reinforced and evolved this understanding. For example, Netolicky (2020) highlighted the role of shared vision and moral purpose in anchoring leadership decisions and creating coherence between strategic direction and day-to-day operations, particularly in times of crisis. In her most recent work, Robinson (2022), in the context of deep learning, reiterated the importance of setting goals and expectations and integrating them into relevant mission, vision and goal statements if "the distinctive purposes of education are to be anything more than philosophical or policy abstractions" (p. 29).

While vision attributes matter, as discussed above (Section 2.4.2), the leader's role in orchestrating inclusive vision development processes is equally crucial. Successful leaders actively engage stakeholders within and beyond the organisation as essential contributors to vision formation (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kools & Stoll, 2017; Wright, 2018; Wylie & McKinley, 2018). While leaders may outline the general direction, this collaborative approach ensures that diverse perspectives from staff, students, parents/whānau, and community groups strengthen the vision's relevance and stakeholders' commitment to implementation. Beyond facilitating vision development, leaders must translate broad, aspirational concepts into specific, measurable goals and performance expectations that stakeholders can readily understand and implement (ERO, 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2012). However, undertaking "goal-setting and goal-pursuit practices" (Meyer et al., 2020, p. 366) has its challenges. As highlighted above (Section 2.4.3), caution must be exercised when setting measurable goals. Prioritising quantifiable outcomes above all else risks adopting a constricted view of achievement that may overlook the importance of well-rounded student development (Noddings, 2005) or restrict creativity and innovation (Priestley & Drew, 2019; Robinson, 2011a; Zhao, 2017).

Communicating a school's vision and goals to stakeholders is an important part of the implementation process. Leithwood (2012) noted that reaching everyone affected by the

school's directions was impossible, even where wide stakeholder engagement was sought. Those actively engaged in the process needed reminding. He suggested that leaders use a range of formal and informal opportunities to explain the vision and goals to stakeholders. For example, leaders might also consider demonstrating the vision and goals in practice and invite different stakeholder groups to share how their work contributes to the schools' vision and goals. Ball et al. (2012), as noted in Section 2.2.3 above, offered a complementary perspective through their concept of "discursive policy enactment". They emphasised how vision and goals are communicated through explicit statements and various artefacts and activities that shape meaning within the school community. Ball et al. argued that these communication methods can become mechanisms through which stakeholders internalise the vision and goals, ultimately leading to self-regulation and alignment with the school's direction without explicit coercion.

The literature consistently positions vision work as foundational to successful educational leadership, emphasising the collaborative development process and strategic communication approaches. While the articulation of vision provides direction, its ultimate impact depends on how successfully it becomes embedded in organisational culture and practice through intentional leadership actions. This integration of vision into everyday school operations creates the necessary bridge between aspirational goals and tangible actions, setting the stage for focused capacity building among middle leaders and staff who will ultimately translate vision into classroom reality.

Building Professional Capacity

School leadership is increasingly recognised as a distributed process rather than residing solely with the principal (Harris, 2020; Spillane, 2006). As such, senior leaders play a crucial role in developing middle leadership capacity. As Solly (2018) argued, if middle leaders are granted autonomy to make key decisions, they must also be equipped with the tools to build their leadership capability. This responsibility falls primarily to senior leaders, who must identify the knowledge, skills, and competencies that middle leaders need to lead change initiatives successfully (Iannini, 2019).

When senior leaders actively engage in building middle leadership capacity, several benefits emerge: enhanced strategic alignment across the school (Hitt & Tucker, 2016), greater consistency in implementing change initiatives (Leithwood et al., 2020), increased middle leader confidence in navigating complex change (Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014), and improved staff engagement with change processes (Harris & Jones, 2017).

As noted above, senior leaders are key in creating enabling conditions for optimal teaching and learning. Building on these benefits of developing middle leadership capacity, senior leaders

need to establish the organisational infrastructure through which vision enactment becomes possible and abstract ideals are translated into daily organisational routines and practices. These conditions include practical frameworks such as strategic and annual planning templates, which provide structure, ensure goal alignment, streamline decision-making, and promote accountability through clear timelines and measurable objectives (King, 2023; Klompus et al., 2023; Mathias, 2023; Reeves, 2007).

Savvy senior leaders will most likely facilitate vision enactment through their deliberate development of collaborative professional cultures, as demonstrated in research literature spanning decades. Creating such cultures requires intentional systems and structures that enable regular interactions, such as team meetings, joint planning time, and shared leadership opportunities (Louis et al., 1996). Such practices potentially reduce fragmentation and foster sustained teamwork (DuFour et al., 2020; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Jensen et al. (2016) argued that allocating time specifically for teacher collaboration is one of the most effective strategies for professional growth. In addition to allocating time, teacher collaboration can be supported by common workspaces which make collegial interactions possible (The Education Hub, 2019). Spaces inviting interaction and flexible options foster formal and informal collaboration.

Another way senior leaders build middle leadership capacity is through strategic partnerships with external facilitators who bring specialised knowledge and objective perspectives to enhance change processes and build leadership capacity. Educational researchers across different contexts consistently highlight how external expertise contributes to sustainable improvement and innovation within schools when connected with on-site learning (Avakian & Clark, 2014; Hargreaves et al., 2010; Kools & Stoll, 2017; Sanetti et al., 2014). ERO (2016) highlighted the value of external experts in challenging leaders' and teachers' thinking and supporting the realisation of a school's vision, values, and goals. Specifically, external expertise can introduce fresh perspectives, helping leaders consider innovative strategies aligning with the school's vision and evolving educational practices. This expertise supports school development through collaborative approaches that respect internal contextual knowledge.

Additionally, allocating time and resources for school-wide PD aligned with strategic goals can build collective capacity across faculty boundaries (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Timperley et al., 2007). It is argued that on-site, collaborative professional learning opportunities reduce the disconnection between theory and practice, enabling real-time reflection and adaptation (Timperley et al., 2007). Active, collaborative, and on-site professional learning is consistently identified as essential for fostering sustained professional growth (DuFour & Eaker, 1998;

Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kools & Stoll, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leithwood, 2012).

When senior leaders intentionally create and maintain the conditions outlined above, middle leaders are better positioned to translate school vision into meaningful faculty and classroom practices (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Leithwood & Sun, 2012). Conversely, when senior leaders delegate responsibility for change without adequate support, middle leaders may struggle to implement strategic initiatives successfully (Cardno et al., 2018; Iannini, 2019).

Beyond creating enabling conditions, senior leaders' active engagement in change processes significantly influences implementation success. Leithwood and Sun (2012) argue that senior leaders must model expected behaviours and practices to maintain credibility, including demonstrating commitment to professional learning and maintaining consistent messaging around strategic priorities. However, research from organisational contexts suggests that individual role modelling alone proves insufficient, with Aiken and Keller (2009) noting that only one in three organisational transformations succeed, partly because executives often exempt themselves from the change they expect others to embrace.

While individual role modelling establishes necessary credibility, it needs to be complemented by collective leadership alignment to create the organisational conditions necessary for successful implementation. Recent business literature (Fragile to Agile, 2023; Grahame Robb Associates, 2022; Metcalf, 2023; Voltage Control, 2023) indicates that even when individual leaders demonstrate appropriate behaviours, the absence of unified messaging across the senior leadership team can undermine change efforts. This collective alignment creates a "unified voice" (Grahame Robb Associates, 2022) that provides consistent messages enabling middle leaders to translate strategic priorities into effective action. Conversely, when senior leaders communicate competing priorities, they create a "fog of confusion" (Fragile to Agile, 2023) that forces middle leaders into the impossible task of reconciling mixed messages while maintaining credibility with their teams.

While this research emerges from business contexts, the fundamental dynamics are equally relevant in educational settings, where the complexity of implementing change initiatives requires the same coherent leadership alignment that business research identifies as critical for successful transformation. Building on this need for coherent leadership alignment, Davies (2003) emphasised that senior leaders must provide strategic guidance while supporting middle leaders to contextualise initiatives within their faculties. This balance between direction and autonomy requires senior leaders to remain actively engaged while empowering middle

leaders to make context-appropriate decisions. Harris and Spillane (2008) noted that visible senior leadership support is critical to successful pedagogical and cultural change.

The literature reveals a complex relationship between senior and middle leadership in enacting school vision and implementing change. While middle leaders occupy a pivotal position in translating vision into classroom practice, their success depends significantly on the quality and intentionality of capacity-building support provided by senior leaders. Schools implementing vision-aligned initiatives typically demonstrate active senior leadership engagement through structured professional learning, collaborative cultures, and visible commitment to change.

This relationship is particularly significant in the AoNZ context, where formal middle leadership development programmes, as detailed below, are limited. This places greater responsibility on senior leaders to provide appropriate support. As schools continue to implement increasingly complex change initiatives, the importance of senior leaders' role in building middle leadership capacity becomes even more pronounced. The following section will examine some of the complexity of middle leadership.

2.7.2 Complexity of Middle Leadership

While there are diverse theoretical perspectives in the field, much of the literature on educational leadership highlights the role of school principals in driving change and improvement (Daniëls et al., 2019; Lipscombe et al., 2021). However, there has been a shift from attributing organisational success solely to the leadership strategies of a single individual with managerial authority. Instead, a more distributed model has emerged, emphasising daily processes at individual and departmental levels and viewing group success as a collective effort (Au et al., 2003; Bento, 2011). This shift highlights the critical role of middle leaders in achieving organisational success, particularly through their ability to influence others (De Nobile, 2021).

Bento et al., 2023 argue that developing an all-encompassing definition of middle leadership within secondary education contexts is challenging, particularly when attempting to create a framework sufficiently inclusive to address the varied and occasionally contradictory functions these leaders perform. This complexity stems from differences in school contexts, organisational cultures, educational frameworks, and the intricate challenges middle leaders face in simultaneously managing administrative duties, exercising leadership influence, and maintaining collaborative relationships with colleagues (Bento et al., 2023). In their literature review on middle leadership in secondary schools, Bento et al. also noted that middle leaders were often individuals within a school who occupy positions such as subject heads or heads of departments or units. These leaders may or may not have teaching responsibilities in addition to

their leadership role. This definition aligns with Grootenboer (2018), who describes middle leading as a relational practice of someone in a school with a positional title but with a teaching load. This reflects the roles of the participants in my study, where they each had teaching and leadership responsibilities.

As noted above, middle leaders play a crucial role in driving successful teaching and learning and positive in-school relationships through their capacity to influence others, simultaneously exercising direct and indirect leadership. As classroom teachers, their impact on student learning is likely to be immediate and tangible, shaping pedagogical practices through direct interaction with students. However, their leadership responsibilities extend beyond the classroom. By collaborating with colleagues and providing role modelling, middle leaders contribute to the broader learning environment, affecting the educational experiences of students they may not teach directly (Grootenboer et al., 2015). This duality of roles highlights the complexity of their position; middle leaders must balance the demands of positive classroom practice with the strategic oversight required in leading a faculty/department's responsibilities (Bassett, 2016; Cardno et al., 2018). As Bassett outlined, such responsibilities range from instructional leadership and strategic planning to staff performance monitoring and development.

Moreover, and relevant to this study, middle leaders often serve as critical intermediaries between senior leadership and the teaching staff, translating school policies into actionable practices within their faculties/departments (Bassett, 2016). This horizontal influence among peers and vertical interactions with senior leaders highlights the middle leader's key role in bridging school-wide initiatives and everyday classroom realities (Bassett, 2016; Edwards-Groves et al., 2019). This adds another dimension of complexity to their role as they try to balance the often-competing demands of senior leadership expectations with the practical realities of classroom teaching and faculty leadership. Consequently, middle leaders are pivotal in maintaining coherence in school policy implementation and fostering localised, faculty/department-level innovations, positioning them as critical agents in shaping the school's educational outcomes.

This raises questions about how prepared middle leaders are to undertake these complex roles. For many teachers, the move into middle leadership is often the first step in facilitating learning and change in adults rather than students (Highfield, 2017). The potential for teachers in middle leadership positions to drive transformative teaching and learning is promising, yet the necessary expectations and support for these roles are frequently insufficient (Gurr & Drysdale, 2013). In AoNZ, aside from a teaching qualification and a practising teacher certificate, there are no compulsory requirements for completing PD programmes or obtaining formal qualifications

to assume senior or middle leadership roles (Highfield, 2017). Ultimately, preparing for leadership is primarily the individual's responsibility, even though their skills benefit a wide range of people and contexts. Regarding senior leaders, the PPTA (2016) stated that skills such as effective change management, handling complex situations, and problem-solving are usually learned through experience on the job. Gurr and Drysdale (2013) described this as the apprenticeship model where "aspiring school leaders progress based on the skills and experience learned on-the-job" (p. 64). This scenario extends to middle leaders and, perhaps, highlights the responsibilities senior leaders should have to not only attend to their leadership development but also mentor middle leaders to grow their capabilities, particularly around leading for change.

2.7.3 Growing Middle Leadership

In AoNZ, leadership development programmes have mainly focused on principals and aspiring principals. Currently, the MoE leadership programmes on offer are the Beginning Principals Programme (MoE, 2025a) and TeachNZ Awards for teachers wishing to "build [their] skills in school management and leadership" should they choose to study or undertake research in educational leadership (MoE, 2025b). While the Beginning Principals Programme is available upon appointment to a principal position, TeachNZ Awards require an application and selection process. In the self-managing school environment, seeking external professional support or expertise is not mandatory to foster staff leadership development. Furthermore, the current centrally funded professional learning and development infrastructure, along with the expert support provided locally and nationally, does not focus on enhancing the skills of individual leaders but aims to support a theory of improvement that benefits the entire school (Highfield, 2017). This then leaves the responsibility of growing middle leadership up to individual schools. This could involve in-house initiatives or participation in programmes offered by private providers. The following section provides two examples of within-school initiatives.

In-school Mentoring

Locating examples of secondary schools leading innovative learning and addressing how they grew leadership in their schools were difficult to find. However, two AoNZ case studies illustrate how senior leaders can collaborate with middle leaders to embrace new learning approaches. The first case study is St Thomas of Canterbury College, an Edmund Rice integrated Catholic school for boys in Years 7–13 founded in 1961. The school is in a major city, has a student body of 663, and draws from a relatively affluent socio-economic area (MoE, 2025c). In this case study, described in the ERO (2018) report, *Leading Innovative Learning in New Zealand Schools,* the new principal (2009) recognised the need for a cohesive school culture that fostered continuous improvement and a shift from fixed to growth mindsets. She recognised a need to

“support her teachers overcome their anxiety and resistance to change” (p. 42) to reach their full potential as successful educators. To achieve the intended cultural shifts, senior leaders began by drawing on NZC (2007) and the teachings of Edmund Rice, which emphasise living faith through action, fostering inclusivity, and promoting social justice (Edmund Rice Education, 2023) to guide their approach. Rather than implementing surface-level initiatives, the school embedded carefully selected strategies into its core practices, and these gradually became integral to the school’s distinctive culture.

A key aspect of the transformation emphasised staff professional learning and development. Senior leaders participated in an in-depth seminar with an internationally renowned change consultant. The seminar focused on developing “the skills they needed to create an environment of trust, challenge deeply held assumptions, share professional knowledge, and inspire each other to be better leaders and teachers” (ERO, 2018, p. 43). Recognising the importance of distributed leadership, the SLT created a shadow management system where middle leaders participated in senior decision-making processes. This involvement equipped middle leaders with the skills necessary to contribute to high-level decision-making, empowering them to be more capable leaders within their respective teams. By distributing leadership responsibility and fostering an environment of trust and shared professional knowledge, senior leaders helped middle managers strengthen their investment in the school’s ongoing transformation and leadership practices. This collaborative approach highlights how a deliberate set of strategies embedded in the role of senior leadership nurtured shared responsibility for change management across the school.

The second case study school is Hobsonville Point Secondary School, a Year 9–13 co-educational state secondary school with a roll of 854 students in 2024. The school opened in 2014, is in the northern suburbs of a major city and draws students from areas of high socioeconomic status compared to other New Zealand schools (MoE, 2025c). As a new school, the foundation principal and senior leaders had the unique advantage of having approximately 12 months together before students arrived. During that time, they engaged in extensive professional learning, planning how they would enact their school vision in practice. Two staff groups joined before the students, each undergoing an induction process. The first group consisted of subject leaders tasked with leading and implementing the subject-specific aspects of the school's vision. Their induction focused on grasping the Learning Design Model, the Learning Hub framework, subject integration strategies, and reimagining how the NZC would be applied in the school. This process fostered a clear understanding of the school's vision (Wright, 2018) by translating aspirational ideals into tangible pedagogical approaches. This induction process illustrates how senior leaders employed intentional strategies to empower middle leaders to lead and enact the

curriculum aspects of the school vision before the second group of staff arrived. An additional feature of this school's commitment to growing staff leadership was evident in the PD programme set up by the foundation senior leaders. A Future-focused Leadership strand was a key component for all staff to complete throughout the school year (Amos, 2014).

These two case studies illustrate two important aspects of growing leadership. Firstly, the senior leaders in both schools engaged in extensive professional learning to prepare for the innovative approaches they were adopting. Secondly, they employed deliberate strategies to support middle leaders in implementing these approaches. At St Thomas of Canterbury College, middle leaders were empowered by working alongside senior leaders and participating in school-wide decision-making processes. Hobsonville Point Secondary School employed a structured induction process to prepare middle leaders for leading innovative learning. It developed a future-focused leadership development programme for all staff to grow their leadership capacity.

Externally Led Middle Leadership Programmes

While many private providers in AoNZ (e.g., Education Associates, Growth Culture, Tui Tuia Learning Centre) and tertiary institutions (e.g., University of Auckland, University of Waikato, Massey University) offer educational leadership programmes or qualifications, it seems that little or no research has been done into their effects or impact on leadership development. However, a middle leadership programme in Australia, led by the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) Leadership Centre in New South Wales, has been examined for its impact and effects on middle leadership practice (Day & Grice, 2019). The following description and effects of the Leading from the Middle leadership programme are sourced from Day and Grice's research report.

This professional learning programme was an on-site programme that targeted teachers who were not part of the executive (senior) leadership team but held formal roles in leading and managing instruction for specific groups of teachers and were an integral part of the school's formal leadership structure. The programme was informed by research and practical experience on successful change for improvement. The selected/targeted teachers participated in five days of face-to-face formal learning over four terms facilitated by the Association of Independent Schools (AIS) Leadership Centre. The first two days of the programme focused on personal and collaborative leadership reflection. Day 1 explored participants' "inner" leadership journey, including practices, values, and strengths, culminating in creating a personal purpose statement. On Day 2, the focus moved to the "outer" leadership journey, where participants, in collaboration with a senior leader, were guided in creating a strategically aligned change project within their area of responsibility. Days 3 and 4 provided knowledge and support for leading these change

projects. Day 3 emphasised change management, while Day 4 focused on practising difficult conversations using an open-to-learning model within a supportive community of practice.

Based on their findings, Day and Grice (2019) reported several "research-informed claims" (p. 48) from the programme that appear to have contributed to the successful development of middle leaders. Participants noted that the programme shifted their focus from administrative tasks to a more comprehensive understanding of leadership within and beyond their roles. Tailored, sustained PD, aligned with individual and school needs, was seen as essential for enhancing leadership capabilities. Additionally, expanding middle leaders' awareness of the broader school context and involving them in change initiatives were crucial for strengthening their contribution to the school's vision.

Pedagogical leadership seems to have emerged as a driver of change, particularly when teaching knowledge and experience are shared within communities of practice, like those fostered through the Leading from the Middle programme. Trust, collaboration, and mentoring – reinforced through informal feedback – were identified as seemingly vital for guiding successful change. Senior leaders, especially principals and executive teams, appear pivotal in empowering or limiting middle leaders' capacity to lead beyond their current responsibilities. Self-reflection on personal values also contributed to leadership growth.

Furthermore, the findings revealed that when thoughtfully aligned with organisational needs, school-based projects fostered middle leadership development and yielded indirect benefits for student outcomes. External programme leadership teams provided critical support by offering perspectives that supported and challenged current practices. Perhaps most significantly, the report emphasised that diagnosing a school's readiness for change was a critical precursor for programme success, suggesting that even well-designed initiatives may falter without appropriate institutional groundwork. These insights collectively highlight how the dynamic interaction between organisational culture, individual leadership capacity, and programme design elements ultimately determines the sustainability of improved leadership practices.

While this research provides valuable insights into the middle leadership programme from a sample of independent schools in Australia, the following considerations warrant comment. The data collection timeline (beginning in February 2017 for a programme running 2014–2017, with follow-up in 2018) raises questions about whether sufficient time had elapsed to fully assess the long-term efficacy and sustainability of the leadership changes. Additionally, given their different resource allocations, governance structures, and institutional priorities, it remains uncertain to what extent these findings might transfer to state secondary schools in AoNZ. It seems likely that the fundamental leadership principles from this study could be transferable

across educational contexts. However, the specific implementation strategies would probably require adaptation to reflect the unique challenges and constraints faced by state secondary schools in AoNZ. Despite these limitations, the researched effects from this programme may offer valuable insights for understanding middle leadership development in the context of vision enactment. This suggests that effective middle leadership development requires building capacity to lead both within and beyond one's normal area of responsibility.

2.8 Conclusion

This literature review has examined diverse perspectives on educational change, policy enactment, New Zealand's educational reforms since 1989, the nature and function of school visions, the affordances of the NZC, and leadership roles in change management. Throughout this exploration, several themes have emerged: the tension between functionalist and critical approaches to change, the contextual factors that shape policy enactment, the critical role of both senior and middle leaders in translating vision into practice, and the complex interplay between structural conditions and individual agency in educational reform. Notably absent from the literature is a nuanced understanding of how curriculum leaders, positioned at the interface between senior leadership and classroom teachers, interpret and translate school visions into practice within the specific context of AoNZ secondary schools. The research questions guiding this study address this gap by examining the structural and cultural contexts that shape vision enactment, the collaborative processes of vision-making, the interpretive work of curriculum leaders, and the conditions that enable or constrain vision translation into action.

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1. How do a school's structural and cultural contexts create opportunities and constraints for curriculum leaders as they work to embed the school's vision?

RQ2. How do curriculum leaders engage with and experience the process of collaborative vision-making?

RQ3. How do curriculum leaders interpret and translate the school's vision in their specific contexts?

RQ4. What conditions inhibit/enable curriculum leaders to translate these school vision perspectives into actions?

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach designed to capture these complex processes through the lived experiences of curriculum leaders at the forefront of educational change.

Chapter Three: Methodology & Methods

This chapter addresses aspects of methodology appropriate for my study (Part 1) and relevant research methods (Part 2). In Part 1, I introduce and explain the philosophical worldview guiding my study and justify the qualitative research approach taken. I also address the quality assurance measures needed in a qualitative research study. I then discuss my inquiry strategy (case study), the process of recruiting participants, and key ethical considerations associated with human research. In Part 2, I provide an overview of the research methods and procedures, including the types of data collected and the use of a personal journal. I finish by outlining my chosen data analysis processes.

3.1 Philosophical Worldview

My philosophical worldview, shaped by a long career in teaching and leadership within a complex and fluid educational environment, aligns with an interpretivist approach, which seems most appropriate for exploring the nature of reality and knowledge within an educational context. I begin by deconstructing what O'Gorman and MacIntosh (2014) refer to as "the ologies" (p. xv) – ontology and epistemology – that reflect the philosophical underpinnings of this interpretivist perspective. Ontology, which concerns the nature of reality (Cohen et al., 2018; Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2014; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994), is represented in interpretivism by relativism – a belief in multiple, subjective realities that can both contradict and coexist (Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Scotland, 2012). Since I will be interviewing individuals with diverse professional backgrounds and experiences that shape their understanding of the concepts expressed in the new vision, an interpretive framework aligns this ontological perspective with the goals of my project. Furthermore, these individuals work in complex classrooms – no two are identical or operate in the same ways. As teachers, they need to adapt to the nuances of classroom cultural practices, highlighting the multiple realities they navigate daily, each shaped by the unique dynamics of their environments. Each participant's perspective is considered valid, reflecting their unique professional experiences, leadership, and curriculum and classroom contexts. By embracing these varied perspectives as valid, my study acknowledges that they are essential to understanding the complex nature of the vision's enactment.

Epistemology is the study of knowledge – its origins, construction, and what makes it valid (Bryman, 2012; Cresswell, 2003; Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Maykut & Morehouse, 1994) and is aligned with subjectivism in the interpretivist paradigm. This view posits that knowledge is co-constructed through the interaction between individuals and their

world and is developed and communicated in a social context which can only be understood from the perspectives of the individuals who are participating in it (Boyland, 2019; Crotty, 1998; Gray, 2014; Lincoln et al., 2011; Taylor & Medina, 2013). By recognising that each participant's reality is shaped by their unique contexts (ontology) and that their knowledge is co-constructed through their experiences within these environments (epistemology), my study acknowledges the interdependence of these perspectives, reinforcing the interpretivist approach. Furthermore, such meanings are often constructed through the "cultural and historical norms that operate in individuals' lives" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p .8). This point also applies to the researchers whose backgrounds and experiences shape their interpretations (Crotty, 1998). Moreover, if, as Crotty (1998) assumes, individuals' historical and social perspectives underpin how they make sense of and engage with their world, I need to understand the setting or context of my participants (Cohen et al., 2018). This makes undertaking research in their professional sphere – their school – an entirely appropriate option.

By adopting an interpretivist framework grounded in relativism and subjectivism, my study seeks to capture the nuanced and varied understandings of a school vision as enacted by its participants. This approach respects each individual's unique professional contexts and experiences and highlights the importance of situating research within the lived realities of those involved. In line with this philosophical stance, a qualitative research approach was appropriate for exploring these subjective experiences in-depth.

3.2 Qualitative Research Approach

My research aims to uncover the rich, complex layers of meaning that participants attach to the school vision, providing a deeper understanding of how it is interpreted and enacted in practice. I achieve this by using a case study as my strategy of inquiry (design) and semi-structured interviews and document analysis as my research methods. Furthermore, the flexibility inherent in a qualitative approach enables me to focus on individual meaning and the importance of reporting the complexity of the situation, particularly as this subject – shifting a school learning culture through the enactment of a school vision – has, as indicated in the literature review, not been addressed with this group of participants before nor in this school (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

A significant challenge for qualitative researchers is taking large amounts of qualitative data generated from a range of sources, for example, recorded interviews (individual and focus groups), documents, and observations, and communicating what the data reveals in a convincing and meaningful way (Nowell et al., 2017). A key criticism of qualitative approaches by those more used to quantitative methods is the lack of scientific rigour and credibility

commonly ascribed to quantitative studies (Vaismoradi et al., 2013). Moreover, the relevance and use of such concepts as validity, reliability, and generalisability – long regarded as the "holy trinity" among adherents of quantitative (scientific) research (Kvale, 1995, as cited in Tobin & Begley, 2004) – have been debated in terms of their applicability in qualitative research (Lincoln, 1995). This point is particularly relevant in my study because the setting is a school. Schools are not laboratories where variables can be easily accounted for – they are complex places, and no two classes are the same. This potentially raises the issue of quality assurance and the measures that need to be addressed to ensure the "trustworthiness" of qualitative research.

For my study, I adopt Lincoln and Guba's (1985) trustworthiness framework to establish quality assurance measures that align with the qualitative paradigm. This framework is particularly appropriate for my study for several reasons. First, it provides quality assurance measures that align with interpretivist epistemology, rather than imposing positivist concepts like validity, reliability, and generalisability onto a qualitative inquiry that is small in nature. Given that my study explores curriculum leaders' subjective sensemaking processes in a specific school context - a phenomenon that is socially constructed, context-dependent, and interpreted through multiple perspectives - traditional positivist criteria would be inappropriate. Trustworthiness criteria acknowledge that qualitative research produces context-bound, interpretive knowledge rather than generalisable, objective truths.

Second, there appears to be common agreement among qualitative researchers that trustworthiness is a key attribute in achieving quality research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Nowell et al., 2017; Suter, 2012). Lincoln and Guba's ideas on trustworthiness therefore provide qualitative researchers with an opportunity to explore ways of articulating the "trinity" of validity, reliability, and generalisability outside of the quantitative (scientific) field (Tobin & Begley, 2004) so the trinity is better represented in more subjective research contexts.

While I am aware that the concept of trustworthiness has been debated and critiqued in the literature (Silverman, 2000; Sparks, 2001), and there are disagreements about how best to demonstrate rigour or robustness in qualitative studies (Tobin & Begley, 2004), Lincoln and Guba's framework remains widely understood and accepted (Nowell et al., 2017), providing a recognised standard for evaluating qualitative research quality.

In refining the broader concept of trustworthiness, Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified the following criteria: transferability, dependability, credibility, and confirmability. Because these ideas resonate with me, I will use these criteria to discuss the characteristics of robust qualitative research and demonstrate how I have applied them systematically throughout my

study, acknowledging the complex and unique nature of school environments while ensuring methodological rigour.

3.2.1 Transferability

Using a case study approach (addressed below in 3.3) means that my study is situated in a specific context (secondary school) and concerned with the multiple perspectives of a particular group of participants (curriculum leaders and a senior leader). The research findings, therefore, are of specific relevance to Braemar Academy. Transferability, which embraces the notion of "external validity", refers to the degree to which the research findings can be generalised to broader contexts, for example, across different participants, groups, or situations on a case-to-case basis (Cohen et al., 2018; Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Transferability is particularly relevant to explain in relation to my single-case study design. I am not aiming for statistical generalisation - my findings are specific to Braemar Academy's context. However, I contend they will have analytical transferability: the insights about how curriculum leaders make sense of vision statements, navigate implementation tensions, and balance competing demands may resonate with similar contexts, rather than provide universal principles for all school contexts. This is because the research findings from my study are not directly generalisable across different participants in other school communities. However, the findings may raise issues and questions of relevance to other school communities, particularly those with similar demographic profiles, those implementing community-developed visions, or those grappling with the legacy of market-driven reforms.

To enhance the possibility of transferability, I provide what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call "thick description" - detailed contextual information about the school's history, the 1987 neoliberal reforms' legacy, the strategic planning process, organisational structures, and participant profiles. This enables readers to make judgements about how well the findings may match with or be applied to other schools and to assess the degree of fit between my study context and their own (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Suter, 2012). The bounded nature of my case study - one school, one implementation year, curriculum leaders as the specific subgroup - actually strengthens rather than weakens transferability. By clearly delineating boundaries, I enable other researchers and practitioners to identify possible parallels with their contexts.

3.2.2 Dependability

Along with transferability, dependability is another criterion to aim for. Dependability is similar to reliability, which refers to the likelihood of achieving similar findings if a similar study was carried out elsewhere by others (Cohen et al., 2018; Suter, 2012). Using an audit trail, where the research process is logically and clearly documented and open to examination, can enhance

dependability. To create my audit trail, I kept records of raw data (interview transcripts, field notes, key documents) and systematically recorded and disclosed my methods of data generation and analysis and key methodological decisions and rationale (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tobin & Begley, 2004).

Underpinning the audit trail is researcher reflexivity, where a researcher keeps a "self-critical" record of the research process (Tobin & Begley, 2004, p. 392). With this in mind, I used a personal journal to record intrapersonal perspectives (e.g., values, interests, and personal insights) during the data collection phase to reflect the "human" aspects of being a researcher and to document reflexive notes about my insider biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

3.2.3 Credibility

Credibility, which embodies the idea of "internal validity", refers to the believability or plausibility of the conclusions. In other words, can the data sustain the findings? (Cohen et al., 2018). It addresses whether the researcher accurately represents the participants' views: Is there a fit? Is it recognisable? (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Tobin & Begley, 2004). In my study, I contend that greater credibility was achieved through several strategies. First, I maintained prolonged engagement by conducting data collection across an entire implementation year, which allowed me to develop deep familiarity with the context and participants' experiences. Second, I engaged deeply with the data through listening to voice recordings, personally transcribing data from semi-structured interviews, reading transcripts, and examining documents supplied by participants. Third, to check that I accurately represented the participants' views, I used member checking by returning their transcripts for review, allowing them to confirm my interpretations of their experiences and realities.

Additionally, credibility can be strengthened by triangulating data generation methods. This study triangulates data generated from semi-structured interviews with data from professional documents. Critical reflections on my biases, perspectives, and influence on the research process are recorded in a personal journal particularly addressing my insider position and potential biases. This ensures that the research findings are believable and accurately reflect the participants' perspectives and experiences (Burnard et al., 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Suter, 2012).

3.2.4 Confirmability

Acknowledging and managing researcher subjectivity through transparency are key principles underpinning confirmability. This means that interpretations of the findings are derived from the data and not a reflection of the researcher's imagination (Tobin & Begley, 2004). A "mindful researcher must use creative insight and careful interpretation" (Suter, 2012, p. 366) is a valid

point, particularly in my study, as the participants are known to me, and the potential for "inside knowledge" to contribute to a biased interpretation is very real. Recognising the potential for biased interpretations and factoring them into the design of my study has come some way in reducing partiality. I achieved confirmability through transparency about my insider position and potential biases, grounding my interpretations firmly in participant data rather than my prior knowledge. At the same time, peer (supervisor) review of my analytical interpretations is another means of aiming for a higher degree of objectivity (Suter, 2012). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), confirmability is established once transferability, dependability, and credibility are achieved. I have been mindful of my potential biases and striven to counteract their influence in my analysis.

Ensuring robustness in qualitative studies requires researchers to be explicit about how and why they have chosen specific legitimising criteria (Tobin & Begley, 2004). I have used the "concept of trustworthiness" and associated criteria developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as my quality assurance measures because it not only aligns with my interpretivist epistemology and acknowledges the context-bound nature of my inquiry, but it is also widely understood and accepted (Nowell et al., 2017). Both criticisms of qualitative quality assurance and my intention to undertake a qualitative inquiry are addressed next.

3.3 Qualitative Case Study

Exploring and understanding the *how* and *what* of my research questions requires an in-depth understanding of participants' (curriculum leaders and a senior leader) own interpretations and meanings of their professional realities. A qualitative case study is ideal for my research because it offers a deep, contextual exploration of the participants' unique interpretations and experiences within Braemar Academy. This approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the *how* and *what* of the research questions by capturing the detailed, context-specific insights of curriculum leaders and a senior leader. It also aligns well with the interpretivist framework by focusing on the subjective nature of reality and knowledge.

However, there seems to be some contention about what constitutes a case study or how it should be done despite it being one of the most frequently used qualitative research methodologies in educational research (Cohen et al., 2018; Merriam, 1998; Yazan, 2015). Yin (2002), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998), three seminal researchers in case study research, demonstrate such contention. Their methodological ideas have influenced educational researchers' decisions concerning case study design (Brown, 2008; Harrison et al., 2017; Yazan, 2015). Furthermore, Yin (2002), Stake (1995), and Merriam (1998) reflect the quantitative-qualitative continuum, specifically, that "qualitative case study research is supported by the

pragmatic approach of Merriam, informed by the rigour [empirical inquiry] of Yin and enriched by the creative interpretation described by Stake" (Brown, 2008, p. 9). This diversity highlights qualitative case study research's rich and multifaceted nature, providing a comprehensive framework that can adapt to different research needs. By positioning my research within this well-established tradition, I intend to ensure that my methodological choices were both theoretically sound and practically robust, thus enhancing the credibility and depth of my study.

Creswell et al. (2007) defined a case study which captured key ideas found in case study design:

> Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports) and reports a case description and case-based themes. (p. 245)

This definition resonated with my study for several reasons. Firstly, it aligned with the qualitative nature of my research, emphasising the exploration of my chosen bounded system over time. My bounded system focuses on understanding the experiences and perspectives of curriculum leaders and a senior leader within a specific secondary school. This enabled me to be selective in identifying the constraints of the case, thus fencing it in (Merriam, 1998). I could limit the number of participants and determine the process, setting, and timeframe. In doing so, it helped me to focus, frame, and manage the data collection and analysis (Harrison et al., 2017) and ensure my "study remains reasonable in scope" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 547). Secondly, the emphasis on detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information reflects the methodological approach I have adopted. By conducting interviews with participants and gathering additional data through document analysis, I aimed to understand how curriculum leaders and a senior leader interpreted and enacted a school vision. Additionally, the idea of reporting both a case description and case-based themes aligned with my intention to provide rich and nuanced insights into the realities of the participants and to identify key themes emerging from the data analysis. Overall, the definition of Creswell et al. (2007) captures the essence of my study, which sought to explore and understand the complexities of vision enactment through the lens of case study research. I will next address both participant recruitment and associated ethical implications.

3.4 Recruiting Participants

I used purposive sampling for my study. Purposive sampling is a non-random technique widely used in qualitative research in which a researcher chooses members of a population to participate. This technique relies on the researcher's judgement to recruit participants who can

best answer research questions or achieve research objectives. In other words, the researcher decides what needs to be known and sets out to find people who can and are willing to volunteer the information by knowledge or experience (Etikan et al., 2016).

3.4.1 Sampling Strategy and Criteria

My sampling approach can be described as informed purposive sampling based on my insider knowledge of the school's organisational and leadership structure. I established clearly defined criteria for participant selection: curriculum leaders who were (a) in stable leadership positions throughout the implementation year, (b) representing diverse learning areas, and (c) directly responsible for translating the school vision into faculty-level action. My insider knowledge enabled me to identify which curriculum leaders met these criteria and would be appropriate participants - knowledge that an external researcher would have struggled to access. This enabled more strategic and appropriate participant approach than random sampling or convenience sampling would have achieved. My existing relationships with those approached, also I hope, made it easier for the curriculum leaders to agree to participate.

However, this insider-informed sampling approach carried potential risks that required careful consideration and the creation of deliberate safeguards. Primary risks included: potential coercion due to my senior position, selection bias based on personal relationships rather than sampling criteria, and participants feeling obligated due to collegial relationships. I addressed these risks through several measures. First, all recruitment was conducted formally via email (Appendix A) after I had announced my departure from the school, meaning there were no professional consequences for declining as I had no ongoing authority over these individuals. Second, participants were provided with full information sheets and consent forms (Appendices B & C), with explicit emphasis on voluntary participation and right to withdraw. Third, I based participant identification on sampling criteria, not on personal relationships or convenience.

In addition to purposive sampling, I applied a homogenous sampling method, which targets participants who share specific traits or characteristics, such as age, culture, job, or life experience, to explore how these similarities relate to the research topic (Etikan et al., 2016). This enabled me to focus attention on approaching curriculum leaders who I knew played a crucial role in enacting the school's vision through developing and implementing programmes of learning. As the bridge between shared vision and classroom practice, this subgroup was central to my research questions.

3.4.2 Sample Size and Participant Selection

Regarding sample size, I aimed for more than five curriculum leader participants to capture diverse perspectives across different learning areas while maintaining the depth of analysis

appropriate for qualitative case study research. The school had twelve potential participants across ten faculties and two specialist centres. However, during the recruitment phase, three faculty leaders and one centre director resigned their positions, reducing the potential sample to eight. This timing was fortuitous in one respect; their departures occurred before recruitment began, clearly delineating who met the criterion of stable leadership throughout the implementation year. From these eight potential participants, I invited five curriculum leaders, excluding three for specific contextual and methodological reasons.

Ultimately, the five curriculum leaders volunteered as participants. Together, they provided rich, diverse perspectives across different learning areas (representing five of the ten faculties in the school) while maintaining methodological rigour and ethical integrity. The participants from this subgroup represented diversity in terms of learning areas, professional experience, and gender.

I also recruited a senior leader able to provide a school-wide perspective on vision enactment and leading change. This sixth participant offered a complementary viewpoint that enabled me to understand vision implementation from both the faculty level (curriculum leaders) and the strategic organisational level (senior leadership). These six volunteers constituted my bounded study group. Profiles of the individual participants are provided in the Findings Chapter. When research involves human participants, issues relating to ethics arise. These will now be addressed.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Research ethics is about the moral principles governing how research is conducted. This goes beyond constructing and implementing a research plan and includes conducting the research responsibly and morally defensibly to ensure that no harm comes to participants (Cohen et al., 2018; Gray, 2014). Because my research involved human participants, I gained ethical approval from Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Ethics Committee (FEDU077/18). Ethical considerations I addressed in this study included obtaining informed consent from my participants, avoiding harm by protecting their identity as much as possible, and maintaining confidentiality when conducting research in a "local" context. I also needed to consider the ethical challenges of my "insiderness", which I touched on in an earlier section (3.2.4 Confirmability).

I needed to behave ethically at all stages of the research process. Given that a key focus of interpretive research is to explore and value the perspectives of others (Strike, 2006), the welfare of my participants needed to be uppermost in my mind as I undertook the role of the researcher (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2018; Gray, 2014). I generated the research data

primarily through individual semi-structured interviews and reviewing professional documents (faculty/department action plans). Both these methods have an ethical dimension; they concern interpersonal interaction (interviews), and the use of documents co-constructed by participants and traceable to them. This meant that, as a researcher, I needed to conduct my research in a responsible and morally defensible way which would cause no harm to my participants (Gray, 2014).

3.5.1 Informed Consent

Fundamental to ethical research practices is the principle of informed consent, whereby the purposes and processes of the research are fully explained to participants (Gray, 2014; Mockler, 2014). While the amount of information provided to potential participants may partly depend on the research study's risk level (Sudman, 1998), they must receive sufficient and accessible information to make an informed decision about their participation (Crow et al., 2006). This information must be understandable and not expressed in complex, theoretical language (Gray, 2014). Informed consent requires an explanation and description of several factors, including any potentially negative consequences of such participation, benefits that may accrue, and the point at which a participant can withdraw from the study or withhold their data (e.g., up until they have approved their transcripts). Limits to confidentiality also need to be addressed, specifically, that although participants' identities may be protected, the data shared will not remain confidential since it is reported in the study. It is also possible that other staff in the school would have known they were participating; thus, within Braemar Academy, their anonymity could not be assured. I used these guidelines to frame the information I provided to potential participants. Specific details outlining the information provided to prospective participants are described in the next section.

I believed the most effective way of obtaining consent was to initially provide potential participants with an information sheet outlining details of the research. The Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) outlined elements such as purpose, focus, what was expected of participants, time commitment, and safeguards (raw data ownership, confidentiality, anonymity, and withdrawal). Once potential participants confirmed their willingness to participate, consent forms were distributed to and signed by participants. While the Consent Form for Participants (Appendix C) referred to the Participant Information Sheets details, information about the participants' right to withdraw, limits to confidentiality, and what participants were expected to do were restated.

3.5.2 Striving to Do No Harm

Mockler (2014) contended that the notion of "doing no harm" to participants relates more specifically to safeguarding community relationships that might be disrupted through the research activities, rather than preventing direct personal harm to individual participants. This point is very valid regarding my research because it was undertaken in a “local” school community. This highlights the importance of observing protocols around anonymity and/or confidentiality to preserve the relationships within the school community. Because the participants shared personal perspectives and faculty documentation, it was essential to protect their identity as much as possible in the final thesis by anonymising each participant’s data.

It may be common knowledge in the school that colleagues would be participants, so anonymity could not be assured within the school. The written consent form contained these provisos, so participants were fully aware of the limits to anonymity. Safeguarding participants’ identity was given priority when analysing the data. While I could not guarantee complete anonymity, I could provide as much anonymity as possible by disguising participants’ identities by using fictitious names when reporting individual interviews. Detailed demographics about the participants were not shared so they were not identifiable in the findings and discussion chapters. A pseudonym was provided for the school’s name to obscure further who participants may be.

3.5.3 Creating a Safe Space for Honest Critique

Beyond procedural safeguards, creating a safe environment where participants could feel comfortable discussing issues and concerns around implementing the vision was essential, particularly given the sensitive nature of critiquing school practices and leadership. I implemented several strategies to establish psychological safety.

First, I gave participants complete choice over interview location - whether on-site, off-site, or via alternative arrangements. While all participants chose on-site locations, they selected spaces where they felt comfortable: one chose his own office away from the administration block, and others booked meeting rooms themselves, giving them control over the setting and privacy.

Second, before beginning each interview, I reiterated the ethical protections beyond what was outlined in the consent forms. I emphasised that their confidentiality and anonymity would be maintained through pseudonyms and secure data storage, that they could withdraw any information at any point, and that only my supervisors and I would access the raw data.

Third, I was intentional about creating a trusting atmosphere during interviews. Given that participants knew me and my former senior role, I did not need to explain my position, but I did explicitly welcome honest, critical perspectives - including critiques of practices I had been

involved with as a senior leader. During interviews, I was careful to respond neutrally and encouragingly to critical comments, signalling that dissenting views were valued rather than problematic. This was particularly important given the power dynamics that had previously existed between us.

Fourth, the member-checking process was designed to be genuinely collaborative. When I requested clarification on specific points from participants, they readily provided additional detail, allowing me to refine the transcripts. This collaborative approach demonstrated their comfort with the process and their trust that their contributions would be represented accurately.

The effectiveness of these strategies was shown when participants offered substantive critiques of school leadership and policy - sometimes quite frank - suggesting that psychological safety extended beyond procedural compliance to genuine comfort in sharing critical perspectives.

3.5.4 Observing Protocols Around Confidentiality

Confidentiality involves not disclosing information from participants to any other participant or anyone outside the project in ways that could lead to identifying the school or their specific roles as curriculum leaders (Cohen et al., 2018). Restricting access to all data meant I collected all data in password-protected digital files for my use, only sharing with supervisors if needed. Access to notes, documents, recordings, and thesis drafts was restricted to me and my supervisors. As per the University's Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations (2008), hard copies of notes, documents, and recordings of interviews must be securely stored for at least five years. This is to allow for academic examination, challenge, or peer review.

3.5.5 Acknowledging Insider/Outsider Researcher Challenges

In qualitative case study research, an "insider" researcher is deeply connected to the group, community, or organisation being studied, often due to personal experience, shared cultural background, or long-term involvement. This insider status may offer significant advantages, such as an in-depth understanding of the context and culture, facilitating access to information and insights that might be less accessible to outsiders (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009; Chavez, 2015). Any established relationships and trust between a researcher and participants can enhance data collection, as participants may feel more comfortable and open (Unluer, 2012). However, this position also presents ethical challenges, including maintaining objectivity and avoiding bias (Greene, 2014).

In my study, although I assumed an "outsider" role after resigning from my teaching position, I remained an insider due to my deep connection with the school and participants before the research. This dual status required me to be acutely aware of how my personal values, assumptions, and past experiences with the participants (curriculum leaders and a senior leader) and the setting (the school) could shape the interpretations formed during the study. As outlined in Chapter One, I had been a teacher in the school for many years and a senior leader for over 10 years before starting this research. To address the challenges of being an insider researcher, it was important for me to engage in reflexivity.

3.5.6 Articulating My Positionality: Prejudices and Assumptions

Given my 28 years at Braemar Academy, the last decade in senior leadership responsible for teaching and learning initiatives, I came to this research with several assumptions and biases that required explicit acknowledgment and management.

First, I had strong views about what should happen in schools. I believed appropriately using digital technologies could transform learning, that student-centred approaches were superior to only teacher-centred instruction, and that traditional secondary school structures were impediments to meaningful change. These beliefs had driven my previous leadership work and risked predisposing me to interpret participants' responses through this lens rather than remaining open to their actual meanings.

Second, I had witnessed multiple failed change initiatives at the school and had formed opinions about why they failed - fragmented implementation, overwhelming pace, lack of teacher buy-in, insufficient support for middle leaders. There was a real risk I would seek confirmation of these pre-existing explanations rather than remaining open to alternative interpretations that participants might offer.

Third, I knew the participants personally and professionally. I had worked alongside them, observed their leadership practices, and formed judgments about their capabilities and commitments. This intimate knowledge could lead me to privilege certain voices or interpret their responses based on my prior knowledge rather than what they were actually telling me in their interviews.

Fourth, I was deeply invested in the school's success and had contributed to the strategic vision being implemented. This more than likely created a bias toward wanting the implementation to succeed and lead me to potentially overlook or minimise challenges and tensions participants were experiencing.

Finally, as someone who had left teaching to pursue doctoral study, I risked viewing the school and participants through an overly theoretical lens that might not reflect the practical realities they faced daily.

These prejudices and assumptions represented significant threats to the trustworthiness of my research. Acknowledging them explicitly was the first step; implementing strategies to distance my research self from these biases was equally critical.

3.5.7 Engaging in Reflexivity

Reflexivity is a crucial process where researchers continuously examine and critically reflect to understand how their biases, assumptions, and positions might influence their study. This ongoing self-awareness helps researchers recognise how their personal beliefs, values, and experiences shape the formulation of research questions, the interpretation of data, and overall research outcomes (Finlay, 2002; Pillow, 2003). By acknowledging their positionality, researchers can better understand how their social background, gender, ethnicity, and identity influence their perspectives and interactions with participants, thereby addressing power dynamics and ethical considerations (Holmes, 2020). Reflexivity also involves scrutinising methodological choices, documenting reflexive thoughts, and engaging in dialogue with peers and participants to gain diverse perspectives and address potential blind spots (Berger, 2015). This practice enhances the rigour and validity of the research and ensures ethical integrity by making the researcher's influence explicit and accounted for throughout the research process (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004).

The insider/outsider dynamic also alerted me to the power relationships embedded within research processes, especially within my school community. Mockler (2014) highlighted the critical need to acknowledge and openly articulate the researcher's positioning within the field of study, particularly where power imbalances may exist between the researcher and participants. As a former senior leader, I sometimes had a supervisory and advisory role over the potential participants, which could have influenced their perceptions of the research process. Although my research was conducted after my resignation, I was mindful of the possibility that participants might tell me what they thought I wanted to hear due to my past roles. Despite these challenges, the willingness of the participants to engage in the research indicated that they did not perceive this power differential as an impediment. However, the need for reflexivity remained crucial throughout the research process to ensure that these dynamics were continuously acknowledged and addressed.

3.5.8 Strategies for Distancing My Research Self

To mitigate the biases and prejudices outlined above, I employed several deliberate strategies throughout the research process.

My resignation and departure from the school before data collection began was crucial. Although I remained an "insider" due to my history, I became an "outsider" in practice. I was no longer present in the school, no longer attending meetings, no longer involved in decision-making. This physical and professional distance created space for participants to speak freely and for me to observe and listen rather than advocate for particular positions.

I maintained a personal journal throughout data collection and analysis to document my assumptions, emotional responses, and potential biases. For example, when a participant described challenges I had anticipated, I recorded my reaction and consciously questioned whether I was over-interpreting their comments to confirm my existing beliefs. When participants offered perspectives that contradicted my views, I noted my initial resistance and worked to ensure these voices were fully represented in my analysis rather than being dismissed or minimised.

Returning transcripts to participants for review wasn't just about accuracy - it was a deliberate strategy to ensure I was representing their meanings rather than imposing my interpretations. Several participants clarified points or provided additional context, which helped me recognise where my prior knowledge was leading me to make assumptions that weren't warranted by what they had actually said.

My choice of reflexive thematic analysis with an inductive approach (discussed in section 3.7) was partly motivated by the need to distance myself from my prior theories about change implementation. By allowing themes to emerge from the data rather than coding against pre-existing frameworks, I created methodological distance from my prejudices and remained open to insights that contradicted my expectations.

I regularly shared my emerging interpretations with my supervisors, who questioned my assumptions and suggested alternative explanations. Their external perspective was invaluable in identifying where my insider biases might be shaping my analysis in ways I hadn't recognised.

I deliberately sought out and gave weight to data that contradicted my expectations. For example, when I began analysing the Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review documents, I felt that the template was not fit for purpose. From my senior leadership perspective, I saw structural issues with it and made modifications to it to make better sense of the data. However, when I discussed the adequacy of the template design with participants

during the first interviews, they were quite happy with it as originally designed. This was a clear moment where my “prejudice” as a former senior leader - someone who had designed and critiqued strategic documents - led me to assume the template was problematic, while participants who were actually using it daily found it functional and appropriate. This example highlighted how my insider assumptions could lead me to misinterpret what constituted a “problem” for participants. It reinforced the importance of prioritising participants' perspectives over my own judgments and reminded me to question my interpretations throughout the analysis process.

Despite these strategies, I acknowledge that complete objectivity was neither possible nor necessarily desirable. My insider knowledge enabled me to understand nuances and context that an external researcher might miss - for example, recognising the significance of particular policy decisions or understanding the historical context of certain tensions participants described. The challenge was leveraging this understanding while remaining open to interpretations that differed from my prior beliefs. I believe the strategies I employed created sufficient distance to ensure my findings authentically represented participants' experiences rather than simply confirming my prejudices, but I recognise this tension persisted throughout the research process and required constant vigilance.

In summary, my recruitment strategy was guided by the principles of purposive sampling, targeting participants who could provide rich, contextually grounded insights into their processes, leading to enacting the school’s vision within their faculty. The ethical considerations central to this study, particularly informed consent, creating safe spaces for honest critique, anonymity, and confidentiality, were carefully observed to protect participants, given the research's “local” context. My dual role as an insider/outsider researcher added complexity to the research process, necessitating a reflexive approach to navigate potential biases and power dynamics. By explicitly articulating my prejudices and implementing systematic strategies to distance my research self from these biases, I strove to ensure the research was conducted with integrity, safeguarding the participants' welfare while producing trustworthy findings that authentically represented their experiences. With these ethical foundations established, the next section will outline the research methods employed for data collection and analysis, which are also grounded in ethical considerations and aligned with the interpretivist framework guiding this study.

3.6 Methods of Data Collection

This section outlines the data collection methods employed in this study. I will discuss semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and personal journals, exploring their characteristics and justifying their selection for this research.

3.6.1 Semi-structured Interviews

I chose semi-structured interviews as my primary method of data collection and document analysis as a secondary source. The curriculum leader participants engaged in two individual semi-structured interviews of approximately 60 minutes during the year (April/November) and provided professional documents for analysis. The senior leader participated in one semi-structured interview that was 60 minutes in duration at the end of the year and provided documents for analysis. The following section explains why I chose semi-structured interviews and document analysis as my methods for generating the data needed to answer the questions in my study.

Interviews per se are a popular data collection method in qualitative research because they allow researchers to gain in-depth insights into participants' experiences, perspectives, and emotions. As such, they are likely to be attuned to the complexity of the subject/issue under investigation and can generate rich, deep, and detailed data (Cohen et al., 2018; Denscombe, 2010). Interviews also provide flexibility, allowing researchers to probe deeper into specific topics based on participant responses. Direct interaction between researcher and participant fosters a more personalised and contextually relevant understanding of the subject matter (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Given my history with these participants, semi-structured interviews were the most appropriate method for eliciting information, as they aligned with my focus on a qualitative, interpretive project. This approach facilitated the exploration of individual experiences in rich detail and supported the in-depth case study methodology, which seeks to understand complex phenomena within specific real-world contexts. The interviews played a critical role in generating the comprehensive data necessary for my case study analysis by enabling nuanced, contextually grounded insights.

While there are different interview methods, the semi-structured option is most apt. Semi-structured interviews are characterised by a blend of structured and flexible elements that comprehensively explore a particular topic. Unlike a structured interview format, semi-structured interviews use an interview guide with predetermined questions, which can be adapted and modified based on the interviewee's responses, essential for probing deeper into emerging topics (Cohen et al., 2018). Open-ended questions encourage participants to elaborate on their experiences and perspectives, providing rich qualitative data that helps understand

complex educational phenomena (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). When conducted conversationally, semi-structured interviews can help to build rapport and make participants feel more comfortable sharing their honest opinions and experiences (Kvale, 2007). This seemed fitting when I was interviewing people I already knew. The flexibility of semi-structured interviews allows for gathering detailed and in-depth responses, making them valuable for exploring complex issues (Edwards & Holland, 2013). This balance between structure and flexibility made it easy to cover relevant topics while creating space to explore new areas of interest arising during the conversation, providing comprehensive insights (Gill et al., 2008).

The two interviews with curriculum leaders were deliberately structured to capture different phases of the implementation year, providing both a chronological progression and an opportunity to track developments over time. The first interview, conducted near the beginning of the implementation year (April), focused on interpreting the school vision, promoting it to staff, and translating it into initial action plans - essentially capturing the sensemaking and planning phase. The second interview, conducted near the end of the year (November), addressed implementing those action plans, embedding the Effective Teacher Profile, and managing change - the enactment and reflection phase. This time-based structure was designed to align naturally with both my research questions and the chronological progression of vision implementation.

This chronological design enabled me to capture participants' evolving experiences and understandings as they moved from initial interpretation through to enacted practice and year-end reflection. It also provided opportunities to observe whether participants made adjustments to their approaches based on experience, whether their concerns shifted or persisted over time, and how their understanding of the vision deepened through the process of enactment. The significance of this time-based approach is reflected in the thematic structure of my findings, which follows the natural journey of the implementation year from understanding and planning through to doing and reflecting.

In choosing the semi-structured format for my study, I used an interview schedule (Appendix D) with predetermined questions I had shared beforehand with participants. This allowed them to think about the topics in advance. This approach allowed both the participants and me to adjust the lines of inquiry, including the order of questions. Additionally, I was able to identify which questions required prompting. The participants had an opportunity to expand on their ideas and articulate their views in their own words, addressing the topics in ways that suit them (Bryman, 2012; Cohen et al., 2018; Denscombe, 2010; Gray, 2014; Kvale, 1996; Mentor et al., 2011). These attributes facilitated respectful relationships and honoured the participants' perspectives within the study, keeping the session relaxed and as informal as possible.

While semi-structured interviews can be conducted in various ways, for example, one-to-one, group, and focus groups, I chose individual interviews so that participants could share their perspectives. One-to-one interviews offer several advantages over group interviews in qualitative research. They provide a private and safe space for participants, encouraging them to share more openly and honestly without the influence or pressure of other group members (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This setting helped me to build rapport and delve deeper into personal experiences, leading to richer, more detailed data. Additionally, one-to-one interviews minimise the risk of groupthink, where participants may conform to dominant views rather than expressing their own (Gill et al., 2008). Interviewing participants face-to-face also allows for observing non-verbal cues, such as body language and facial expressions, providing additional context and insight into participants' responses (Opdenakker, 2006) and supporting more open and candid conversations. Moreover, face-to-face interviews reduce the likelihood of misunderstandings (Seitz, 2016) and minimise distractions or technical issues common in virtual settings, leading to more focused and effective communication (Irvine et al., 2013).

However, one-to-one interviews are not without challenges. At a pragmatic level, I found conducting and transcribing the interviews very time-consuming. Also, the coding required after the interview data had been generated took up considerable time (Denscombe, 2010; Gray, 2014; Mentor et al., 2011). At an interpersonal level, my identity as an interviewer and the dynamics between myself and the participants may have affected their responses. They may have wished to please me and say what they thought I wanted to hear rather than accurately reflecting their professional reality. Moreover, the participants may have felt inhibited speaking “for the record” because a recording device was present (Denscombe, 2010) or found the interview experience intrusive, saying more than they intended to and later regretting doing so (Sewell, n.d.). However, participants were given opportunities to review, amend, and approve their transcripts after each interview. Those who took up this opportunity responded to my requests for clarification on parts of the recorded interview that I had not heard clearly rather than asking for any part of the conversation recorded in the transcripts to be deleted. While one-to-one/face-to-face semi-structured interviews were my primary data source, this was complemented by analysing key documents I will address next.

3.6.2 Document Analysis

Document analysis is particularly applicable as a research method in qualitative case studies (Bowen, 2009), as it can provide a potential source of empirical data about a particular phenomenon, event, or organisation (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2002). Documents can be used in several ways to support the research process, for example, by providing background and context, highlighting additional interview questions, tracking changes and developments to action plans,

supplementing other research data, and corroborating evidence from other data sources (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is often a cost-effective data collection method, requiring fewer resources than extensive fieldwork or large-scale surveys (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). A key strength of using documents is that they are "unobtrusive" and "non-reactive" (Bowen, 2009), as they are unaffected by the research process. As Merriam (2002) noted, documents "[do] not intrude upon or alter the setting in a way that the presence of a [researcher] might" (p. 13), thus reducing the risk of bias or reactivity affecting the data. To this end, it was appropriate that my research project had access to documents. While a range of documents were made available to me during the data collection process and helped provide context and general information (e.g., Braemar Academy's Strategic Plan 2019–2021), I chose to use common documents for in-depth analysis – the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* which included departmental/faculty actions plans.

My choice to focus on these common documents for systematic analysis was a deliberate methodological decision prioritising consistency, comparability, and alignment with my research questions. I analysed five *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* documents - one from each curriculum leader participant - which used a standardised template but contained goals and action plans specific to each faculty context. While participants supplied a range of documents to me, the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* documents were the only documents common to all participants. The other documents participants provided were faculty-specific and related to particular activities or actions within their individual contexts. While these helped me understand the detail of what participants were doing, they were not comparable across participants and therefore were not suitable for systematic analysis as primary data. Including them would have introduced inconsistency in my analytical approach.

The *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* documents were ideally suited for in-depth analysis for several reasons. First, the senior leadership team had created these documents specifically to guide curriculum leaders in co-constructing action plans with their staff, focusing on enacting the goals outlined in the annual plan and directly aligned with the school's vision. As such, the documents were directly aligned with my research questions about how curriculum leaders made sense of and enacted the vision. Second, because all participants used the same standardised template, I could systematically compare approaches across faculties while still capturing individual variation in how leaders articulated their understanding and actions. Third, each faculty's version was edited and developed throughout the year as a "living document" that evolved in real-time, allowing me to track changes and developments as curriculum leaders' understanding deepened and their implementation progressed.

Furthermore, each curriculum leader shared the digital document with their staff, the senior leader attached to their faculty, and an external facilitator who provided expertise and support. This ensured ample opportunities for leaders to receive support and guidance from others, facilitating collaboration with faculty colleagues and enhancing the overall effectiveness of the action plans. Digital sharing of such a document helped promote transparency, foster collaboration, and integrate diverse perspectives, ultimately leading to more informed and effective decision-making. Critically, this document was not just a static artifact - it reflected the negotiated understanding within each faculty context. This enhanced its value as a data source because it captured the collective sensemaking process rather than just individual leader perspectives. For each faculty, it was a living document tracing the way each faculty area developed its understanding of the new school vision, notwithstanding the set requirements of the document. This was, therefore, a valuable resource for me to use as part of my research.

The primary purpose of document analysis in my study was triangulation - corroborating evidence from the semi-structured interviews rather than serving as a standalone data source. Although these documents were created independently of my research agenda, they supported my study in several ways. Specifically, they provided background and context about each faculty/department and the learning area represented, highlighted areas that required further exploration during the semi-structured interviews and tracked changes and developments that occurred as faculties/departments gave effect to their action plans. While the documents provided some supplementary data to the findings from semi-structured interviews, their most significant value was corroborating the evidence from the semi-structured interviews. This, together with the shared nature of the documents, strengthened the verifiability of the research evidence in total.

With 11 interviews across 6 participants over the course of a year, combined with this detailed document analysis, I reached data saturation - the point where additional data sources were unlikely to reveal substantially new insights about curriculum leaders' sensemaking processes. The depth and richness of data from these sources provided comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon I was investigating.

As with other data collection methods, document analysis has its limitations. As indicated above, the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* documents and action plans I analysed were produced for purposes other than my research and did not necessarily link to my research questions (Bowen, 2009). However, the broad nature of this document provided a range of evidence that complemented the data collected from the interviews. While there was some variability in how different curriculum leaders expressed their ideas and provided details of action plans, all five *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* documents followed the

same template structure with standard parts already completed. This enhanced consistency in how ideas and action plans were articulated and reduced the amount of written text needed, thus enhancing the usability of the data collected.

In summary, one-to-one, face-to-face semi-structured interviews provided rich, nuanced insights into participants' experiences while allowing for flexibility and adaptability in the interview process. The time-based structure of the two interviews enabled tracking of developments across the implementation year, from initial sensemaking through to enacted practice and reflection. Despite challenges, such as time-intensive transcription and potential biases, the interviews produced valuable data that reflected the participants' perspectives in their own words. Complementing this primary data source, document analysis offered an unobtrusive means of triangulating and contextualising the interview findings. By integrating these methods, my study ensured a robust and comprehensive approach to data collection, setting the stage for a detailed analysis of the insights and patterns that emerged.

3.6.3 Personal Journal

Journal keeping in research is often used as a reflective tool and is particularly valuable in qualitative studies where the researcher's experiences and reflections are integral to the process. Personal journals serve as tools for documenting observations, thoughts, and reactions throughout the research journey, offering a structured way to engage in reflexivity (Ortlipp, 2008). Reflexivity, the ongoing examination of the researcher's role and influence, is crucial for addressing potential biases, particularly when they have an insider perspective within the research context (Berger, 2015).

Research journals are typically reflective, involving regular entries that capture the researcher's reflections, methodological decisions, and emerging insights. These can later be analysed to understand how personal beliefs or positions may shape the research process (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Journal keeping has advantages, including fostering self-awareness, enhancing reflexivity, and providing a space for researchers to critically examine their assumptions and decisions (Darawsheh, 2014). Journals can help researchers balance and acknowledge their subjectivity, particularly in insider research, by making it easier to recognise potential biases. However, some disadvantages include the researcher becoming overly introspective, which might lead to overemphasising personal experiences rather than focusing on participants' voices (Nadin & Cassell, 2006). Additionally, journal entries can be time-consuming to maintain and analyse, requiring careful consideration to integrate them effectively into the research process.

I chose to keep a journal as it was a critical tool for enabling me to put reflexivity into practice as a researcher. Specifically, I was able to examine my positionality and its potential influence on

the research process. This was important because I was an insider researcher to some extent, having had pre-existing relationships and roles within the study context. Reflexivity, therefore, was essential in navigating power dynamics and addressing the risks of bias or preconceptions (Berger, 2015). The journal helped me document these reflections, ensuring they were systematically considered throughout the research.

The journal proved valuable not just as a methodological tool but as a means of genuine learning about my biases, my positioning, and the complexities of insider research. I will briefly address the key insights I gained through this reflexive practice.

The journal revealed patterns in my thinking that I might not have recognised otherwise. Early entries showed my tendency to interpret participants' differences in their responses through a deficit lens - I was looking for similarities to help develop themes. Documenting these reactions helped me recognise this bias and consciously shift toward viewing differences as valuable variations in approach and understanding, in line with the interpretivist paradigm. I also learned that my "senior leadership" mindset persisted even after leaving the school. Journal entries after interviews often revealed frustration when participants did not articulate their ideas and/or implementation plans as clearly as I expected or struggled to connect their actions explicitly to the vision. Seeing this pattern in my writing helped me recognise I was still thinking like a senior leader evaluating performance rather than a researcher seeking to understand authentic experience. This awareness enabled me to bracket these judgments during analysis and focus on what participants were actually telling me about their experiences.

The journal helped me recognise subtle ways my former position continued to influence interactions. For example, I noted that some participants seemed to justify their decisions to me during interviews, as if seeking approval. Recording these observations made me more conscious of how I responded - I learned to use more neutral prompts and avoid nodding or verbal affirmations that might signal judgment. Over time, I noticed participants becoming more candid, particularly in second interviews, suggesting my adjusted approach was creating safer space for honest critique. I also learned that my insider knowledge was a double-edged sword. Journal entries revealed moments where I made assumptions about what participants meant based on my contextual knowledge, sometimes failing to probe for deeper explanation because I thought I already understood. Recognising this helped me develop more disciplined interviewing practices, asking for clarification even when I thought I understood.

Perhaps most importantly, the journal taught me that insider research is not simply about acknowledging bias - it is about actively managing the tension between "intimate knowledge" and "analytical distance". Early entries showed me treating my insider status primarily as a

liability to overcome. Over time, I learned to recognise its value: my contextual knowledge helped me understand subtle references participants made, recognise significant omissions in their accounts, and ask follow-up questions that probed beneath surface responses. The journal documented my developing understanding that complete objectivity was not the goal - rather, the goal was transparent subjectivity where my positioning was explicitly acknowledged and its influence on interpretation was systematically examined.

The journal entries, varied in type and length. Some were informal, others were more specific about process or notes about observations. Together they informed my reflexive statement in the methodology chapter, provided evidence for confirmability in my trustworthiness discussion, and helped me recognise when my interpretations needed to be tested against participant data through member checking. They also influenced my analytical approach, for example, my awareness of the tendency toward deficit thinking led me to deliberately seek alternative interpretations when coding data about differences among participants.

Reflexivity is often presented in methodology texts as a straightforward practice, but the reality, as my journal entries indicate, is that maintaining rigorous reflexive practice throughout a lengthy doctoral journey, especially as a sole researcher managing multiple demands, is genuinely challenging. I achieved some important insights through the journal, particularly about my biases and power dynamics, but I acknowledge the practice was more limited than methodological best practice would suggest. Nevertheless, the reflexive work I accomplished strengthened my research trustworthiness by making my influence explicit and enabling me to critically examine my interpretations throughout the data collection and analysis process.

3.7 Data Analysis

This section details my analytical approach in two parts. First, I present an overview of reflexive thematic analysis, examining its key principles and theoretical foundations. Then, I provide a detailed account of how I implemented this approach in practice, describing my steps to identify, develop, and refine themes from the data.

3.7.1 Reflexive Thematic Analysis

I chose to use reflexive thematic analysis as the primary method of data analysis due to its alignment with interpretive framing, as well as its accessibility and theoretical flexibility (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2013, 2020). Reflexive thematic analysis aligns well with an interpretivist perspective because it supports the notion of multiple realities and a commitment to seek participants' viewpoints to gain an in-depth understanding of how they experience and make sense of their reality. The method also provides a clear and systematic framework that is easily

understood and implemented, making it accessible to researchers across various disciplines and levels of expertise in qualitative research. Moreover, reflexive thematic analysis does not prescribe specific theoretical assumptions or pre-existing categories. However, it offers flexibility in interpreting and analysing data that can align with diverse theoretical perspectives and the unique characteristics of a study context. This flexibility enables the exploration of complex research questions. It facilitates a nuanced understanding of the patterns and themes that emerge from the data, making it an ideal choice for my project.

Braun and Clarke (2019) described reflexive thematic analysis as "the researcher's reflective and thoughtful engagement with their data and their reflexive and thoughtful engagement with the analytic process" (p. 594). This description aligns with my use of a personal journal, as discussed earlier, which served as a dedicated space for this reflective engagement, allowing me to document my observations about the data, acknowledge potential biases, and track the development of my analytical thinking throughout the research process. Reflexive thematic analysis acknowledges that researchers interpret data through their lenses and perspectives and that multiple interpretations and realities can emerge from the same dataset, depending on the researcher's reflexivity. This alerted me to the importance of reflecting on my background, how it might influence my interpretation of the data, and whether I was privileging certain voices over others. This also connects with my insiderness and the intimacy afforded, which I needed to be constantly wary of since, together, they might adversely affect the study's outcomes. My analysis was, therefore, iterative and systematic in mitigating these influences.

Reflexive thematic analysis takes an inductive approach, which means that data is open-coded, with themes and categories emerging directly from the participants' responses, emphasising participant/data-based meanings (Byrne, 2021). This type of thematic analysis is very flexible, allowing researchers to change, remove, and add codes as they work through the data. As noted earlier, it emphasises the researcher's active engagement in critically reflecting on their assumptions, biases, and interpretations and how these may shape the analysis.

Reflexive thematic analysis is comprehensive and, while time-consuming, is most suitable where little or nothing is known about the study phenomenon (Burnard et al., 2008). Vaismoradi et al. (2013) highlighted the flexibility of the inductive approach, noting that it allows researchers to adapt their focus as new themes emerge from the data. This flexibility ensures that the analysis remains grounded in participants' experiences and perspectives, capturing the complexity and richness of the data. However, in my study, deductive analysis was used to ensure that the themes produced by the open-coding and the qualitative data generated by the participants aligned with my guiding research questions, as my research and interview questions framed the interview data.

My decision to use a predominantly inductive coding process was deliberate and methodologically aligned with my research aims. As noted throughout this methodology chapter, little was known about how curriculum leaders in New Zealand secondary schools make sense of vision statements and translate them into practice; this was an unexplored phenomenon with this specific group. An inductive approach was therefore most appropriate because it allowed themes to emerge organically from participants' lived experiences without imposing pre-existing theoretical categories that might constrain what I discovered.

Additionally, my interpretivist worldview, which views reality as socially constructed with multiple perspectives, required an analytical approach that prioritised participants' meanings and sensemaking processes. Using a theoretical framework like the Theory of Enactment (Chapter Two, Section 2.3) as an analytical lens from the outset risked privileging my theoretical assumptions over participants' authentic voices, something I was particularly conscious of given my insider position and intimate knowledge of the school context. I wanted to ensure I was genuinely hearing what participants were saying, not just confirming what theory predicted they would say. This sequencing reflected my intention to let sufficient empirical data accumulate so I could determine what kind of explanatory framework best reflected my findings, rather than forcing my data into a predetermined theoretical mould.

My approach represents a legitimate methodological choice within qualitative research traditions, particularly for exploratory studies of under-researched phenomena. The benefit was ensuring my analysis remained firmly grounded in participants' lived experiences and allowed me to remain open to the complexity and diversity of their perspectives. Both inductive and deductive approaches have merit, and I believe my predominantly inductive approach with deductive elements (linking to research questions) was fitting given the exploratory nature of the study and my interpretivist worldview.

3.7.2 Procedure

Reflexive thematic analysis entails ongoing and reflective coding, interpretation, and analysis cycles to generate detailed and contextually informed insights into the research topic (Nowell et al., 2017). Braun and Clarke (2006, 2013, 2020) provide a six-phase approach to guide this iterative and reflective process. The six phases are familiarising the dataset; coding; generating initial themes; developing and reviewing themes; refining, defining, and naming; and writing up. I used these phases as a general guide in analysing my data.

Becoming Familiar with the Dataset

As the sole researcher collecting these data sets, I immersed myself in data analysis by conducting primarily two interviews per person and analysing documents. I managed all aspects

of data collection and used Voice Record to capture interview data, facilitating more straightforward digital transcription. Engaging with participants during the interviews and listening to their responses and anecdotes gave me a deep understanding of their experiences. Transcribing the interviews required listening to the recordings multiple times. This line-by-line transcription helped me observe details not evident during the real-time interviews.

The standard template that underpinned the professional documents I analysed contained five columns. The first column numerically referenced the school-wide (strategic) goals, while the second recorded detailed action plans and progress reports. The remaining three smaller columns recorded key personnel, reporting dates, and resources. I created a new template to familiarise myself with the data and make sense of it. I added columns to delineate between strategic goals, specific objectives (not included in the original planning/review template), faculty/department goals, action plans, and progress reviews. I then transferred all the content from each curriculum leader's planning and reporting document onto the new template. This process enhanced my familiarity with the data. It provided greater strategic clarity, allowing me to align the planning and reporting documents more easily with the school's Strategic Plan, which I had access to.

Inductive Coding

Coding is categorising and labelling textual data to lay the foundation for identifying themes, patterns, and insights (Saldaña, 2016). Inductive coding involves developing codes based on the data instead of approaching the dataset with a pre-determined set of codes based on existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In practical terms, coding involves meticulously reading through a dataset (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, or documents) and assigning codes to various excerpts from the text (Miles et al., 2014). These codes can be words, phrases, or short summaries that capture the essence of each data segment (Gibbs, 2007).

My research questions directly shaped my analytical approach in two key ways. Firstly, the interview schedules were designed to address each research question, creating a deductive framework that organised the initial data collection and provided broad categories for organising participants' responses. The interview questions for the first interview (vision-making, interpreting the vision, promoting it to staff, translating it into action plans) directly addressed RQ2 (How do curriculum leaders engage with and experience the process of collaborative vision-making?) and RQ3 (How do curriculum leaders interpret and translate the school's vision in their specific contexts?), while the second interview (implementing plans, embedding the Effective Teacher Profile, managing change) addressed RQ3 and RQ4 (What conditions inhibit/enable curriculum leaders to translate these school vision perspectives into actions?).

Secondly, during the coding process, my research questions acted as an anchor to ensure emerging themes remained relevant to my inquiry focus. This meant that while I allowed themes to emerge inductively from the data, I continuously checked whether they addressed my key research interests. For example, when codes clustered around challenges curriculum leaders faced, I examined whether these related to structural/cultural contexts (RQ1: How do a school's structural and cultural contexts create opportunities and constraints for curriculum leaders as they work to embed the school's vision?) or enabling/inhibiting conditions (RQ4).

I began coding once the checked transcripts from the curriculum leaders were returned to me after the first interview. After transcribing the interview data, I systematically worked through each transcript, highlighting keywords and phrases that captured what participants were communicating. These "key messages" (codes) were essentially short summaries of what participants said about their experiences. For example, codes like "needing time for faculty meetings," "feeling ownership of vision," "struggling with assessment-driven culture", "lacking professional development on leading change", "having input into vision development", "interpreting equity differently", and "using planning templates effectively" emerged across multiple participants' transcripts. This process generated a list of key messages (open coding) that focused on what the participants said without delving into deeper interpretation, providing a descriptive analysis of the data content communicated by the participants.

I established a profile for each participant, organised around the broad categories from my interview schedule (which reflected my research questions). Within each category, key messages (codes) were transferred along with supporting quotations, allowing me to see patterns within individual participants' experiences. This deductive framework, using interview schedule categories that aligned with the transcripts, provided a logical starting point for analysis.

Once the individual profiles were completed after the first interview, a collective profile was prepared in table format to compare participants' responses and identify similarities and differences across the same categories. This comparative analysis revealed where participants shared common experiences and where their experiences diverged. For example, all five curriculum leaders spoke about the importance of the participatory vision development process (directly relevant to RQ2), while they showed varying interpretations of what 'equity' meant in practice (addressing RQ3) or different levels of success with project-based learning (informing RQ4). This process was repeated after the second set of interviews, which were held later in the year. The senior leader participant was interviewed once in December, and the same process was applied. An individual profile was developed and then added to the collective profiles.

The key planning and reporting documents were used primarily for triangulation; they were not subject to coding but served to clarify and support key messages espoused by the curriculum leader participants.

Generating Initial Themes

Once the initial coding was completed, I focused on collating the codes from the collective profiles to generate initial themes. While each participant's responses and experiences were unique, several commonalities existed. At this point in the analysis, I created a mind map and shared it with my supervisors for discussion and feedback to visualise relationships between codes and identify potential themes. Common messages were grouped under categories aligned to the interview schedule, which, in turn, linked to my research questions. For example, codes related to "dedicated faculty time", "collaborative culture", "planning templates", and "external facilitator support" clustered together to form what became the theme "Support Provided (Enablers)", directly addressing RQ4. This provided a "big picture" of the whole data set and helped me to identify patterns and develop ideas about possible themes.

Developing, Reviewing, and Refining Themes

Developing themes required reviewing and analysing different codes (common messages) and how these might be combined according to shared meanings. This was an iterative process where data items, coding, and patterns were constantly revisited, and quotes were collated to demonstrate key ideas. I then developed thematic maps that showed the relationships between codes, sub-themes, and overarching themes. This iterative process involved constantly moving between the coded data, the emerging themes, and my research questions to ensure coherence and relevance. Thematic maps were created, which collated the data items, codes, and quotes against each theme. I used a miscellaneous category to collect all the codes that did not fit easily with the prospective themes. This was analysed during a later phase, but I decided to remove it as a theme since it was too miscellaneous to be useful for my project. Before discarding it, however, I integrated some codes with existing themes. Some initial groupings were discarded or restructured when they did not hold together conceptually or did not address my research focus.

To illustrate how coding led to theme development, the theme "Shared vision-making" (addressing RQ2) emerged from codes across participants' transcripts that captured their experiences of participation in vision development. Initial codes included phrases like "having input", "ownership of vision", "co-construction", "contributors not recipients", and "imperative to change". When I examined these codes collectively, I recognised they represented more than just participation, they captured how curriculum leaders actively shaped rather than passively

received the vision. This distinction was important for my research question about how curriculum leaders engage with collaborative vision-making, as it showed them as agents in the change process from the outset.

During the final analysis stage, I re-examined the themes related to the dataset and the research questions. Each theme needed to provide a coherent and internally consistent account of the data that other themes could not tell. Through the process of developing thematic maps, areas of overlap became evident, which required further refinements to the final themes. Once the final themes were refined and defined, I assigned labels to communicate an important aspect of the theme. For example, one theme was “Shared vision-making”, and one of the labels used to convey a key element of the theme was “Imperative to change”.

My methodological coding practices reflected the highly iterative and fluid nature of reflexive thematic analysis, where codes are continuously refined rather than fixed from the outset, indicating the rather messy nature of qualitative data.

3.8 Conclusion

My study adopted an interpretivist framework grounded in relativism and subjectivism. Using a qualitative case study method with purposive sampling, semi-structured interviews, document analysis, and reflexive journaling, I could explore how curriculum leaders and a senior leader interpreted and enacted the school vision. The inductive approach inherent in reflexive thematic analysis facilitated the generation of authentic insights and supported methodological rigour. These combined approaches provided a robust and comprehensive framework, enhancing the reliability and credibility of the findings and contributing to a deeper understanding of the evolving school culture. While I had intended to share the research findings with participants and school leadership once analysis was complete, the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdowns throughout 2020-2021 made this impractical, as schools were focused on crisis management and maintaining basic operations.

The next chapter (Findings) identifies the themes I identified from the data.

Chapter Four: Findings

4.1 Introduction

As stated in Chapter One, in 2018, Braemar Academy's (pseudonym) governing body (BoT) undertook an in-depth review of its mission, vision, and strategic direction. This review included extensive consultation with the school community, developing new mission and vision statements, and a strategic plan to support the new direction.

This chapter presents the findings from interviews with five curriculum leaders as they undertook the task of understanding and translating the vision's key components into pedagogical practices. These participants explain how they worked on the process with and in their faculties. Each leader was interviewed twice, supplying a range of faculty documents for analysis. The five curriculum leaders are Chris, Joanna, Melanie, Rachel, and Rhys (pseudonyms). Samantha (pseudonym), a senior leader, shared her views in a later interview and provided relevant documents relating to what were current and planned initiatives. Her interview and provided documents enhanced my understanding of my research questions.

I will begin the chapter by introducing the participants and detailing the timeline and focus of the interview.

4.2 The Participants

Five (5) curriculum leaders and, later, one senior leader participated in the study. The curriculum leader participants and the senior leader had in-depth knowledge and experience of specific earning areas of the NZC. Historically in AoNZ, curriculum leaders have enjoyed high levels of autonomy and independence in discharging their responsibilities within their curriculum area. At Braemar Academy, the curriculum learning areas were designated as "faculties". In addition, two further faculties existed – one was a hybrid of two learning areas, while the other focused on students with special needs. Some faculties contained more than one subject and were further divided into departments. For example, the Arts Faculty consisted of three departments – Drama, Music, and Visual Art, while the Languages Faculty was divided into five departments – French, Japanese, Mandarin, Spanish, and Te Reo Māori. The names of the faculties tended to mirror the learning area umbrella terms of the NZC.

Four of the five curriculum leader participants were HoFs, while another was a HoD. Four participants were also members of a newly established Junior Curriculum Review Group tasked with redesigning the Junior Curriculum (Years 9 and 10) and timetable to reflect a more innovative learning environment. Two of these participants also served as facilitators in the

Community of Learning – Within School Teachers (CoL – WST), primarily responsible for enhancing colleagues' teaching practices and fostering an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning. Participants' professional experiences during data collection (2019) are outlined next.

Chris had been at Braemar Academy for 13 years and was a HoF – a position he had held for five years. Over the previous two years, Chris had thought deeply about the direction his learning area had been taking and felt that their curriculum offerings had not been meeting the needs of current or future students. This had become a big focus for him, conceding that it had been a personal challenge because he began reflecting on his teaching practice and what was being taught. Chris was a member of the Junior Curriculum Review Group.

Joanna was a very experienced teacher appointed to Braemar Academy two years ago. She had taken up a key leadership position in a faculty focused on students with special needs. She had been impressed with the role's inclusive and diverse nature and the degree of autonomy it offered. Joanna was excited to come to Braemar Academy at a time when she believed the school was readying itself for significant change. She felt empowered to make changes that would better meet the needs of the students who came directly under her responsibility.

Melanie had been at Braemar Academy for 20 years and was HoF – a position she held for 11 years. She had previously taught in another local school and had been a leader in her subject area at the national level. Throughout her many years of teaching, Melanie had experienced much change. While she conceded that change can be unsettling and challenging, it also presented new opportunities. Melanie believed it was important for a school to keep evolving rather than waiting until change was forced on it.

Rachel had been at Braemar Academy for four years and was a HoD within a faculty. She had been teaching for 10 years after working in a different role. Before joining the school, Rachel had a varied career, including experience teaching her subject to adults and being a specialist in a special needs school. She believed it was essential to recognise and acknowledge the diversity of students and try to address those individual differences. Rachel was also a CoL – WST and a Junior Curriculum Review Group member.

Rhys had taught at Braemar Academy for seven years and was an Acting HoF. He was excited by the opportunity to create a faculty that was perceived as being innovative and meeting the needs of students by setting them up for senior school or plans after leaving school. Rhys saw his key role as developing a collaborative culture in his faculty and providing opportunities for staff to be part of a shared decision-making process. Rhys was also a CoL – WST and a Junior Curriculum Review Group member.

Samantha was recently appointed to the SLT at Braemar Academy. She came from a strong teaching and learning background and had taught and held curriculum leadership positions in both New Zealand and overseas schools. Samantha had been a CoL – WST but relinquished that position upon her appointment as a senior leader. She held several key responsibilities, including leading the Junior Curriculum Review Group at Braemar Academy for the implementation of the school's new strategic/annual plan.

I conducted two recorded interviews with curriculum leaders in a one-to-one setting. The first interview occurred near the beginning of the year. It addressed three key areas: interpreting the school vision, promoting it to faculty and department staff, and translating it into faculty/department action plans. The second interview occurred near the end of the year and addressed three areas: implementing faculty/department action plans, embedding the school's ETP, and managing change. The *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document was central to this interview, which outlined the intended action plans, reflections, and changes over the year. I conducted one interview with the senior leader at the end of the year in a one-to-one setting. This interview addressed four key areas: understanding and interpreting the school vision, specific leadership responsibilities related to enacting the vision, the role of the SLT in leading and managing school-wide change, and school-wide support needed for vision enactment.

I will now present the findings primarily derived from the interview transcripts. Additional information analysed from the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document is included where appropriate. The findings are structured around four overarching themes addressed in order: shared vision-making, interpreting the vision text, translating vision text into actions, and mediating conditions. Quotes from participants are mostly verbatim, but some have had minor editing to enhance sensemaking.

4.3 Shared Vision-making

Shared vision-making emerged as a significant theme because it captured how curriculum leaders actively shaped the school's future direction rather than merely implementing directives. For the purposes of this study, it is intended to refer to and describe the collaborative processes through which staff contributed to, refined, and took ownership of the school's vision. This theme arose from synthesising curriculum participants' descriptions of their involvement in vision development and their sense of agency. Two factors are outlined in this section: the imperative to change and the inclusive and participatory nature of the process. The timing of the strategic review of the school's future direction, which included revising its vision, aligned with the participants' views that the school was ready and needed to change to better reflect

developments and disruptions already evident both locally and internationally. For example, Chris said, "As a school, we have to move on, and it was great to see that we took that opportunity, and I feel we are moving in the right direction". Joanna, a recent appointment to the school, remarked, "I came to Braemar at a time when I knew the school was ready for change, and I've felt empowered to make changes for the advancement of my students". Since the need for change became an impetus for these curriculum leaders, engaging in a participatory and inclusive process appeared to be important in making it easier to undertake, given the overall readiness for this process.

All curriculum leader participants said that having considerable input into developing the revised school vision gave them a strong sense of ownership over the school's future direction. Joanna described the process:

> At the end of last year, we, as Heads of Faculty, were given a draft of the school vision to look at. We were able to discuss it [with other heads of faculty] at Board of Studies meetings and then take it back for discussion at our faculty meetings, which was good. Because of this, there was a lot of input and ownership. It felt like co-construction – so it certainly feels like our vision … it feels like a more living document.

Both Rhys and Melanie felt that as contributors to the school vision revision, it was a significant step in participation rather than being recipients of a pre-determined vision. For example, Rhys said, "As staff, we must buy into and own the school vision because we are the ones in the classroom. It can't just come from the principal and the board and be told, 'This is what you are doing'."

Ownership regarding contributions to the vision emerges as a recurring motif throughout the interviews. Participants consistently reported that this ownership facilitated meaning-making and helped them contextualise the new vision within their specific faculty contexts. These points helped me define the theme as shared vision-making.

4.4 Interpreting Vision Text

Interpreting vision text emerged as a distinct theme, capturing how curriculum leaders moved beyond initial participation in the vision-making process to develop deeper, personalised understandings of the school's vision. This theme encompasses the various approaches and resources participants used to make meaning of vision statements.

The curriculum leader participants identified various factors that had influenced how they thought about and made meaning of the school vision beyond the initial participation in Board of Studies (BoS) meetings with all other faculty leaders. These included professional

experiences with high-needs students, professional discourse with colleagues, professional readings, and, in the case of one participant the intent of the NZC. The participants engaged in self-directed learning and actively sought new ideas and knowledge to better understand the intent of the school's vision. Despite differences in approach, there was common agreement among participants about the aspirational goals underpinning the vision, which focused on:

- Developing an ***inclusive educational community***
- Prioritising ***equity*** and ***excellence***
- Enhancing student ***capabilities*** and ***values***
- Enabling students to ***positively contribute to an ever-changing world.***

Inclusive Educational Community

All curriculum leader participants acknowledged that developing an inclusive educational community meant addressing the needs of the diverse range of students that were reflective of the school. Melanie's comment captured the nature of that diversity when she said, "So we have our kids with special needs, we have our diverse range of ethnicities and cultures and things – that's all these people in our inclusive education community." Rhys reflected on his evolving perspective of what an inclusive educational community was, saying:

> I used to think of an inclusive educational community just as kids with special needs – inclusive in that way. But there has been that shift … away [from that] to inclusive being everyone in our classrooms. I think that's one of the most important things with the vision, and I still don't think there's a complete understanding of inclusive educational communities.

Joanna, who had led PD sessions for all staff on the nature of inclusion, argued that this understanding was in constant need of review, suggesting that "while staff have more of an understanding of what inclusion is because we have talked about it, it is something that needs to be revisited".

The findings show that all curriculum leader participants were aware of the diverse nature of students in the school's educational community and understood that the term "inclusive" was broad. Addressing the needs of all students is what makes for an inclusive educational community, a point all participants agreed with.

When discussing the key stakeholders within the inclusive educational community, four curriculum leader participants focused on the school's students when discussing inclusivity. However, Chris's interpretation of an inclusive educational community included the broader community beyond the school. He said this view related to "family and friends of students

currently in the school and also employers ... we need to ensure everyone is on the same journey". Such a comment perhaps indicates the growing realisation of participants that including the key stakeholders who exist beyond the confines of the school is likely to gain widespread commitment to a school's future direction, as espoused by a shared vision. A complicating factor with this realisation is, possibly, the enormity of the task to fulfil, given how this relates to excellence and equity, addressed next.

Equity and Excellence

While there was a general understanding that equity focused on learners achieving their educational potential regardless of entry points or personal circumstances, the notion of pursuing equity was more varied in participants' views. Joanna, for example, said:

> So often, people look at equity and think it needs to be equal. It's different because, especially working with the students I work with [special needs], for it to be equitable, we need to make sure that they are getting more opportunities to achieve the same outcomes.

Rachel, who does not work with special needs students daily, said that equity was "when everyone has what they need to be successful", which she explained through two ideas:

> [Firstly], teachers in my department try to think of practical ways to do that, from designing learning programmes to providing autonomy and choice and scaffolding. [Secondly], not giving up on students who might exhibit behaviours that are not completely helpful to their learning opportunities.

Rachel's view supported the idea that all students can learn. Participants appeared to accept that some students need more opportunities in support and resources to achieve their educational potential regardless of personal circumstances but differed in what that looked like or was possible to provide.

Some curriculum leader participants expressed equity regarding all students having the same opportunities to achieve success. For example, Rhys saw equity as "everyone having the same opportunities – is it fair?" and believed that achieving fairness was about "coming up with differentiated learning strategies for all students, and to try and ensure it happens". This suggests that for Rhys, an equitable opportunity comes from having diverse strategies, similar to Rachel's points about design and scaffolding. Melanie also linked the idea of fairness with equity when she said:

> I think the word "equity" is really important – that's fairness. All these people in our inclusive education community are treated the same. They all come out the other end, getting the best education possible to survive in our ever-changing world.

These differing views of equity (fairness and being treated the same) hint at the ongoing cultural debates around ethnicity, privilege, poverty, and ability. Implicit in Rhys and Melanie's interpretation, though, is that the same opportunities to achieve success can take different pathways. Regardless of their view about how equity might be achieved, study participants all acknowledged the importance of responding appropriately to diversity in the school community. This connects with notions of how to help students achieve excellence.

The participants believed that excellence was about teachers supporting students in reaching their learning potential. Rachel's comment captured the essence of what the other participants saw as excellence when she talked about students' individuality: "I guess excellence says that students come from different levels, different understandings, different places, and different stages in life, and it's our goal and mission to extend from wherever they are." This highlights a relationship between the concepts of equity and excellence.

All participants acknowledged that focusing on a singular view of excellence as only about academic success was too narrow. Melanie, for example, thought it was important for students to succeed across a range of areas when she commented:

> Excellence is getting the best you can out of every student – personal excellence – not just academically but socially, culturally, or anything – as long as they are getting the best out of themselves, and we are helping them to do that.

Chris thought that excellence should also extend to transferable competencies when he said:

> I don't think exams and grades are a good way of measuring excellence. It's far more than that … especially if we look at skills … those intrinsic things … how they have performed at school in collaboration, and [those sorts of things] … it's very difficult to measure.

An entry in his *Faculty School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document for August regarding Junior reports (Years 9 & 10) revealed that this was to be actioned: "Tests are to be removed, and teachers will report on the curriculum objectives, and skills [relating to] the Nature of [subject strand] and key competencies [from the NZC, 2007]." This view raises questions about what is reported to parents and valued at all levels in classrooms and across the school.

While Rachel's position appears closely linked to the participants' views of inclusivity expressed earlier, Melanie and Chris suggested that a broader conception of excellence is more likely to

include wider areas and expertise. Common to both these perspectives is the notion of personal growth for all students, which, perhaps, links to the participants' views of inclusivity, suggesting opportunities to build future capabilities.

Capabilities and Values

All curriculum leader participants acknowledged the significance of developing capabilities in lifelong learning. Rachel emphasised the importance of developing resilient learners when she stated:

> I think there's a need for resilience. I think [my subject] gives students opportunities for that in the way that students problem solve, learn from mistakes, and can develop their propositions. You have to make your own decisions and choices and be able to analyse and reflect on all those sorts of things. I expect people to be able to think, to learn how to think, and to have confidence in [their] decisions and capabilities … these are not necessarily subject-related but essential life skills.

Rachel thus indicates the potential of learning to build content knowledge and life-long capabilities centred on personal agency and confidence. Understanding how to think and learn is part of this skill set, and Rachel's ideas appear to sync with Chris's. Developing such skill sets is essential if students are to achieve their learning potential.

Chris, when reflecting on the attributes learners need in an ever-changing world, said:

> So they must have the [capabilities] to contribute to a world we have no idea what it will be like in ten years. If we can instil those [capabilities] – how to learn, critical thinking, and communication – then they should be able to adapt to any situation, no matter their situation. As life changes or the world changes with technology or whatever else, they can adapt.

Melanie thought about the importance of developing capabilities in a slightly different way. She noted that a feature of an ever-changing world was the global problems young people would inherit when she said:

> The world is changing very fast. I look at all the problems in the world, like climate change, and our kids will have to deal with that. They must develop the capacity to bring about the changes needed to solve these problems.

She also believed that capabilities were valued more highly by employers than exam results and remarked:

> Employers are looking at whether people are critical thinkers, team players, problem solvers – those sorts of things. I've noticed on CVs, interviews, and things now that voluntary service is something that employers are very interested in. So I think those things have gained much more importance than just your pure academic …

This observation resonates with the broader conception of excellence discussed earlier, where achieving potential went beyond traditional academic results and embraced a range of other areas and proficiencies.

While each curriculum leader participant promoted different capability attributes, such as resilience, adaptability, and problem-solving, they understood capabilities as knowledge and skills that could be applied to different and shifting situations and were not bounded by subject area.

At the first interview, three curriculum leader participants commented on the school's values. They all agreed they were crucial for determining how people would behave within the school. Joanna, for example, said, "The school's values are really important. We operate around those values since we don't have many school rules. Our faculty has ensured that we include and refer to those values frequently."

She also believed that "understanding those values", along with developing portable competencies as described earlier, "linked directly back to the ever-changing world" and the ability of young people to meet the challenges that would confront them. Joanna acknowledged the critical role of values in influencing behaviours and actions beyond school.

While Joanna commented on the role of values in general, Rachel and Chris focused on one of the school values in particular – respect. For example, Rachel believed respect was essential for nurturing an inclusive environment, identified earlier as being characterised by diversity. She said, "Respect for each other, for valuing and celebrating diversity and differences, and building that relationship between teacher and student [creates] an inclusive environment, and you have to nurture that." Meanwhile, Chris highlighted the importance of respect as an essential element of the ideal profile of a student representative of the school, saying, "The [school] values are really important in terms of the things that underpin the sort of person we want to have to represent Braemar Academy."

While these participants discussed the importance of values differently, they understood them as guiding principles of behaviour in the classroom and school. This was interesting as the school's vision is explicit about enabling their students to participate in an ever-changing world

by developing values and capabilities. However, only Joanna made this connection by suggesting that values influenced students' choices beyond school.

While shared ownership of the vision was a recurring theme during the vision creation process (Section 4.3), it does not necessarily translate to uniform understanding or implementation. The varied interpretations of key concepts like inclusivity, equity, and excellence suggest that participatory processes, while valuable for generating buy-in, may also create spaces where individual professional experiences and values shape how the vision manifests in practice. This tension between collective vision-making and individualised interpretation highlights a critical challenge in educational change leadership: the gap between participatory development processes and the subsequent lack of structured, ongoing forums for collective sensemaking.

4.5 Translating Vision into Actions

Translating vision into actions emerged as a significant theme because it represented the critical process through which curriculum leaders translated the vision text into tangible educational practices. This theme captures the practical implementation strategies, pedagogical approaches, and structural changes that participants developed to operationalise the school's vision. The data revealed that this translation process was multi-faceted, with participants working across various areas of school life to bring vision principles to life.

This section examines four key dimensions of this translation process: creating a student-centred learning environment, developing initiatives, embedding school values, and embedding effective teaching practices.

4.5.1 Student-centred Learning Environment

A key theme underpinning the shared vision's organisational goals was creating a student-centred learning environment to address inclusion, equity, and excellence. Implicit in this was the need to embrace teaching practices centring on all learners' needs. This included recognising and valuing students' backgrounds, prior knowledge, and interests. Creating a classroom curriculum that is relevant and meaningful and providing opportunities for learners to take more control over their learning are also important factors. The curriculum leader participants identified several attributes they believed underpinned the concept of being student-centred. These will be reported, in turn, as student voice, student agency, responsive curriculum, Te Tiriti o Waitangi, and new learning programmes.

Student Voice

All participants acknowledged that getting to know students was a prerequisite for developing a student-centred learning environment. They believed this was achieved by gathering and using

student voices to build relationships and inform teaching practices and programmes of learning. For example, Melanie said:

> Getting to know your students was about having conversations [with them] and using that information to foster those relationships. We are all using a variety of ways of gathering that voice. It could be done formally by the students through surveys or informally, which we often do, [like asking them] a question "put your hand up", or it could be asking individuals, it could be using stick it "post-its". Then, you can use that voice to inform change or confirm that what we are doing is positive, and we can build on that.

She added that it was expected that her faculty staff would collect feedback about their teaching practice and learning programmes, seeking answers to these questions: "Do students perceive them as being culturally inclusive? Do they feel safe in their classroom? Do they feel their teacher gives them time as individuals?"

Rhys said his faculty had placed much emphasis on gathering student voices about what was happening in classrooms:

> We created a survey based on the "Seven Principles of Learning" (Groff, 2012) and focused on how students felt in the classroom. Did they feel safe? Did they feel their culture was valued? Did they feel their teacher knew their strengths, weaknesses, and interests, and did it matter to them? We analysed our survey data and then reflected on what we would change within our teaching practice, which we shared in a PD session.

Rhys also spoke of how his faculty trialled using Learner Journals to gather student voices from Year 9 students. He commented:

> Some of them [students] didn't think that was an example of student voice because it was them reflecting on their learning. They also found it challenging, and their feedback indicated they had difficulty writing SMART goals and reflecting on key competencies.

Furthermore, an entry in the *Faculty School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document for August stated, "The Learning Journal is quite clunky, and it has become an extra ... we need to incorporate this into the [students'] learning and build it in Schoology [Learning Management system]." And later, in October, after further reviews, "the online version in Schoology [will focus on student] goal setting – one personal goal, one academic goal per semester". Despite its shortcomings, Rhys felt that using the Learner Journal had resulted in more culturally responsive practices by faculty staff.

Melanie's and Rhy's comments highlighted the importance of using student voices to inform teaching practice. Their focus on gathering data about how students felt about their classroom experience and, in Rhys's case, reflecting on their learning was instrumental in making students feel valued and personally invested in their learning.

Student Agency

Participants also saw a key attribute of student-centred learning as providing opportunities for students to control their learning by giving them greater choice and input. Chris, for example, spoke of PBL, which had been a big focus of the junior curriculum in his faculty. His faculty had embarked on two projects with junior students. Regarding the first project, he said:

> We ended up developing programmes of work that "yes" had a context but were very prescriptive in the way we did it. Teachers led it – "you're doing this, you're doing that" – there was very little autonomy. As teachers, we identified that we hadn't hit the project-based learning correctly.

In preparation for the second project, Chris instructed his staff to give students greater control over their learning and allow them to decide what and how their projects would be carried out. He commented:

> We needed to give students autonomy and agency – they had to have a choice. So we worked on "what is co-construction", and I challenged the teachers. I said, "Right, we cannot go in with a project; the students must develop their project." Teachers took it in different ways … [In the end] we had many projects within a class … whatever [the students] were interested in.

Chris's experiences highlighted the difference between teacher-led and student-led projects. While both involved offering students choices, the second project demonstrated students' authentic responsibility and ownership of their learning.

Rachel believed that the organisation of her subject area at the senior level allowed for quite a high level of co-construction and choice when it came to meeting the needs of individual students. She explained that her subject could be studied through several lenses, which she had developed into discrete courses. Rachel said, "We've tried different things, like encouraging students to cover two [courses] and overlap them." She gave an example of a Pasifika student who was able to cover two related courses in her subject with one project that focused on a topic of cultural significance. "So her whole body of work and study was student-driven and was about [people] that she was interested in, could relate to, and understood."

At the junior level, Rachel explained that her department used SOLO taxonomy rubrics to make learning more visible and enhance student agency. She said they did so by encouraging students to take more control over their learning:

> SOLO works well for us, and we have been doing it for some time. It allows us to see the steps students must take to get to the different levels. The students self-assess and see where they think they are. At the end of the project, the teacher assesses as well.

Individual Education Plans (IEPs) have always been a feature of Joanna's faculty because of the nature of students in the faculty. She explained that in the past, the IEPs had been very teacher-driven and focused on academic learning. She believed the IEPs needed "to include a social aspect in terms of where the students were heading with their lives beyond here" and "allow students to have more input into the goal-setting process". Introducing a special programme called Citizen You enabled this to occur. Joanna described one student who had benefitted from the programme. She said:

> [Student X] has level 2 NCEA, and he has reached a point where he struggles to deal with all his Level 3 subjects because he has realised that cognitively he's not functioning at Level 3. He needs to build his social awareness and creativity. He has never really had to do that. So he worked with [the programme developer], worked out his strengths, and then made goals based on those. And that's been really exciting – what has happened for him.

These findings suggest that teachers and students have greater learning satisfaction when students are encouraged to exercise agency.

Responsive Curriculum

Participants ' responses included developing a more responsive curriculum considering student interests, backgrounds, and prior knowledge. It was also a focus of the school's PD programme in Term 1. Chris explained that, as a result, the junior learning programmes in his faculty had been modified and were less content driven. He said:

> It's the pared-back curriculum and only looking at the achievement objectives we need to achieve. I've given teachers a bit of autonomy [in terms] of how they want to teach that. The idea is to enable teachers to go off on tangents depending on what their students are doing or are interested in. Some teachers were concerned that we were not preparing our kids for Level 1 [NCEA]. I think we are, but there is a difference between teaching them Level 1 in Year 10, which we have traditionally done, and preparing them for Level 1.

Chris's comments highlighted the importance of teacher independence and implied that reducing the content covered would result in deeper learning opportunities and greater student choice and agency.

Rachel spoke of the high level of differentiation that characterised the learning programmes in her department. While all students benefitted, she found it particularly helpful in targeting the needs of more challenging students. She said:

> My teachers don't give up on people, so if someone cannot engage with what is happening in the classroom, we find other options and try to get them engaged in another way. We've got lots of differentiation, I guess. Lots of one-to-one for students who really need it.

Rachel's commitment to differentiated learning was emphasised in her *Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document. For example, an entry in May: "Differentiated learning must be built into our junior programmes to support and extend all learners in [subject]. Continue to modify units or invent new ones to engage and extend each cohort."

At an individual level, Melanie said that using background knowledge and relationships with students can be used to create authentic learning opportunities. She gave an example of one of her senior students who was struggling with a NCEA internal assessment:

> I found out that she was from Northland, and what her iwi was, so when she came to do her internal assessment – it was about inequality – I said, rather than doing it generally around New Zealand, why don't you focus on Northland and your area and look at that, which she did. So she could look at the absolute inequalities there relative to the rest of New Zealand. So it made it a lot more meaningful for her because she was doing it for an area of interest.

These findings suggest that when teachers can use students' experiences and backgrounds, they can better connect classroom learning to their lives outside school.

Te Tiriti o Waitangi

Strong links to the principles underpinning Te Tiriti o Waitangi were highlighted by four participants as an important component of a culturally responsive curriculum. For example, Rhys said that over the last two years, his faculty had placed a greater focus on understanding Te Tiriti o Waitangi from a Māori perspective rather than a "very British history perspective", and making their programmes reflect "a more 'localised' curriculum". He said:

> If I were a Year 10 student sitting in a class listening to all the history in the texts, I'd not be engaged. I want to know how it is relevant to me now. [For example], I want to understand what's happening at Ihumātao and other settlements now, whether it's related to water, etc. Everyone makes references to the Treaty. We need to make that a part of it if we want our students to be informed and participate in society. They need to be aware of the Treaty's relevance now, not just its history.

Rachel took a broader view and focused on applying the principles that underpin the Treaty to their programmes of learning and classroom practice. She believed that Te Tiriti o Waitangi applied to everybody:

> It's like looking after everybody and respecting their background, mana, history, and ancestors – that applies to everybody. And in our programmes [of learning], we can do that. We give students opportunities to explore their culture but also specifically teach elements of Māori culture – it's not just their own culture.

While Melanie acknowledged that her faculty had greatly emphasised including a Māori dimension into their learning programmes, classroom displays, and classroom practice, she believed that Māori culture provided a good starting point for drawing on other people's experiences and cultures. For example, she said:

> I was looking at resources for my [NCEA] Level 1 class. We were looking at the different Māori concepts – *kaitiakitanga*, *rahui*, all those things – and I was able to say to [one of my students], "Ok, you are from Thailand; you have got a *rahui* there." And he said, "What – no we haven't!" And I said, "Yes you have!" and brought up *The Beach* – from the movie. And then I said to [another student] who was Muslim, "Have you got anything like that in your culture?" And she said, "Umm, when we go to Mecca, we are only allowed one bottle of water."
>
> I said, "We do this in New Zealand. This is the Māori concept. But look, we do it in other cultures as well", so they could see those connections. And that's the beauty of it; you can then pull in other people's experiences and cultures after starting with the Māori one.

Melanie's *Faculty School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document also revealed that "two staff have been undertaking a te reo course through Te Wānanga and sharing their learning [with other faculty staff], while three other staff are focusing on an aspect of *whakawhanaungatanga* for their teaching inquiry". This further emphasises the commitment of Melanie's faculty to embedding Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles into their classroom practice.

The curriculum leader participants articulated their ideas about Te Tiriti o Waitangi differently. While they all acknowledged the special place of Māori as *tangata whenua*, they believed that respecting the background, mana, and history of all cultures represented in their classrooms were essential features of inclusivity. The participants' understanding of the principles underpinning Te Tiriti o Waitangi provided this impetus.

New Programmes of Learning

Implementing new programmes of learning that targeted junior students at risk of not achieving basic literacy and numeracy skills was a key school-wide goal. This would help to address existing inequities. Joanna was the only participant whose faculty was responsible for developing such a programme. She explained the development of the PATH programme, which targeted students working at Level 1 (and sometimes early Level 2) of the NZC. A key feature of the programme was building strong executive function and social skills and emphasising positive relationships with and among students. The students attended the programme for six hours per week, received in-class support, and had an individualised learning programme mapped out for them for the current and following years. Class size was limited to between 10 and 15 students.

Joanna reported, "We knew pretty much part way through Term 1 that the students involved had already made a turnaround." Joanna said the data collected regularly and from various sources showed that the programme positively impacted students by growing their confidence as learners and developing their executive functioning and social skills. She said:

> You can see with this data that some students did exactly what we wanted, and they "pathed" out of the PATH programme. Some of them went back to mainstream classes, and others left the school. Across the year, the numbers fluctuated, which is what we wanted to happen – we wanted some students to transition out. And, just anecdotally, students' attendance in PATH is much better. It's their other classes they are not attending, but in terms of PATH, that's the class they'll attend.

Implicit in Joanna's last comment was that the high level of individual support/mentoring the students received, which could not be replicated in mainstream classes, encouraged them to attend. This and focusing on developing executive functioning skills benefitted a range of "at-risk" students.

The findings reveal that creating a student-centred learning environment is complex and requires a multidimensional approach that extends beyond traditional pedagogical practices. This approach is characterised by valuing students as individuals and empowering them to participate in their learning journey actively. The curriculum leaders demonstrate a nuanced

understanding of inclusion and personalised learning by systematically integrating strategies such as gathering student feedback, providing authentic learning choices, and developing curricula that respond to students' backgrounds and interests. Affirming New Zealand's unique bicultural identity through Te Tiriti o Waitangi principles is a key feature, emphasising cultural responsiveness and equity. Implementing targeted support programmes, like the PATH initiative, and focusing on individual student needs highlights the commitment to addressing individual student needs and educational inequities. Putting students at the centre of teaching and learning has significant implications for pedagogical practices, challenging school leaders and teachers to reimagine their approach to learning and student engagement.

4.5.2 Developing Initiatives

Re-designing the junior curriculum and timetable to reflect an innovative learning environment was a key goal in the first year of the Strategic Plan. While there was an expectation that all faculties would explore innovative teaching and learning models, it would appear, from participants' review documents, that the newly established Curriculum Lead Group would be primarily responsible for providing leadership in this area. As a senior leader, it fell to Samantha to establish and lead the group. Three participants (Rhys, Chris, and Rachel) were members. The key outcome for the group was to develop a new Junior Curriculum Model and a new timetable structure ready for implementation in 2021.

In reflecting on the school vision, Samantha said she had mainly focused on the second part – "[Enabling] students to have the capabilities and values to positively contribute to an ever-changing world":

> I was reading something recently that the average school leaver is likely to have about 20 different jobs in their lifetime. So we've got to have students who can cope with that – be adaptable and flexible – and are comfortable with this notion of things constantly changing. So that's my understanding – that they are future-ready – and that's what I keep returning to for the junior curriculum. Are our students leaving ready to be really successful in whatever happens?

Under her leadership, the Curriculum Lead Group identified three key areas underpinning a future-focused approach to learning – prioritising capabilities over content, PBL, and integrated studies. These will be discussed in turn.

Prioritising Capabilities over Content

Samantha said that the group began by identifying a set of capabilities they believed students needed to be future-ready. These included collaboration, communication, self-management,

critical thinking, curiosity, and innovation and were closely aligned to the key competencies described in the NZC (MoE, 2007). She questioned whether students currently had those skills and whether they, along with teachers in some learning area-based faculties, valued them higher than content knowledge. For example, Samantha explained how some subject courses were very "assessment driven" even in the junior school:

> We've got faculties that go, "OK, they are going to be doing this assessment for NCEA, and we need to practise it in Year 10, we need to practise it in Year 9." For me, that is wrong. We've [identified a set of capabilities] and said that these are the skills we want the kids to have, and we should be focusing on that, and the assessment will be fine.

She said that changing some teachers' mindsets around assessment-driven courses was a challenge, particularly as the school was perceived as being successful when measured by NCEA results:

> People are reluctant to change and say, "OK, this is working well, especially for this group of kids. It's working well because we've got these scholarships, we've got these students going to university, we've got good endorsements". So it is hard to persuade those people that we need to change.

Samantha pointed out that academic students also needed to have future-ready capabilities:

> These students at the top still need all these skills we are talking about. University courses differ from when we were at university, where you sit, listen, and take it all in. They will often come into the classroom and wait for the teacher to tell them to do something – I don't think that's right. That's not enabling them to have the skills that we want.

For Samantha, prioritising the development of capabilities over content knowledge, often a characteristic of assessment-driven courses, "are the shifts we are trying to work on".

However, for Joanna, whose faculty supported students with disabilities and was not learning area-based, embedding key competencies into students' IEPs and directly linking them to their learning has been a key priority for some time. While the set of capabilities identified by the Curriculum Lead Group was important for students with disabilities, Joanna identified other competencies – independence, risk-taking, persistence – as also important in preparing her students to be future ready once they leave school. For example, she said:

> Independence and risk-taking are very important. It is really important that they take those risks. They also need to understand that it mightn't work the first time, so

> persistence is also important. They need to keep on trying. Sometimes, it's just having the confidence for the students to keep going.

Joanna particularly stressed managing self and relating to others as two key competencies that were hugely important for students with disabilities to develop. For example, concerning managing self, she stated:

> Some students rely on teacher aides for personal care. How will they manage that when they leave here? How will they get to the bus on time, get themselves ready on time, and organise their carers to do it?

Regarding relating to others, Joanna said:

> That's one thing that our students find difficult, and part of that is that not all the community outside of the school is very good at interacting with them. A lot of the public doesn't even think they can speak.

These findings emphasise the importance of prioritising the development of future-ready capabilities, such as collaboration, critical thinking, and self-management, over content knowledge. They highlight the challenges of shifting away from assessment-driven approaches, especially in contexts where traditional academic success is highly valued. They also stress the necessity of fostering these skills in all students, particularly those with disabilities, to ensure they are prepared for future challenges.

Project-based Learning

The Curriculum Lead Group focused on investigating PBL, which they believed provided students with opportunities to develop many of the future-ready capabilities they had identified. Rhys and Chris trialled PBL within their faculty, while Rachel undertook three cross-curricular projects.

Undertaking a Global Citizen project, which focused on an issue or problem related to one of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, was a major innovative strategy Rhys's faculty had introduced the previous year for the Year 10 cohort and continued in the year of data collection. The project also required students to present their findings to invited community leaders on a designated "community" day. Rhys spoke of the skills he believed the students were developing by engaging in the Global Citizen project: "They have to work with people [in groups] and collaborate, think critically [about a real-life issue/problem], and evaluate [possible solutions/social actions/research process]; its real issues – those sorts of 21st-century skills." He also said that the research skills the Year 10 students were gaining from the Global Citizen project were having a noticeable impact on the quality of research carried out in Year 11:

> The biggest thing we've seen, and I've talked about this to the Junior Curriculum Committee, in Year 11 this year, the research work our kids in [our learning area] are producing is a million times better based on the Year 10 project.

Rhys did, however, concede that students often disliked working together:

> It was interesting in our student voice last year that the kids hated working in groups. But we asked them what skills they had left with, and they said they could work with other kids. We said, "Well, you mightn't like it, but you can work with other people." And that's what we wanted out of it.

He also conceded that while much emphasis was placed on community involvement, time constraints were a barrier. "We try to emphasise social action and get students involved in the community, but based on our review, we still did not get enough time to get lots of meaningful social action."

As indicated earlier, Chris's faculty trialled PBL for the first time with junior students. In reflecting on the second project the students undertook, Chris said that he had noticed that students appeared reasonably skilled at undertaking projects with a research focus but struggled to develop projects requiring investigation skills, which was a key feature of his learning area. Chris's comments implied that he viewed research projects as predominantly presenting existing knowledge on a topic. In contrast, projects requiring investigation skills would produce more original work and require higher levels of critical thinking. He said:

> We found that most students just went and did a research project because it is something they know. They research in [other subjects as well as our own] so they understand research. I identified that they don't have the skills to design experiments, practically carry out tests, critically analyse and develop, and work as a team.

Chris also observed that students struggled to work in teams: "They are often working alongside each other but not communicating with each other or collaborating." He highlighted several areas that needed to be addressed, particularly developing investigation skills:

> We had our review the other day and decided that in terms 2 and 4 next year [2020], we need to work on the skills the students lack – those investigation skills. So [teachers] have been instructed to develop investigations … and I have supplied them with a whole heap of investigations, and they can do any investigation.

While Chris did not specifically explain how the faculty would address the issues around group work, he did acknowledge its potential benefits. He also believed that the quality of PBL in his

faculty would be considerably enhanced by placing a greater emphasis on developing investigation skills when he said:

> If we can develop those skills, and they will be working within groups as well, you've got collaboration, critical thinking, seeing a result, not thinking that is the end but looking at that result and asking more questions to go on further – students struggle with that. Still, it's the essence of a project.

Exploring cross-curricular PBL has been a major focus for Rachel. At the time of her interview, she had just completed one project with a junior class and was undertaking a second project with the same group of students but through a different lens. Based on her experience, she was somewhat cautious about making PBL the primary focus of a learning programme. Concerning her latest project, she said that most academic students were not interested:

> It's really interesting that at the minute, I'm finding that most academic kids don't want a bar of [project-based learning]. They appear to be "out, out" because everyone has been trialling it here and there. For the lower-ability ones, it is more their place to shine, and they are excited, motivated, and engaged.

Rachel had observed that the academic students were "quite good at delegating and dividing roles out and avoiding things they don't want to do". For example, she said there were two components from two different learning areas in her current project. The academic students tended to take charge of the group, decide which component they preferred, and allocate the other, giving little thought to the overall group operation. She noted, "If one of [the group members] is not there, then it doesn't happen – they just sit there twiddling their thumbs." Rachel believed that understanding how groups worked best was a key learning for both teacher and student. She said:

> Part of the learning for a teacher is giving students opportunities to (a) lead part of the project but then (b) ensure they have a secondary goal or responsibility so that they are actually involved, and then the work will become stronger in the timeframe. So there is potential for learning key competencies.

Rachel conceded that it is difficult to know from her trials whether PBL has enhanced student capabilities. However, she identified "thinking, being able to apply knowledge from one subject to another in a more abstract way, experimental learning, learning from what other people are doing around them, and that design process" as potential outcomes.

Melanie was not a member of the Curriculum Lead Group but a keen supporter of PBL, although her faculty had yet to engage in projects specifically. She conceded:

> We have discussed it with my faculty, and there has been some action, but not so much "subject-related" as "area of expertise-related". I have done a lot of sustainability work and talked to Chris and Rhys about how my knowledge could be used in inquiry projects in their faculties.

Melanie did note that much PBL appeared to be happening across the school, "Everyone is doing their own thing at the moment, and there is an urgent need for a more coordinated approach."

Samantha, the senior leader participant, believed that considerable progress had been made with advancing PBL within/across some faculties and highlighted the good review process they had implemented using the specialist classroom teacher as an objective reviewer.

The Curriculum Lead Group explored PBL to develop future-ready capabilities. Trials across faculties revealed both successes and challenges. While PBL fostered skills like collaboration, critical thinking, and research-focused projects, challenges were evident, particularly with group work and investigative projects. While most participants saw potential in PBL, at least one (Rachel) noted difficulties engaging academic students and the need for a more coordinated school-wide approach.

Integrated Studies

The Curriculum Lead Group proposed implementing curriculum integration in 2021 to enhance connected and cross-curricular PBL. The proposed integration of four learning areas into two affected both Rhys and Chris, and they reported that they had been in preliminary discussions with the two other HoFs they had been paired with.

Rhys said they were ready for integration as a faculty and saw many crossovers between his learning area and the one he was to be paired with. He believed "the biggest thing is around compromise" and that you needed to start with a blank canvas. He said:

> Integration, to me, is that you start from scratch – you're building a whole new programme. You can't come and say we must do this film study, and you must do that – that is not integration. You've got to have a blank canvas.

He reported that his faculty had identified vital skills to be included in any integrated programme: "Things like perspectives, social actions – these are the things we value – and interpretation skills … nothing content related." He said they had met with the other faculty who had also undertaken a similar process, which provided the basis for their first meeting. However, while Rhys described the first meeting as "very diplomatic", he was wary of not allowing his learning area to be absorbed into the other:

> We just let them go because we wanted to get them on board. But starting from scratch, we wouldn't be that diplomatic because we are not going to stand back and be "[our learning area] just filling in with [their learning area]". It has got to be a joint programme, and it's got to have a special name.

Chris said his initial discussions with the other learning area he was paired with focused on "looking at similarities between their curriculum and our curriculum". An outcome was that a small-scale integration at the topic level would be trialled the following year. Rhys and Chris were keen to explore and experiment with integrated learning but conceded that the faculty leaders they had been paired with were not currently as progressive in their thinking as they were. Rhys commented, "I think with the changes we are potentially looking at to our curriculum and going to integration, there's going to be a lot of support needed for all faculties [involved]."

Rhys and Chris were cautiously optimistic about integrating four learning areas into two, designed to promote cross-curricular and connected learning. While both were eager to explore integrated learning, they recognised the need for careful collaboration to ensure balanced input from all faculties involved. They highlighted the importance of support for successful implementation.

The school's focus on developing innovative initiatives reflects a significant shift towards developing future-ready capabilities, such as collaboration and critical thinking, and aligning with the broader vision of preparing students for an ever-changing world. However, tensions remain as the school struggles with deeply ingrained, assessment-driven practices that often hinder fully enacting these more innovative changes. While PBL and cross-curricular integration have shown promise in shifting the learning culture, they also require careful planning and collaboration among staff. Strategic leadership is pivotal in guiding these initiatives, ensuring alignment with the school's vision, and fostering collaboration to drive meaningful curriculum innovation.

4.5.3 Embedding School Values

The development of the school values was an outcome of the school's participation in the PB4L (Positive Behaviour for Learning) programme in 2014. Participation in this initiative provided the school with funding to develop artefacts to support embedding the values into school life. Samantha confirmed that school values had continued to be a focus and were promoted and embedded into all parts of school life. The participants saw the school values as a framework for guiding behaviour for both staff and students and were instrumental in promoting a quality learning environment.

All curriculum leader participants spoke of it being a key feature of classroom practice in their faculty/department; two participants indicated they extended school values beyond behavioural expectations and used them as a learning opportunity. Chris's comments essentially captured the views of the other participants when he described how the school values were used as a framework for guiding behaviour in his faculty. He said they had a three-prong approach: displaying posters depicting the school values in all classrooms, teachers modelling school values, and using school values as a basis for broader faculty pastoral practice:

> We have the posters up in all the classrooms. If, for example, we are talking about group work, we would say, "Remember to respect each other as it's one of our school values; value diversity in your group; find out the strengths and weaknesses of each other and work together." So it's just highlighting it.
>
> Also, there has been a big push for us, as teachers, to consider those values and make them transparent. We should also identify within the class when students show those values and say, "Johnny, great – that was a great use of diversity."
>
> [In terms of broader faculty pastoral practice], we very rarely have to send students up to the deans, and I think part of that is that we link things back to values. Even if we do have to remove a student, we remove them to another teacher's class, and then that [restorative] discussion almost happens anyway by that teacher when they can.

Chris added that using school values to underpin faculty pastoral practice had "organically grown" because teachers had been embedding school values "into their classroom management plans" for several years.

While Rhys reported that "our classroom expectations are our values", he also said that his faculty incorporated the school values into their learning programmes. For example, he explained:

> The start of our Year 9 programme is heavily embedded with values, and we focus on the people [associated with them]. We use it to teach kids some basic inquiry skills. For example, "You are in Hilary House – so what values did Sir Edmund Hilary show? What did he do? How did he persevere?" We get them to write a paragraph as a formative assessment to see their writing.

Similarly, Melanie's planning template revealed that the school values were to be referenced in the teaching and learning programme, specifically how they connected to successful local business enterprises.

While Chris and Rhys emphasised the application of school values in student behaviour, Joanna's faculty paid close attention to the staff. For example, an entry in the *Faculty School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document for August suggested that some support staff were struggling to embrace the school values into their behaviour when dealing with students:

> Efforts are being made to get all staff on board with [the school values], as several teaching inquiries have focused on the school's values and their application. However, despite consistent examples from teaching team members, staff adoption remains limited. It does appear that staff have difficulty understanding that some behaviours relate to student conditions and that they [students] are not being "naughty". The challenge may be that TAs are unwilling/unable to change their behaviour and their management of students. Teaching staff are still working on this.

Embedding school values into classroom practice was crucial for fostering a quality learning environment. Most participants reported using values primarily for behavioural guidance. However, two participants (Rhys and Melanie) went beyond behavioural management to integrate values into learning experiences. Furthermore, Samantha (Senior Leader) believed values and capabilities were closely related and essential in preparing students for an ever-changing world – a key phrase in the vision statement. This approach highlighted the potential for values to be more than just behaviour guidelines, suggesting they could be a powerful tool for deeper learning and personal development.

4.5.4 Enhancing Effective Teaching Practices

A key school-wide goal was to enhance effective teaching practices by embedding the school's ETP principles. The ETP had been developed without input from the teaching staff. While the document did not acknowledge its sources, it appeared closely related to the *Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile*. It consisted of five dimensions, each with a strong culturally responsive focus. Two dimensions – *manaakitanga* and *tangata whenuatanga* were the intended focus during the year of data collection.

The participants presented a range of views of what an effective teacher looked like in their faculty. For example, Rhys said it was someone who

> provides a warm, safe environment for students, enabling them to share their views and opinions and acknowledge and respect their culture; communicates regularly with families via email or phone and reflects on their teaching practice to make changes.

For Rachel, an effective teacher was someone who "enjoyed what they were doing, and the classroom was full of engaged and motivated people …", while Chris believed it was someone

who had positive relationships with their students, which "started with getting to know them, of where they've come from, and what they are doing". These participants' key message was that effective teachers show that they know and care about their students and their learning, a fundamental component of *manaakitanga.*

Concerning the school's ETP, participants said that for each of the five dimensions that made up the profile, they developed a set of key indicators about what was expected of an effective teacher in their faculty. This was done in collaboration with their faculty staff. Faculties then used this information in different ways. For example, Melanie said:

> We built up a profile of an effective teacher for our faculty, and in our PD, I got [the staff] to use the highlighter tool to identify where they were at. Everything they thought they were doing well was highlighted in green. Things they thought they needed to work on were highlighted in orange, and things they didn't or left out were highlighted in red. So that was quite a good little reflection exercise. So together, we built up our profile and then asked, "Are we, as individuals, embodying this?"

For Joanna, working through the dimensions of the ETP highlighted that many of her staff were teacher aides, and they did not think it applied to them. She said:

> When we first started looking at the ETP, the teacher aides said, "It doesn't really apply to us." And it does. So we will revisit that next year because all the teacher aides will have their appraisals done using an Effective Teacher Aide profile [which we have developed].

To customise the ETP for her faculty, Joanna explained:

> We sat down as a faculty and said, "What does the profile sound like and look like?" We developed a shared understanding, and each centre could make its own. So up on our walls, and the students in my centre helped, we have artwork about what [an effective teacher] feels, looks, and sounds like. It is fairly simplistic, but teacher aides, teachers, and students all know what it means. The language we use around the place reflects the Effective Teacher Profile – I think for our faculty, *manaakitanga* embodies everything we do.

An Effective Teacher Observation tool was developed to embed the ETP. The degree to which the observation tool enhanced teaching practice provided a range of views. Chris, for example, was very optimistic about its impact:

> As one of the observers who has used that tool, I can tell you that it is really good for providing information to a teacher. It's better than the tick box approach because it allows you to give feedforward.

Melanie, however, was unsure as to whether the ETP observation tool was improving practice:

> I don't know about improving practice, but you are certainly more aware of what you need to do to be an effective teacher. Am I meeting these criteria, or is something missing? It's not so much the actual document as the conversation you have afterwards. That's the important thing.

While Rachel acknowledged that the tool helped embed the teacher profile, she did not feel that the tool had improved teaching practice in her department. She said:

> The new observation tool is useful, and if we want to embed the teacher profile, it is a good way of doing it with the teachers because they all see it and understand it. It's quite good because it has the heading and what it might look like in the classroom. So that's quite useful. The only thing is that you will not see all of that in one observation.

Rachel commented that it was too early to tell if there were any improvements to teaching practice using the profile, saying:

> It was only recently given to staff for appraisal documentation at the end of the year, with no time to guide teachers on how to best use it. As a result, we haven't had the opportunity to do more than one observation using this tool – too soon to evaluate its effectiveness.

The Effective Teacher Observation tool appears to provide a helpful guide to describing effective classroom practice. Perhaps its real value, as implied by Chris and Melanie, was the information provided for the professional conversations after lesson observations. As the tool was a recent development, it was too soon to measure its effectiveness in improving teaching practice.

While the Effective Teacher Observation tool was a major focus for staff school-wide, other observation tools were also in use. Samantha (Senior Leader participant) gave two examples, saying:

> So, we've got [the Across the School Leader] leading other CoL leaders in observations with a Te Kotahitanga tool, which talks about the co-construction of learning and is very student-centred – the Growth Conversations. [Another CoL leader] has been doing something similar but more in-depth and linked to the effective teacher profile. He has

been working with four teachers this year but has worked in-depth to change some really challenging practices.

Samantha believed that using the observation tools and the professional growth conversations that occurred, as a result, was driving a more student-centred and contextualised approach to learning. She said, "I try to get to as many lessons as possible, and I have seen more student-centred learning. I believe – that's anecdotal – it is because of the various things we've got happening that are linked together."

The findings reveal that while participants valued the structured ETP as a foundation for guiding teaching practices, its impact is most meaningful when faculties contextualise it to their needs. The participants' understandings of effective teaching aligned with *manaakitanga* principles, particularly regarding student relationships and care. The ETP observation tool received mixed responses, with participants consistently valuing the professional conversations following observations more than the tool itself. Implementing multiple observation approaches (including Te Kotahitanga and Growth Conversations) reflected participants' belief that effective teaching practice cannot be captured through a single lens. As the implementation was still in its early stages, its full impact on teaching practice remains to be seen, pointing to the importance of allowing sufficient time for embedding new approaches before evaluating their effectiveness.

4.6 Support Provided (Enablers)

Support provided emerged as a significant theme because it captured the critical resources, structures, and processes that positively influenced curriculum leaders' ability to implement the school vision. This theme illuminates how specific organisational supports functioned as enablers facilitating vision implementation across faculties. Analysis of participant accounts revealed several forms of support that enhanced their capacity to translate vision into practice.

The findings identified four key factors that supported the curriculum leader participants in making the shared vision a reality. These included designated faculty time for meetings, using planning templates, working with an external facilitator, and regular school-wide PD sessions. These factors will be reported in turn.

4.6.1 Faculty Time

All curriculum leader participants agreed that two key factors were essential for developing, implementing, and reviewing their action plans: dedicated time for faculty meetings and a collaborative faculty culture. The fortnightly timetabled faculty sessions were identified as crucial. Rhys, whose faculty was based around a traditional and longstanding learning area, emphasised:

> The best thing the school has done to help us implement our action plans is the Thursday professional development time we get with our faculty – it's so beneficial. We start at 8:30, and we achieve a lot. Having the time to work collaboratively helps the small number of staff resistant to some faculty initiatives get caught up in the enthusiasm and receptiveness of the majority, encouraging them to follow suit.

However, Rhys highlighted that proximity further enabled collaboration: "I think one of our strengths is that we all work in the same space, and there's lots of discussion all the time … And I think collaboration is the key because people also think they own those ideas."

Chris, whose faculty was also based around a longstanding learning area, spoke of how the dedicated time provided opportunities for meaningful dialogue:

> Our faculty PD sessions have been great because they allowed me to have robust and challenging discussions with my faculty. We can reflect on our curriculum and then offer project-based learning in a way that makes some positive change. I'd say that 90% of the teachers are on board, and we are moving in the direction we want.

While Rachel valued the allocated planning time, she conceded that it was largely spent with her department rather than the faculty she was part of:

> We don't have as many faculty meetings as we should because they get cancelled for department time, and life is busy. However, this makes it tricky for me to share the outcomes of the Curriculum [Lead Group] meetings, and I'm the faculty representative.

Nevertheless, Rachel emphasised that collaboration was critical to building trust in her leadership:

> We are very collaborative. We talk about things when they arise. Because of this, I try to lead by example. It's not coaching, nor is it a specific way of doing things. It's leading by example and building trust.

Rachel's experience highlights the differences between faculties that have traditionally operated as a single learning area and those comprising several independent subject departments. It also indicates challenges when faculty leaders do not prioritise cohesion across departments. In such cases, senior leadership support becomes crucial in providing additional structures and guidance to help faculty leaders overcome departmental silos and foster meaningful cross-departmental collaboration.

Melanie, who oversaw three different departments within her faculty, explained how an external facilitator helped create a collaborative agenda:

> One of my HoDs and I met with the external facilitator, and we formulated generic goals for the faculty instead of department goals. We then individualised them [for each department] by consulting with the different faculty members. This process has helped to develop a shared understanding of how the school vision will be enacted in our faculty.

As a recent arrival to Braemar Academy, Joanna found it challenging to create a collaborative climate where views could be shared and actions co-constructed:

> The people who work in our faculty all have a similar ideology – they believe in putting the students first and that these students all have a right to education. So that's already there, but we needed to be more cohesive in our approach because it's obvious that although we all want the best for our students, we were going about it differently.

To develop a cohesive faculty, she met with everybody, including teacher aides:

> At the very beginning of the year, I brought up the school vision, and we discussed it … This is our school vision, us, this is who we are, this is what we are doing. It felt inclusive, it felt we belonged, and it was a great way to start the year.

My study participants favoured using an inclusive and participatory approach when working with colleagues. Both dedicated time and collaborative cultures were essential for giving faculty/department staff a sense of ownership over decisions and future actions concerning vision enactment. While collaborative cultures were reported to be a strength at the faculty/department level, this was not consistently the case beyond this organisational level as described below in Section 4.7.2.

These findings suggest that successful vision translation requires both the structural provision of time and its intentional use in building a collaborative culture. When effectively used, these elements create a positive feedback loop where dedicated planning time enables meaningful collaboration, strengthening faculty cohesion and enhancing the collective capacity to enact the school's vision.

4.6.2 Strategic Planning Templates

The curriculum leaders at Braemar Academy received a strategic planning template to align their faculty/department goals with school strategic goals and translate them into classroom practice. The completed template was to form part of the annual report to the Principal. The curriculum leader participants were unanimous that the planning template made it easier to articulate faculty/department goals and action plans for the year and link them to classroom practice. Furthermore, the strategic goals developed to support the vision were fewer than in

the past and, according to the participants, more meaningful because it allowed faculty to address the goals more deeply for themselves.

Rhys pointed out how the template made it easier for the faculty to indicate its direction, saying:

> It is clear what we are doing and how it links to the vision and the school's strategic goals. And I think when we shared [the template] with the faculty, it was obvious – this is what we are doing and why. We are already doing this, and this is why. It helped back up actions we were already doing.

Chris also indicated how the structure of the template helped his faculty understand the links between school goals and classroom practice, saying:

> It gave my faculty staff an understanding of what they needed to do in the classroom to meet our school goals, which we hadn't previously had. The school goals had been far away, like forgotten at the classroom level.

Joanna said she found it easier to develop faculty/department goals using the planning template:

> We are certainly looking at more alignment, meaning there will be a change in practice. You have the school vision and the strategic goals, and it all flows. It was much easier to develop faculty goals than department goals and align them with school-wide goals.

While Melanie found the structure of the planning template helpful in linking the school goals to the professional practice of her faculty staff, she was particularly pleased to see fewer strategic goals. She commented:

> I also like that we have fewer goals than we've had in the past because it means you can focus on things much more carefully. Rather than do a little for a lot, you can do a lot for a little. So that's made it much more manageable. I feel a lot more under control this year because we're doing less and doing it better than in the past. [The goals] are much more meaningful and manageable.

Chris thought the strategic goals were sufficiently broad to allow for some autonomy within each faculty:

> They've reduced it to four strategic goals, meaning we can focus and dig down. However, they are not so prescriptive that my faculty will have the same goals as everybody else – you can make it fit where you are within the faculty.

These findings suggest that planning templates can be useful for scaffolding and providing structure. They can help leaders translate a vision's strategic goals into actionable plans. This, combined with a small number of easily understood learner-focused strategic goals, appears critical when translating the aspirations of a shared vision into a reality.

4.6.3 Accessing External Expertise

Opportunities to work with an external facilitator, Julia (pseudonym), who had, among other things, expertise in strategic planning and review, were open to all curriculum faculty leaders as well as senior leaders and those teachers in the CoL leadership roles. While Rachel, as a HoD, did not work directly with the external facilitator in developing her department's action plans but relied on her HoF to disseminate the information, the other four curriculum leader participants, as faculty leaders, did. Meetings with the external facilitator occurred once a term during the year of data collection, and other middle managers from their faculties accompanied each faculty leader. Julia helped such staff develop their new action plans. She later provided ongoing support as they implemented and reviewed them.

The faculty leader participants unanimously believed that Julia's assistance was invaluable. Melanie found Julia to be supportive and probing during planning sessions; her comments reflect the views of the other participants. She said:

> Julia's been great. I did not feel like I was floundering and did not know what I was doing. She channelled you into it. So she prompted us when we had our meetings – she didn't tell us. She prompted us about things we might not have thought about, making it far more thorough. Her ongoing guidance has been really helpful. It clarifies everything for you.

Other features of Julia's assistance included personal curriculum leader support (a "saving grace" for Chris), strengthening collaborative practice (Joanna), and articulating action plans (Rhys). However, Rhys indicated that Julia's services would not continue beyond Term 1 of the following year.

External facilitation, which focuses on change processes, can be critical in helping leaders understand and plan for change. Such facilitation, especially when other faculty staff are present, can strengthen collaborative practice within a faculty over time. It seems that on-site, ongoing, and responsive external facilitation recognising specific needs will likely be highly valued. Issues might arise, however, when such external support ends, even when the support is still needed.

4.6.4 School-wide Professional Development Sessions

School-wide PD sessions occurred once a fortnight, alternating with faculty time. These "in-house" sessions included workshops, guest speakers, and professional inquiry groups, focusing mainly on teaching and learning practices. Samantha, the senior leader participant, had overall responsibility for leading these. All curriculum leader participants appeared to value the school-wide PD programme. Three participants made mention of it. Melanie, for example, appreciated the opportunity to work with colleagues outside her faculty. She said:

> I've enjoyed working in groups when we've had workshops and things like working with people from different faculties who, perhaps, have different viewpoints or experiences. So going outside your faculty, I've found really refreshing.

Rachel valued the content covered in workshops and by guest speakers because it allowed her department to "discuss things that we've thought about and learned". However, she felt that the professional inquiry groups, led by the CoL leaders, needed more structure and direction. She said, "It can be quite tricky when you've got all the CoL leaders doing different things to find common ground to work on." Samantha (senior leader participant) expressed similar views during her interview, saying:

> The CoL leaders had their focus areas, and although they had carried out good research, it didn't really align with what we're doing. We can't have ten initiatives going simultaneously. Next year, each CoL leader will have a specific area of responsibility aligned to the school's needs.

For Joanna, however, the timetabled PD sessions created logistical problems because of the nature of her faculty. Instead, she created a compromise solution. She explained:

> Our students come to school at the same time professional development takes place … so a lot of my staff aren't there [at the PD sessions) because they need to care for them. So we are putting all the students together with teacher assistants, allowing the teaching staff to attend the fortnightly professional development sessions.

Engaging in a school-wide PD programme appears to be a valuable way for staff to learn with and from each other across subject and faculty divides. Key elements leading to beneficial staff learning with in-school PD include being on-site, supporting active and collaborative learning, and being close to student learning.

These findings suggest that providing both structure and support is critical in enabling leaders to translate their understanding of a shared vision into practice. The four enablers – dedicated faculty time, planning templates, external expertise, and PD – functioned as an interconnected

system rather than isolated factors. Planning templates provided necessary scaffolding for constructing action plans, while fewer, more focused strategic goals allowed for deeper implementation without being overly prescriptive, preserving faculty autonomy. However, the effectiveness of these technical tools was increased by how leaders used dedicated time to build collaborative cultures within their faculties. Notably, faculty structures influenced collaboration patterns, with traditional single-subject faculties achieving greater cohesion than those composed of multiple departments, where departmental priorities sometimes overshadowed faculty-wide initiatives.

External facilitation played a pivotal role in this system by building leadership capacity and strengthening collaborative practices, although questions remain about sustainability once this support ends. School-wide PD created valuable cross-faculty learning opportunities, although implementation challenges emerged in specialised contexts. These findings highlight that successfully translating vision into practice requires well-designed structural elements and intentional leadership practices that cultivate collaboration and ownership. Vision enactment was most successful when leaders used structural supports to foster meaningful professional conversations and shared decision-making, rather than treating them simply as requirements to be fulfilled.

4.7 Needing Support (Inhibitors)

Needing support emerged as a theme because it represented significant challenges and barriers that curriculum leaders encountered when attempting to implement the school vision. This theme captures areas where participants identified gaps in organisational support that hindered their ability to fully realise vision-aligned practices. Understanding these inhibitors provides crucial insight into the conditions necessary for successful vision implementation.

While all curriculum leader participants reported they felt considerable progress had been made in implementing their action plans over the year, the faculty leader participants identified two further support areas they strongly believed were needed. These focused on building their capacity to lead change and creating a cross-curricular collaborative leadership culture.

4.7.1 Building Capacity to Lead Change

The faculty leader participants stated that while they were empowered to make key decisions within their area of responsibility regarding how the school vision was to be implemented, they had not received PD in leading strategic change. For example, Chris said:

> As a head of faculty, I'm being put in a position where I must lead significant changes without adequate professional resources and professional learning behind me. I don't

> feel supported as much as I could. We've got so many initiatives happening, but what worries me is that it has been thrown at the heads of faculty to lead, and if we haven't got it right, we will struggle.

Melanie agreed, giving an example of a significant school initiative that has been a focus for the year. She said, "We cannot be expected to deliver to our staff when we can't do it … project-based learning, for example, how many HoFs know what it involves?"

While Chris acknowledged the competing claims on leaders' time, he felt strongly that building the capacity to lead change was critical for faculty leaders and the SLT. He stated:

> I understand we're time-poor and don't want to create more professional learning. Still, I think what is lacking is professional development in which the heads of faculty and the senior leadership team undergo the same learning at the same time.

While the curriculum leaders were not asked whether they had engaged in personal study programmes to enhance their leadership practice, their general conversation with me suggested this was not the case. These findings suggest curriculum leaders often have the role of leaders because of curriculum expertise. They may not have a background in organisational change processes.

4.7.2 Enabling Cross-curricular Collaborative Leadership

Faculty leader participants were unanimous that opportunities to engage in meaningful discussions with other faculty leaders and the SLT on school-wide plans and progress had been minimal**.** While they acknowledged they met together every three to four weeks in a professional setting, the focus was mainly on operational matters. Melanie's comment captured the frustration of the other faculty leader participants when she said, "For example, six items were on the agenda at the BoS meeting the other night. There were report dates, staffing, and … and it was like, 'What is this?'" Chris added:

> That's an hour and a half of scheduled time in our programme that we could use for some of our professional development. Many of the things we talk about could be sent out through emails or the learning management system.

While attempts had been made earlier in the year for faculties to report on their progress, Rhys remarked, "It happened for two meetings, and then it stopped, so I don't know what X faculty is doing around this goal or that goal – I have zero idea." Melanie agreed and added, "You need to be aware of what's going on in other faculties so you can tap into them, not double up, and [explore opportunities] where you could collaborate more." Joanna felt the current nature of the

meetings only reinforced the siloed nature of the school structure when she said, “We still operate in our little faculty.”

This suggests that leading organisational change across the school requires the SLT to support faculty heads to lead change through meaningful and deep discussions about how to do what matters. Cross-curricular collaborative leadership is more beneficial for curriculum leaders as they aim to achieve school-wide goals.

4.7.3 Role of Senior Leadership

Participants indicated that they noticed a gap between what they were expected to do and the modelling of change and leadership practices from the top. Specifically, they noted that the school leader was not driving school-wide change and that support from individual senior leaders was variable.

Participants observed that the school leader had appeared to delegate responsibility for leading change to a subordinate member of the SLT. For example, Melanie said, “Well, I don’t know who is leading the changes, but Samantha [school leader participant] seems to do a lot of that coordination through [professional development].” Rhys commented, “The principal will talk about exams and this and that, but … there is no [school-wide] collaboration which will have to change if we go down an integrated curriculum approach [next year].” Chris felt the school leader didn’t always appear to be cognisant of what was happening in the classroom, observing that

> sometimes, there is a sense of disengagement [between] our leader and what’s happening within the classroom and the faculties. Quite often, we will get told things by one [subordinate] senior leader only to have them contradicted by the school leader purely through a lack of understanding. This has led to confusion and disharmony.

While each participant had a slightly different focus, they pointed to a gap in strategic leadership direction from the top. They observed that the SLT did not always operate as a cohesive unit, particularly when communicating decisions to staff. As Rachel noted:

> The senior leadership team is trying hard to clarify things and be present and transparent about the process. There was a lot of discussion and feedback sought from staff, but key outcomes were not always clearly communicated, so people were often left unsure of what was happening.

This finding suggests that leading change involves the collective efforts of many school leaders; however, the school leader plays a crucial role in directing the overall change effort. While each faculty was ostensibly managed by one of the SLTs, senior leaders' support in discussing issues

and progress brought mixed responses. Rhys and Rachel both expressed enthusiasm for the support they had received from their respective senior leaders. For example, Rachel said, "I think in our faculty, our 'go to' person [senior leader] is really helpful and very generous with his time." For Joanna, however, "the issue of [me having] time and sometimes hidden agendas [interference]" prevented her from having conversations with her senior leader. Chris sought support from the external facilitator, which he described as his "saving grace".

However, all curriculum leader participants acknowledged that at an operational level, the SLT was approachable, helpful, and had the school's best interest at heart. For example, Joanna said, "One thing about the senior leaders is that they operate an open-door policy, and they will always listen. They are awesome in that respect and will pass you to the next person [if they can't help]."

The findings indicate that while curriculum leader participants have made significant progress in implementing their action plans, they face significant challenges in leading strategic change and fostering cross-curricular collaboration. A notable gap exists between their curriculum expertise and the organisational change management skills needed to translate the vision effectively into practice. This highlights a critical PD need that has been largely unaddressed.

Although collaborative cultures within faculties have been effective in fostering shared understanding and ownership of the school vision, cross-curricular collaboration remains severely limited. The predominantly operational focus of school-wide leadership meetings has reinforced faculty silos rather than breaking them down. Furthermore, participants identified a disconnect in strategic direction from senior leadership, with the school leader appearing disengaged from classroom realities and delegating vision implementation responsibility without clear communication or consistent modelling.

These findings suggest that successful organisational change requires building the capacity of middle leaders and ensuring consistent support and coherent strategic direction from senior leadership. The variable quality of support from individual senior leaders, coupled with apparent communication inconsistencies within the SLT itself, has created confusion and hampered cross-faculty collaboration. This highlights an important distinction between operational and strategic leadership. While operational support was accessible through "open-door" policies, the absence of knowledgeable change leadership and whole-school collaborative structures presented the most significant barriers to enacting the new vision.

4.8 A Senior Leader's Perspective

A senior leader's perspective emerged as a distinctive theme that provides a valuable counterpoint to the faculty-level experiences documented in previous sections. This theme captures the school-wide view of vision implementation, offering insight into the systemic considerations, strategic decision-making processes, and organisational supports that frame curriculum leaders' work. Including this perspective enables a more comprehensive understanding of how vision enactment operates across different levels of school leadership.

Samantha held several key responsibilities for the implementation of the school's strategic/annual plan – a point not lost on her: "Well, I've got a lot of these goals [allocated to me], and there was one time in the year I thought 'hang on, is it me doing the whole annual plan?'" She believed she had been primarily responsible for leading and coordinating the strategic/annual plan implementation, saying, "I think it's me who is trying to conduct the orchestra." Samantha saw the school vision as a beacon that provided direction for the school as it moved forward with its planned goals and actions. She noted, "Sometimes you get side-tracked into things, and you stop for a moment and go, 'actually, is this taking us towards where we said we want to go?'" So, for Samantha, being mindful of the intended outcome of the change process guided her practice.

4.8.1 Being Supported

Samantha said support over the year had come from various sources within and outside the school. For example, she said the SLT had been very supportive, although mainly on an informal basis. There were few formal SLT opportunities to discuss this significant change leadership task. Samantha said she received the most support from the DP, especially regarding the proposed changes to the junior curriculum, which is a significant initiative. She said:

> In talking things through, "Is this the right direction? What should my next step be?" [the Deputy Principal] has been really good with that. He has come to almost all the meetings with the junior curriculum review group, and he doesn't always say very much – he lets me do it – but I know he's there for backup. He's also been part of many school visits.

She added that while the school leader had not been "super hands-on" with the work she was doing with the junior curriculum review, "he's been open to the ideas, and he's been listening, and certainly, once we got to the stage of putting forward the [next year's timetable] proposal, he's been really supportive about me presenting that".

Samantha highlighted the team of people who had been a part of the curriculum lead group, saying:

> That group of middle leaders who are interested and want to be involved has been supportive and helpful and has done a lot of the groundwork. For example, [one member] organised the trip to Christchurch and the school visits, and I didn't have to do all the nuts and bolts. So I could focus on the questions and what we wanted to find out, and she did all the practicalities.

External support came from an MoE expert in curriculum design who helped Samantha understand the process of redesigning a junior curriculum. She explained: "I did have somebody from the Ministry [of Education] come in and talk through curriculum design because that's one of her areas of expertise. It was good to go back and look at how to do this process."

Further support came from the external facilitator: "I've had regular meetings with Julia … and when we presented the different proposals [for the following year], [she shared] strategies on how to get feedback from people without one person dominating the discussion."

While Samantha received support from various sources, she noted the absence of direct and cohesive support from the school leader and SLT colleagues. This confirms the curriculum leader participants' view that the school leader and a unified SLT were not driving the school-wide change effort.

4.8.2 Providing Faculty Support

Samantha explained that each senior leader was allocated faculties for oversight and support. She noted two important ways senior leaders could support their allocated faculties as they enacted the vision: first, visiting their faculties during the fortnightly faculty sessions to discuss and review progress, and second, attending meetings with their allocated faculty leaders when they met with the external facilitator.

Samantha described how she used the fortnightly faculty sessions, saying:

> In those faculty PD sessions, I go to my different faculties – not just the one I teach in. I've been to XX faculty quite a few times, and I sat in with them and tried to understand how things work in XX. I have also been to the YY faculty. Sitting in on meetings and seeing how things are going is a very worthwhile use of my time.

Samantha also attended her allocated faculty leaders' meetings with the external facilitator each term. She remarked:

> This has been really valuable because we've looked at the annual plan, which has given us a chance to go into quite some detail about how far they've got [with their action

> plans]. If they said they would do this in Term 1, it is a check: "Have you done that?" That's accountability.

With funding not being available to secure the services of the external facilitator beyond Term 1 of the following year, Samantha believed that it was vital for the senior leaders to step into that role, suggesting that

> it will be very important that the senior leaders keep going with what [the external facilitator] would have done. At least once a term, they need to meet with their HoFs. They [SLT] need to go through their [HoFs] work – where they are up to, what they need, and what's next. This needs to be a priority.

Samantha added that the SLT needed to meet, ideally once a term, to discuss the work of their respective faculties and what they are seeing and hearing: "It's about keeping us accountable as well."

At the cross-curricular level, Samantha identified two areas where further support could be given. These were creating a leaders' forum for sharing ideas and providing PD on leading change. The faculty head participants highlighted both these areas, as reported earlier.

Samantha believed the BoS meetings, where HoFs meet with the SLT every three to four weeks, are a place for discussing, monitoring, and coordinating the implementation of the annual plan. She observed that

> the intention was for BoS meetings to have more discussion and PD focus, but that didn't happen. They ended up going back to a list of admin-type things. So, for me, we need to change how we are doing these meetings because that's our one time together.

Regarding PD time for building change management capacity, Samantha said:

> This year, I haven't focused enough on ensuring that the HoFs have PD or a discussion on how to lead what we ask them to lead. So I need to somehow work in other times when we can get HoFs and SLT together – learning together – because HoFs have to lead things they don't know about, putting them in a really difficult position.

Senior leaders have a critical role to play, both individually and collectively, in providing ongoing support to curriculum leaders that will enable schools to achieve the strategic/annual goals. This is particularly important when external facilitation cannot continue indefinitely, and the SLT must take on that role. This raises the question of how prepared and qualified the senior leaders are to take over that role.

4.8.3 Reviewing School-wide Progress

Samantha explained that discussions around the school-wide implementation of the annual goals plan occurred during the regular scheduled senior leadership meetings rather than meetings designated for the task, which she felt had been "a little bit tick boxy – just going through 'what have we done' at a mid-year point and towards the end of the year". However, she added:

> I guess the most meaningful discussion came at the end when we were working on the [following year's] annual plan – "Okay, what of this has worked, what can we put to one side, what do we need to continue to focus on." But by then, it's a bit too late.

Samantha's observation indicates that timing is important. If the end of the year is "a bit too late", the SLT may need to change when and how they collect evidence of progress and what they do with it to enhance future decision-making.

While reviewing the progress of vision enactment via the school's annual goals plan, I noticed that while the progress seemed well established at the faculty level, some challenges were evident at a school-wide level regarding timeliness and process.

The role of the SLT in driving school-wide change emerges as both crucial and problematic. Samantha's experience as the de facto change leader ("conducting the orchestra") highlights a concentration of responsibility without corresponding authority or support. This reflects earlier observations from curriculum leaders about senior leadership's absence of unified strategic direction. The school leader's limited engagement ("not super hands-on") and the lack of formal SLT opportunities to discuss major change initiatives created a leadership vacuum Samantha attempted to fill, often with support from individual colleagues rather than the collective leadership team.

As external facilitation nears its end, senior leaders are expected to continuously support curriculum leaders, raising significant concerns about their readiness, qualification, and capacity to assume this responsibility. Samantha herself identified key leadership deficiencies that reflect those raised by faculty leaders: the need to change the BoS from operational "admin-type things" into a strategic forum and the crucial need for PD on leading change for HoFs who are asked to "lead things they don't know about".

Moreover, while faculty-level implementation appears well-structured, school-wide oversight faces significant challenges in timing and process. The "tick-boxy" approach to annual plan reviews and the delayed meaningful discussions ("by then, it's a bit too late") suggest that strategic review processes are reactive rather than proactive. These findings indicate that

successful vision implementation requires operational leadership, synchronised strategic oversight, properly timed review processes, and deliberate capacity building at all leadership levels.

4.9 Conclusion

The findings reveal that developing a shared vision was central to initiating meaningful change within the school. The collaborative ownership fostered by this vision appeared to create alignment across faculties, yet transitioning from vision to practice seemed to require more structured support and strategic leadership than was evident from the transcripts.

Leadership emerges as a crucial bridge between these layers. However, the findings reveal gaps in the capacity of curriculum leaders, highlighting the need for targeted PD and senior leadership support to foster greater change management expertise. While some progress has been made in fostering a collective sense of responsibility, further investment in capacity building will be essential to ensure sustainable school-wide change.

Additionally, efforts to embed school values into academic and personal development have improved student engagement and classroom management. However, the shift towards creating a student-centred learning environment aligned with New Zealand's bicultural identity and emphasising future-ready capabilities continues to face challenges, particularly in breaking away from traditional assessment models. Strategic planning and coordinated efforts across leadership levels will be vital in ensuring the success of these initiatives.

The findings highlight the importance of vision-building and the structures, leadership, and capacity-building required to bring that vision to life. The next chapter discusses the significance of these findings.

Chapter Five: Discussion

5.1 Introduction

This study examined how curriculum/middle leaders in a traditional secondary school in AoNZ undertook to enact the cultural/pedagogical change expected of a new school vision.

The research questions guiding this study are:

RQ1. How do a school's structural and cultural contexts create opportunities and constraints for curriculum leaders as they work to embed the school's vision?

RQ2. How do curriculum leaders engage with and experience the process of collaborative vision-making?

RQ3. How do curriculum leaders interpret and translate the school's vision in their specific contexts?

RQ4. What conditions inhibit/enable curriculum leaders to translate these school vision perspectives into actions?

The Findings chapter analysed data from the curriculum leaders and one senior leader. This Discussion chapter combines key ideas from the findings and interprets them with key ideas from the literature review. Drawing on the Findings (Chapter Four) and Introduction (Chapter One), I have framed the Discussion chapter around three key elements – context (RQ1), vision work (RQ2 & RQ3), and mediating conditions (RQ4) as a lens for exploring the opportunities and constraints curriculum (middle) leaders face when interpreting and translating their school's vision into actions. As noted above, each of these elements will address the research questions. The final section makes key recommendations for the school and participants. I conclude by discussing this research's limitations and strengths and offering suggestions for future research.

As established in my Literature Review (Chapter 2, Section 2.3), Ball et al.'s (2012) Theory of Enactment reconceptualises educational change as interpretation and translation rather than linear implementation. This framework is particularly apt for analysing Braemar Academy's (pseudonym) vision enactment because it captures three critical aspects of the change process my findings revealed: how curriculum leaders actively interpreted the vision's language within their professional contexts (interpretive dimension), how specific school structures and cultures enabled or constrained their capacity to act (material dimension), and how practices and discourses became normalised - or resisted - within the school (discursive dimension).

Applying this lens to my findings reveals that change at Braemar Academy (pseudonym) emerged not from top-down directives but through curriculum leaders' complex negotiation of the vision within their specific faculty contexts. The following sections examine how contextual factors (5.2), vision work (5.3), and mediating conditions (5.4) shaped this enactment process, demonstrating why the same school vision was enacted differently across faculties and why certain changes took hold while others faltered. This analysis moves beyond describing what happened to explain *how* and *why* change unfolded as it did through the lens of enactment theory.

5.2 Context

As noted in the literature review, Ball et al. (2012) contended that school-specific contextual factors strongly shape and influence policies, creating limitations, pressures, or opportunities in the enactment process. This view is echoed by Harris (2020), who described the everyday experience of leaders at all levels as being the pull and push of context. Just as policies can fail when they do not account for schools' diverse realities, a school vision can falter when it does not consider the local context. This aligns with what Courtney et al. (2021) identified as the contextual element of critical scholarship, emphasising that educational knowledge and practice exist within specific historical and geographical conditions shaped by ideological, cultural, and political factors.

The research context of Braemar Academy (Chapter 1, Section 1.2) demonstrates something of this interplay of opportunities and constraints. Structurally, the school benefits from significant opportunities: strong governance, stable leadership and staffing, well-resourced ICT infrastructure, and the autonomy afforded by the NZC (2007) and NCEA framework. However, these opportunities exist within a competitive educational environment driven by neoliberal policies prioritising measurable outcomes over innovation. This reflects what Ball (2003) describes as performativity, where market-oriented policies create a regime of accountability that shapes leadership decisions and institutional priorities. The school's traditional organisational structure, characterised by rigid timetabling and hierarchical leadership, further appeared to constrain efforts to transform pedagogical approaches.

Culturally, the school's shift towards greater demographic diversity and its strategic repositioning as an “inclusive educational community” (Chapter 4, Section 5.3) created opportunities for change even as these aspirations conflicted with deeply embedded institutional practices centred on academic performance and traditional transmissive teaching methods. Both elements may prove difficult to shift or evolve, especially with long-established staff comfortable in their current situations. This cultural-structural tension is reflected in

several ways, such as the rigid timetabling structure, with its fixed periods and subject boundaries, reinforced faculty/departmental silos, and limited opportunities for cross-disciplinary learning or flexible grouping that might better serve diverse learners. As Samantha (the senior leader overseeing all faculties) observed, assessment-driven teaching practices have become entrenched in some faculties – a pattern sustained by both the structural organisation of teaching allocations and a deeply rooted cultural belief and practice that traditional methods best serve academic outcomes. In some faculties, assessment appeared to be treated as more important than the values and practices extolled in the front half of the NZC.

The hierarchical leadership structure of the school appeared to compound this challenge. While intended to provide clear lines of authority and ensure accountability, this structure seemed to inadvertently reinforce cultural resistance to change by concentrating decision-making power among those most likely invested in maintaining traditional approaches. This illustrates the power dynamics that Courtney et al. (2021) positioned as central to understanding educational environments, where all stakeholders operate within complex matrices of power relations that both enable and constrain their actions.

As reported in the introductory chapter (Chapter 1, Section 1.2), student feedback highlighting the limitations of direct instruction suggests their readiness for change. The pressure of league tables and national assessments, combined with faculty/departmental structures limiting teacher collaboration and experimentation, appeared to create a self-reinforcing cycle of traditional practice. As Harris (2020) noted, “For school leaders, at all levels, context and culture infused by power and micro-politics are immovable factors in any improvement effort” (p. 1) – a reality evident in how Braemar's structural arrangements reflect and sustain its conservative pedagogical culture.

Braemar Academy's experience illustrates how enacting a school vision requires more than policy directives or strategic planning; it demands an astute awareness of local structural and cultural realities. As Courtney et al. (2021) argued, context is foundational to critical educational scholarship, requiring researchers and practitioners to explicitly acknowledge how contextual influences shape educational processes and outcomes. While the school has the autonomy and resources to implement change, external policy pressures and internal traditions create competing demands. As Leithwood et al. (2020) contended, "Effective school leaders understand and respond appropriately to the different contextual demands that they face" (p. 9). The challenge, therefore, is not simply in developing a vision but in navigating the specific contextual factors that determine whether that vision can be meaningfully enacted. This reflects what Ball (2003) identified as the complex interplay between agency and structure in educational

settings, where leaders must negotiate the tensions between external policy pressures and their own institutional values and practices.

5.3 Vision Work

5.3.1 Vision Creation

Engaging all stakeholders in the strategic review process ensures that everyone owns, shares, and understands the school's vision and strategic direction (Kools & Stoll, 2017; Kose, 2011; Torre & Murphy, 2016). The findings confirm that revising the school vision at Braemar Academy involved the active participation of all staff members and key community stakeholders, including parents, caregivers, and students. The participants felt that the inclusive nature of the strategic review process augured well for the implementation phase as they were less likely to encounter resistance from faculty colleagues and more likely to engage them over the longer term because there was greater "buy-in" (Kools & Stoll, 2017).

While my research focused on middle leaders' perspectives, it is important to note that the BoT sought the perspectives and aspirations of all teaching staff, non-teaching staff, students, and parents/caregivers during the strategic review. A key characteristic of a truly shared vision is the sense of connection and commitment by the people most closely affected (Senge, 2006). Implicit here is that an inclusive, participatory process for revising the school vision leads to greater buy-in, engagement, and commitment from all stakeholders. By ensuring that the vision reflects the values and aspirations of teachers, non-teaching staff, students, and parents, the school is more likely to create a culture of collaboration, shared responsibility, and long-term commitment to achieving the goals set out in the vision.

5.3.2 Engaging with Vision Language

In their Theory of Enactment (Chapter 2, Section 2.2.3), Ball et al. (2012) framed policy enactment as a dual process of interpretation and translation. Interpretation involves making meaning of policy language, while translation involves the concrete actions and practices that put policy into effect. This framework offers valuable insights into vision enactment, as school visions, like policies, require interpretation and translation into practice. I examined how the curriculum leader participants interpreted the vision statement through professional experiences and the school's cultural-historical context. This interpretive process aligns with social constructivist theory, where meaning emerges through lived experiences and social interactions (Boyland, 2019; Cohen et al., 2018; Lincoln et al., 2011).

The findings (Chapter 4, Section 4.4) support this theoretical perspective. Participants highlighted the pivotal role of professional experiences, discussions, and readings in making

sense of the language of the school vision. Interactions with others, whether through lived experiences with high-needs individuals or discussions with colleagues within and beyond their faculties, were significant. This collaborative process, which reflects core tenets of social constructivism, was a key factor in their knowledge creation. It should also have featured how senior school leaders worked with the whole staff to foster appreciation of the new vision and help its enactment and embedding in the school's cultural practices. However, very few concerted and deliberate senior leadership group efforts to foster this were evident during the year of data gathering. Despite this limited leadership engagement, the participants proceeded to interpret the meaning of the vision statement.

The revised school vision statement (Chapter 4, Section 4.4) was based on several aspirational goals that reflected what the school's community stakeholders hoped the school would become. It incorporated *inclusiveness, equity,* and *excellence,* key terms central to ERO's (2016) evaluation framework for AoNZ schools, which reflected the current sociopolitical educational aspirations. These additions aligned with longstanding educational policies addressing social inequities (Bolstad et al., 2012) and appeared to be influenced by the school's (at that time) most recent ERO review.

Inclusiveness is underpinned by the notion of diversity. Contemporary literature on diversity in education reflects an important paradigm shift, from viewing diversity as a disparity to address to recognising it as a strength to actively cultivate (Bolstad et al., 2012; OECD, 2023). This perspective emphasises preparing students to engage with diverse cultural, linguistic, and ideological perspectives. While the curriculum leader participants demonstrated awareness of their community's diversity and the importance of addressing individual needs, their perspectives primarily focused on identifying and managing rather than leveraging diversity as a pedagogical resource (Chapter Four, Section 4.4). Moreover, their interpretation of inclusivity remained largely student-centred, overlooking broader community engagement. This contrasts with research and best practices which emphasise the value of collaborative partnerships between schools, families, and communities in shaping education for diverse needs (Boutte & Johnson, 2014; Kools & Stoll, 2016) and fostering student success (Kose, 2011; Torre & Murphy, 2016). This gap may suggest the need for a more comprehensive approach across the school that not only recognises diversity but actively cultivates it as an educational asset through genuine collaborative partnerships with the wider school community.

While closely linked to their views on inclusiveness and diversity, participants' understanding of *equity* revealed differing interpretations of how it should be achieved. Some, like Joanna, advocated for differentiated support, particularly for special needs students requiring "more opportunities" to achieve similar outcomes. Rachel emphasised adaptive teaching practices

through autonomy, scaffolding, and managing challenging behaviours. Rhys and Melanie, however, aligned equity with fairness and "same opportunities" while acknowledging different pathways to achievement. These perspectives reflect broader cultural debates about defining and implementing equity in education (Levinson et al., 2022; OECD, 2018; Sahlberg, 2022), highlighting leaders' challenges in fostering shared understanding among their faculty. Despite these differences, participants agreed that effectively addressing diversity is essential for achieving equitable educational outcomes. While addressing equity remained a key focus, the vision statement equally emphasised excellence as another crucial dimension of student success.

Participants interpreted *excellence* broadly, encompassing academic, social, cultural, sporting, and competency achievements (Chapter Four, Section 4.4). However, this holistic view contrasts with dominant national and international interpretations that primarily measure excellence through academic outcomes (Australian Council for Educational Research, 2019; Ministry of Education, Singapore, 2019; O'Grady et al., 2019). In AoNZ, excellence is commonly linked with success in external examination results and reflects how parents interpret a school's value, along with perceptions about the geography of certain postcodes. My participants acknowledged the challenges of measuring non-academic outcomes, a limitation that often leads teachers to prioritise measurable achievements. While recent research signals growing interest in non-academic dimensions (Bjorklund-Young, 2016; Boon-Falleur et al., 2020; Egalite et al., 2016; Garcia, 2014), participants struggled to balance their commitment to holistic development with performative school culture demands. Nevertheless, they maintained that nurturing holistic student growth was essential for developing capabilities for future citizenship. This holistic view of excellence aligned closely with the school's emphasis on developing key capabilities in students.

Participants emphasised the need to develop resilient, adaptable learners for an “ever-changing world” (Chapter Four, Section 4.4). They identified capabilities such as problem-solving, critical thinking, communication, and collaboration, which align with NZC values (MoE, 2007), as essential for this development. While participants viewed capabilities as transferable skills applicable across varying contexts, they did not deeply explore the term's meaning.

The research literature broadly supports these perspectives, although it offers more nuanced terminology distinctions between “capabilities” and “competencies” as previously discussed (Hipkins, 2018; OECD, 2018). Despite these varying terminology preferences, both concepts emphasise applying knowledge and skills in unfamiliar situations, aligning with the participants' interpretations and the school's vision of preparing learners for an uncertain future.

Beyond capabilities and competencies, the vision statement emphasised the importance of values in preparing students for their roles in a complex, unpredictable world. Values are foundational beliefs that shape ethical decision-making, social cohesion, and responsible citizenship. They are integral to developing knowledge, skills, and agency within curriculum frameworks (MoE, 2007; OECD, 2018, 2023) and appeared to be important at Braemar, where Samantha (senior leader) confirmed that values were deeply embedded in all school life and visually represented through classroom posters. These artefacts exemplify Ball et al.'s (2012) concept of the discursive aspect of policy enactment, functioning as tools that integrate the school's ethos into daily practices without explicit enforcement.

While Samantha explicitly connected values to broader ethical thinking and capability development for life beyond school, the curriculum leader participants primarily associated values with behavioural expectations and classroom management. This tension between immediate behavioural outcomes and long-term ethical development reflects a broader challenge in fully translating the school's vision into practice throughout the school.

While my participants addressed the key aspirational goals underlying the school vision, none articulated an overall picture or image of what the school or students would look like if the key stakeholders worked together to realise the vision. This contrasts with Pekarsky's (2007) assertion that a vision should give stakeholders a detailed picture of their destination and progress markers. Similarly, scholars argue that a concrete image of the desired future empowers a vision to unite and motivate the school community (Caldwell & Spinks, 1992; Gurley et al., 2014). This absence of a concrete shared mental image may undermine the school's ability to establish new cultural practices aligned with its vision, as stakeholders lack a common destination to work towards or meaningful benchmarks to gauge their progress. Without this detailed picture that Pekarsky and other scholars deem essential, decision-making may risk becoming become fragmented, potentially leading to conflicting priorities that hinder the school community's ability to translate their aspirational goals into cohesive, coordinated action.

Despite their involvement in revising the vision statement (vision making), participants noted limited opportunities for ongoing, school-wide discussions about its meaning. This gap reflects Leithwood's (2012) emphasis on why it is important for leaders to consistently communicate the vision, even with those involved in its development. The participants' difficulties articulating a cohesive vision may suggest insufficient leadership attention to fostering a shared understanding of the values and capabilities they wished students to develop before leaving school and how to achieve them. Hobsonville Point Secondary School (Chapter Two, Section 2.7.3) provided one example of articulating a vision’s aspirations with concrete actions for

learners. Potentially, this might have been useful for Braemar Academy leaders to have used as inspiration for reviewing their own practices as they sought to change.

5.3.3 Translating into Action

Having examined how curriculum leaders interpret the vision, I now turn to how they translate this interpretation into practice. Ball et al. (2012) described translation as the tactical work of turning policy statements into tangible actions, routines, and practices. This section examines how curriculum leaders undertook this process, from making sense of the school vision's language to embedding its principles into their daily work. Their efforts to bring the vision's ambitious goals to life reveal the challenges and opportunities of turning aspiration into meaningful educational practice.

Equity and Excellence

As highlighted in the findings (Chapter Four, Section 4.5.1), all five curriculum leaders regarded fostering a student-centred learning environment as essential for achieving equity and excellence. For these leaders, equity meant ensuring all students could access and succeed in academic learning, regardless of their starting points or backgrounds. This commitment presented a challenge: balancing the school's long-standing emphasis on academic standards and increasing focus on student agency. Rather than viewing these as competing priorities, the participants sought to integrate them, employing deliberate strategies to ensure that academic rigour and student agency could coexist.

Chris's approach to NCEA demonstrates how structural changes can support equity and excellence in education. By questioning the assumption that Year 10 students must learn Level 1 content, he advocated for a "pared-back curriculum" to provide all students with opportunities to master foundational skills and engage more deeply with core concepts. This approach to equity, defined here as creating conditions where all learners have access to appropriate learning experiences, may better position students, particularly those who might struggle with premature exposure to advanced content, to tackle challenging academic work in subsequent years. This perspective aligns with Fullan et al.'s (2017) framework of deep learning, which suggests that when educational systems create conditions for all learners to develop key competencies, the potential for excellence – measured through stronger and more meaningful learning outcomes – increases for all students.

Rachel and Melanie's culturally responsive approaches demonstrated how equity and excellence could be mutually reinforcing. Rachel enabled senior students to overlap their courses and engage in culturally significant projects (Chapter Four, Section 4.5.1), which was more likely to result in equitable access to learning while maintaining high standards. Similarly, Melanie

leveraged students' cultural knowledge to create authentic NCEA assessment opportunities, showing how valuing diverse perspectives can enhance academic achievement. These approaches align with research showing that students learn more easily and thoroughly when academic knowledge and skills are situated within their lived experiences and frames of reference (Gay, 2000; Berryman et al., 2018; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; ERO, 2016), making learning both equitable and academically rigorous.

Rachel's implementation of SOLO taxonomy (Biggs & Collis, 1982; Hook & Mills, 2011) with junior students and Joanna's faculty's use of individually designed learning plans and PATH programmes (Chapter Four, Section 4.5.) illustrate equity-focused practices that combine structured frameworks with increasing student autonomy. These approaches maintain high academic expectations while providing differentiated support, creating pathways for all students, including those with diverse learning needs, to meaningfully engage with challenging content. This balance between structure and agency aligns with Mitchell's (2020) evidence-based strategies for inclusive education, demonstrating how targeted pedagogical frameworks can empower every student to access academic success regardless of their starting point.

Each faculty's approach illustrated how intentional strategies could advance equity and excellence through student agency, even if the approaches differed widely. While some leaders/participants focused on rethinking curriculum structures to ensure all students could access deep learning (Chris), others emphasised culturally responsive pedagogy (Rachel and Melanie) or individualised support systems (Rachel and Joanna). Faculty planning documents revealed regular monitoring of academic progress and equitable outcomes through various data sources, including assessment results, student self-evaluations, and engagement surveys across different student groups. This systematic approach to tracking and evaluating outcomes demonstrated that increasing equity through student autonomy and responsive practices enhanced rather than compromised academic standards. By rethinking academic achievement through an equity-focused, student-centred lens, curriculum leaders translated the school's vision for equity and excellence into practice.

Capabilities and Values

All participants agreed that prioritising capabilities with specific content knowledge was essential for preparing students to be future-ready (Chapter Four, Section 4.5.2). They saw capabilities as complementing, rather than replacing, traditional subject knowledge, recognising that a strong foundation in content supports critical thinking, problem-solving, and adaptability. However, not all faculties embraced this shift, with some continuing to prioritise assessment-driven, content-heavy, transmission-focused approaches. This highlighted an ongoing tension between traditional knowledge transmission and the development of broader competencies

(Scott, 2015). Despite these challenges, the findings suggest that embedding capabilities into curriculum design ensures all students have equitable opportunities to develop essential skills. This aligns with international frameworks (OECD, 2018; Peterson-Badali et al., 2023; Quinn et al., 2019). While the NZC (MoE, 2007) has long emphasised key competencies, research indicates that barriers to implementation persist (Fadel et al., 2015; McDowall & Hipkins, 2018). The school's vision and strategic goals explicitly referenced capabilities, likely explaining the renewed focus despite these longstanding challenges.

PBL was the key approach for integrating capabilities with subject knowledge, supporting future-ready skills, and promoting student choice and autonomy (Chapter Four, Section 4.5.2). However, the assumption that group work naturally fosters collaboration appeared problematic as, without explicit scaffolding, teamwork was often inconsistent. Additionally, the uncoordinated scheduling of PBL led to "fatigue" among students, raising concerns about sustaining engagement over time. Despite these hurdles, the senior leader (Samantha) reported steady progress in embedding PBL, supported by structured review processes led by a specialist classroom teacher. The findings reinforce PBL as a powerful student-centred model for capability development, fostering critical thinking, communication, collaboration, and self-management. Literature supports this, characterising PBL as an effective way to cultivate learner agency, inquiry, goal setting, and real-world problem-solving (Kokotsaki et al., 2016; Mergendoller, 2018; Scott, 2015). However, successful implementation requires careful planning, including explicit support for group work (Kokotsaki et al., 2016) and better coordination across faculties to prevent overuse. Two key implications emerged from this case study (1) PBL provides meaningful opportunities for students to develop future-ready capabilities, and (2) its success depends on addressing challenges in group work facilitation and whole-school curriculum planning.

Some curriculum leaders proposed integrating learning areas to strengthen the link between capabilities and disciplinary knowledge and encourage deeper student inquiry. Two curriculum leader participants supported this shift but had differing views on implementing it. Rhys advocated a fully integrated subject, while Chris preferred a cross-curricular PBL model. However, resistance from other faculty leaders suggested that successful integration would require careful change management. The findings indicate that curriculum integration can enhance student inquiry by linking disciplines around relevant, real-world themes. This aligns with literature supporting interdisciplinary approaches in 21st-century education (McDowall & Hipkins, 2019; McPhail, 2020; Scott, 2015). However, interpretations of curriculum integration vary widely, requiring clarity in theory and practice (McPhail, 2017). Since the school was still in the early stages of exploring integration, establishing a strong theoretical foundation and

providing targeted PD would be crucial for success. If carefully structured, curriculum integration could complement PBL by embedding capabilities within rich disciplinary learning, strengthening the connection between knowledge and its application in complex, real-world contexts.

While school values were consistently reinforced through behavioural expectations, they appeared to remain only marginally integrated into deeper learning experiences. Most faculties prioritised behavioural compliance over a more holistic approach that recognises how values fundamentally influence students' choices, judgements, and actions, despite evidence that integrating values education throughout the curriculum enhances academic and personal growth (Berkowitz et al., 2017).

However, isolated examples, such as Rhys's Year 9 study of national identities and Melanie's business case studies, illustrate how values can enrich curriculum learning beyond mere behavioural guidelines. The challenge of bridging the gap between aspirational values statements and meaningful student development through deliberate curriculum integration reflects broader discussions in the literature. Halstead and Pike (2006) highlighted the role of multiple curriculum subjects in fostering moral and civic education, advocating for a curriculum that embeds values holistically across disciplines. The OECD (2021) further stresses the necessity for such integration, arguing that intentionally embedding values across educational curricula is vital for shaping positive lifelong learning outcomes and contributing to a more equitable society. These perspectives reinforce that values education should extend beyond behavioural expectations to meaningfully shape students' ethical and intellectual development through comprehensive curriculum integration. Therefore, schools must move beyond treating values as mere behavioural guidelines towards purposefully integrating them into the curriculum across all disciplines, creating learning experiences that develop not only students' knowledge and skills but also their capacity to think critically about ethical dimensions and apply values meaningfully in their day-to-day school activities and lives beyond school.

The findings appear to reveal progress and ongoing challenges in translating the school's vision into curriculum practice, particularly balancing academic excellence with equity, student agency, and future-ready capabilities. Curriculum leaders have successfully implemented student-centred strategies, demonstrating that academic excellence and student agency coexist when supported by deliberate structural and pedagogical changes. Integrating capabilities through PBL shows promise, but success depends on better cross-faculty coordination and explicit scaffolding of collaborative skills. Similarly, curriculum integration offers the potential for strengthening links between capabilities and disciplinary knowledge, though its success will require careful change management and a clear theoretical foundation. While school values are

embedded in behavioural expectations, their role in deeper learning experiences remains untapped, presenting an opportunity for more intentional integration across subjects.

Effective Teacher Profile

The findings (Chapter Four, Section 4.5.4) on implementing the ETP provide valuable insights into how teaching frameworks are experienced and adapted in practice. The ETP (drawn from the work of Bishop and Berryman, 2009) identified five dimensions – *manaakitanga*, *whanaungatanga*, *ako*, *wānanga*, and *tangata whenuatanga* – that characterised an effective teacher at Braemar Academy. These dimensions encompass core pedagogical values: *manaakitanga* (demonstrating integrity and respect), *whanaungatanga* (building respectful relationships), *ako* (reciprocal teaching and learning responsibility), *wānanga* (engaging in meaningful dialogue with learners and communities), and *tangata whenuatanga* (affirming learners' cultural identity and context). They collectively form a culturally responsive framework that guides teacher practice. *Manaakitanga* and *tangata whenuatanga* were the dimensions intended to be a focus during the year of data collection.

All participants spoke of how the school's ETP, taken from the *Te Kotahitanga Effective Teaching Profile* (Bishop & Berryman, 2009) underpinned by a culturally responsive focus, had provided them with a framework to guide teaching practices in their faculties. They understood that culturally responsive pedagogy involves actively engaging students by drawing on their identity, language and culture to create meaningful and contextualised learning experiences (Berryman et al., 2018; Brown-Jeffy & Cooper, 2011; ERO, 2016). This aligns with literature globally and in New Zealand that advocates for such teaching approaches to address equity and create more inclusive schools (Berryman et al., 2018; Morrison et al., 2019; Schlanger, 2018).

While the ETP observation tool received mixed responses about how well it improved teaching practice, participants consistently valued the professional conversations that followed observations more than the tool's technical aspects. This finding aligns with Timperley (2015), who found that effective professional conversations develop relationships characterised by "trust, openness, challenge and mutual respect" (p. 52) that enhance participants' sense of agency to improve practice. The participants' preference for dialogue over technical tools suggests that these conversations created what Timperley described as "enabling relationships" that support authentic professional growth.

These findings are significant because they highlight how structured frameworks like the ETP can facilitate the critical examination of teaching and learning through a culturally responsive lens that validates and reflects students' diverse identities and experiences. Such examination is essential in addressing issues of equity and inclusiveness.

5.4 Mediating Conditions

5.4.1 Inhibitors

This section examines both inhibitors and enablers in the change process that the curriculum leaders embarked on. First, the findings highlighted three main challenges that curriculum leader participants felt impeded their ability to enact the revised school vision: understanding and managing change processes, limited professional dialogue across faculties, and insufficient senior leadership engagement in driving the school-wide change effort. From there, four key enablers are outlined. To begin with, the three inhibitors are discussed in turn.

Understanding and Managing Change

As noted in the Literature Review (Chapter Two, Section 2.6.1), when middle leaders are granted decision-making autonomy, they need to be provided with appropriate capacity-building tools to succeed in distributed leadership roles (Solly, 2018). Senior school leaders need to identify and provide the support needed (Iannini, 2019). While it is possible that senior leaders in some schools do not take this role seriously enough, my findings revealed that the curriculum leader participants were empowered to make key decisions about implementing the school vision in their faculty/department. However, as highlighted by Chris and Melanie (Chapter Four, Section 4.7.1), they had not received specific PD or support within the school that built their capacity to lead change despite having access to an external change agent. Further, they both expressed concern about implementing key initiatives (e.g., PBL) without adequate knowledge, for they worried about the impact this might have on student outcomes if initiatives were improperly executed. Chris added that he felt unprepared to manage other leadership challenges, such as dealing with staff resistant to change. Both Chris and Melanie highlighted what appears to be a broader systemic issue - a laissez-faire approach to building change management capacity at the middle leadership level despite significant expectations for leading transformation.

Studies in the field of middle leadership highlight the limited amount of PD, resources, and learning support available to middle leaders when undertaking the leadership aspects of their role (Cardno et al., 2018; Day & Grice, 2018; Gurr & Drysdale, 2013; Highfield, 2017). This particularly applies to AoNZ, where the lack of externally led middle leadership programmes leaves individual schools or leaders responsible for building leadership capacity. The literature review chapter (Section 2.7.3, p.44) discusses examples of individual schools' efforts to build middle leadership capacity. These included in-school mentoring (ERO, 2018), structured induction programmes for middle leaders (Wright, 2018), and future-focused leadership development programmes (Amos, 2014). However, also noted in the literature review, the MoE

(2024) supports individuals in personal study to grow their leadership knowledge. The findings reveal that none of the participants appeared to take up that opportunity.

Implementing a new school vision requires significant changes in teaching and learning practices. Such complex changes demand sustained support and careful management to ensure successful implementation and embedding. While the curriculum leader participants had been given autonomy to lead these changes, they had not received adequate professional learning targeting change processes. This gap suggests that senior leaders may have underestimated either the complexity of the change process or the specific support middle leaders would need to lead it successfully. Alternatively, these same senior leaders, as a whole, may not have considered how their own actions could positively affect outcomes in this regard if they undertook an active, supportive stance in the change process. As noted in Chapter Two (Section 2.7.1), senior leadership investment in middle leadership capacity provides several benefits: strengthened strategic coherence (Hitt & Tucker, 2016), more consistent implementation of initiatives (Leithwood et al., 2020), enhanced middle leader change management capability (Thorpe & Bennett-Powell, 2014), and deeper staff commitment to change efforts (Harris & Jones, 2017).

These findings suggest that school leaders need to more actively prioritise structured, targeted PD for middle leaders to successfully enact a shared school vision and drive significant shifts in learning culture. This requires an investment in targeted PD that equips middle leaders with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to navigate the challenges of implementing school-wide changes. Strengthening middle leadership ensures autonomy aligns with capability, safeguarding staff engagement and student outcomes. Such support can also enhance the overall capacity of middle leaders to tackle future change initiatives to support both the school and its students in achieving positive outcomes.

Professional Dialogue Across Faculties

Middle leaders play a pivotal role in the centre of the school hierarchy, mediating between senior leaders and faculty staff (Bassett, 2016). This position makes them crucial conduits for vertical and horizontal communication within schools, highlighting the importance of regular, meaningful collaboration between middle and senior leaders. Such collaborative opportunities are essential for collective reflection on school vision, reviewing progress, and maintaining coherence across different faculties (Wylie & McKinley, 2018).

However, at Braemar Academy, curriculum leaders reported limited opportunities for meaningful cross-faculty professional discourse (Chapter Four, Section 4.7.2). While regular leadership meetings occurred every three to four weeks, these sessions primarily focused on

operational matters rather than strategic discussions or PD. Chris highlighted this inefficiency, noting that many administrative items could be handled through ICT tools, potentially freeing up valuable face-to-face time for more substantive professional dialogue.

Rhys and Melanie were concerned that there was neither space nor opportunity for faculties to share progress about how they were meeting the new goals. Avoiding duplication but fostering cross-faculty collaboration was seen as important. Joanna's observation that "we still operate in our little faculty" captures the persistent challenge of faculty/departmental silos that these operational meetings reinforced rather than dismantled. Research suggests this “siloed effect” can be overcome through intentional cross-faculty communication structures and collaborative cultures that promote organisational coherence (DuFour et al., 2010; Jensen et al., 2016).

Collaboration among faculty leaders facilitates sharing teaching practices, resources, and innovations that underpin the school’s vision and goals (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020). This missed opportunity at Braemar Academy reflects a gap in the vision enactment process despite existing research literature that could have helped, such as the work of Fullan and Quinn (2016), who explore the importance of fostering coherence across schools by cultivating a collaborative culture. On a smaller scale, this advice could also work within a single school.

The absence of meaningful cross-faculty collaboration at Braemar Academy represents a missed opportunity for organisational learning and coherence. While regular meetings existed, their focus on operational matters limited opportunities for strategic dialogue and professional growth. Opportunities for cross-curricular collaboration and sharing are one strategy a senior leader could facilitate and model their commitment to change. Instead, with an operational focus, there are limited opportunities for innovation and cultural change across faculties.

Senior Leadership Engagement

The enactment of a collaboratively developed school vision suggests that cohesive leadership across all levels is highly desirable, with the school leader and SLT playing critical roles in providing strategic guidance and alignment (Davies, 2003; Fullan, 2007; Robinson et a., 2009). By offering clear strategic direction, senior leaders are more likely to focus on pursuing vision-related goals cohesively and consistently (Day & Sammons, 2013). Middle leaders, who often serve as the operational drivers of vision enactment, might be better positioned to successfully implement a school’s vision within their teams while being visibly supported by the senior team (Harris & Spillane, 2008). This visible support may be, as researchers argue, a critical adjunct to eventual pedagogical and cultural change in a school.

My findings have highlighted a critical gap between senior leaders' expectations and practical leadership implementation at the faculty level. Literature on successful leadership practices emphasises the central role of school leaders in leading change (Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood et al., 2020; ERO, 2016; Wylie & McKinley, 2018). However, Melanie's description of the reality at Braemar Academy revealed that the change effort had been delegated primarily to a newly appointed SLT member rather than being led directly by the principal and established senior leaders (Chapter Four, Section 4.7.3).

This disconnect between expectations and practice was further evidenced in managing collaboration time and reviewing school-wide progress. Curriculum leaders were given clear expectations regarding attendance and activities during fortnightly faculty meetings. They were required to review their progress at designated times during the year and complete a full review in mid-November. Samantha's observations revealed that the SLT did not maintain similar disciplined practices for monitoring and discussing faculty progress (Chapter Four, Section 4.8.3). This inconsistency in modelling expected behaviours may undermine the effectiveness of distributed leadership practices (Leithwood & Sun, 2012) and creates a credibility gap between leadership layers.

The findings also revealed a lack of cohesion within the SLT. Chris's observations about the disconnect between the school leader and classroom-level realities highlighted how conflicting messages from different SLT members created systemic confusion. This lack of cohesion, exacerbated by irregular SLT meetings to discuss vision implementation, directly contradicts findings from the business literature which emphasises the importance of clear and consistent messaging from an aligned senior leadership team (Fragile to Agile, 2023; Grahame Robb Associates, 2022; Metcalf, 2023; Voltage Control, 2023).

The evidence suggests that the principal of this school at the time of the research may have abdicated responsibility for developing a cohesive approach to vision enactment within the SLT before or in tandem with middle leaders having to engage in the process.

5.4.2 Enablers

The findings identified four key factors, which I will discuss, that supported participants in implementing the shared vision: planning templates, faculty collaborative time, fortnightly school-wide PD, and outside expertise.

Planning Templates

As discussed in the literature review, strategic and annual planning templates are valuable tools to help school leaders manage change while aligning with broader educational goals (King,

2020; Klompus et al., 2023; Mathias, 2023; Reeves, 2007). My findings (Chapter Four, Section 4.6.2) confirm this. Curriculum leaders at Braemar Academy received a strategic planning template to align their faculty/department goals with school strategic goals and translate them into classroom practice. The template's usefulness stemmed from its simplicity, limited schoolwide goals, and flexible success measures.

The literature emphasises focusing on a small number of specific, easily understood, and measurable goals to translate vision into reality (ERO, 2016; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Leithwood, 2012). My findings support this approach. Participants responded positively to the new strategic plan's streamlined goals, agreeing that having fewer goals made it easier to focus on and grapple with within their faculties. However, the template had not been designed to reflect the new strategic plan's broader, more integrated requirements, potentially hampering cross-faculty progress monitoring. This mismatch may emphasise the need for planning tools to evolve alongside strategic goals. While best-practice exemplars for designing tailored templates exist (MoE, 2025d), Braemar Academy's experience demonstrates the importance of customising templates to specific strategic needs. This suggests that while generic templates provide a foundation, schools should develop customised versions that explicitly address their strategic priorities to ensure clarity, coherence, and alignment in planning and implementation.

Neither the planning template nor the strategic plan contained measurable targets, although activity-oriented success indicators were present for curriculum leaders' reference. This contrasts with literature on vision development (Gurley et al., 2014; Hitt & Tucker, 2018) and goal setting (Bendikson & Robinson, 2013; Locke & Latham, 2002; Meyer et al., 2020), which emphasises measurable targets for improved student outcomes. This lack of measurable targets highlights schools' tension when changing the learning culture. While targets provide clarity and accountability, they may reduce teachers' professional agency by inhibiting creativity and innovation, often requiring experimentation and risk-taking, which may not produce immediate, quantifiable results (Ball, 2003; Priestley & Drew, 2019; Zhao, 2017). This suggests that school leaders should prioritise goals' relevance and depth over rigid measurability, particularly when fostering significant changes in school learning culture.

Developing a Collaborative Culture

As established in the literature review, successful school improvement relies heavily on developing collaborative professional cultures through intentional systems and structures enabling regular interactions (Louis et al., 1996). The importance of interacting with colleagues was touched on earlier (Section 5.3.2); this section further explores the notion of collaboration. At Braemar Academy, the development of collaborative cultures was supported through two key

strategies: timetabling regular faculty time and providing dedicated physical spaces for faculty staff to meet and work.

The findings show that designated collaboration time in the school timetable enabled curriculum leaders to consistently engage in meaningful discussions, planning, and reflection with others in their faculty. Chris commented that he found the time invaluable for robust and challenging discussions with his faculty, a sentiment shared by the other curriculum leader participants. As noted in the literature, such practices potentially reduce fragmentation and foster sustained teamwork (DuFour et al., 2010; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). A key expectation for these scheduled times was that they were well-structured, related to vision enactment work, and worked at fostering trust and meaningful engagement (Vangrieken et al., 2017). Having regular, well-structured opportunities for collaboration meant that middle leaders could engage in trust-building and meaningful engagement. Potentially, such a structure reinforces at least some of the conditions necessary for vision enactment.

The second feature of the school that supported the development of collaborative environments was the open-plan faculty/department resource areas, which provided workspaces for all staff to work and network in one area. As discussed in the literature review, common workspaces can make collegial interactions possible (Education Hub, 2019) and can impact the quality and frequency of teacher collaboration. Rhys articulated how physical proximity in his faculty space enabled continuous professional dialogue: Rhys's team could easily collaborate, argue and discuss in both formal and informal contexts, since they shared a common workroom. This geographical proximity was a strength of the faculty in his view. This highlights that a shared, informal workspace fostered ongoing communication that enabled the team to address disagreements constructively and maintain momentum toward their faculty goals. These kinds of interactions likely built the trust and mutual respect that Timperley (2015) identified as essential for professional conversations that enhance teachers' sense of agency to improve practice.

While these collaborative spaces benefitted most faculties, the findings revealed important limitations in this structural approach to fostering collaboration. Creating a collaborative faculty culture proved particularly challenging for Joanna due to time and physical resource constraints. The fortnightly timetabled faculty time was challenging to negotiate due to the unique nature of the faculty and its students. Unlike other faculties, this faculty did not have a shared resource area, thus compounding the complexities they faced. It is clear, then, that one solution does not necessarily work for all. I could not determine whether the lack of a shared resource/meeting area and time had been raised with senior leadership to discuss options. A bespoke solution for this faculty could have demonstrated inclusivity from the top.

While physical spaces and scheduled time allocations reflect a leadership group's commitment to collaboration, the challenges faced by one faculty demonstrate that one-size-fits-all approaches may not serve all faculties equally well. The absence of suitable meeting times and a shared resource area significantly impacted this faculty's ability to collaborate effectively, highlighting the need for flexible, context-sensitive solutions that acknowledge the diverse needs of different faculties.

Embedding School-wide Professional Development

The importance of active, collaborative, and on-site professional learning for sustained growth is emphasised in the literature (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018; Hitt & Tucker, 2016; Kools & Stoll, 2016; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leithwood, 2012; Timperley et al., 2007). Braemar Academy embedded fortnightly PD sessions in the school timetable. This signalled a commitment to continuous learning for all teachers and teaching support staff and aligns with Darling-Hammond et al., (2017), who emphasised the importance of dedicated time for high-quality PD that directly impacts teaching practices and student outcomes.

The on-site nature of these sessions made PD more accessible, removed logistical barriers, and embedded it in daily school life. Timperley et al. (2007) argued that school-based PD reduces the disconnect often experienced in off-site workshops, fostering real-time reflection and adaptation. This approach allowed curriculum leaders and teachers to refine strategies directly responding to their learning environments. Literature affirms that sustained, embedded, and contextually relevant PD leads to more effective teaching practices and improved student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Timperley et al., 2007).

Contextualised PD at Braemar Academy enabled teachers to address the school's specific learning conditions while fostering a unified approach to student success (Hargreaves & O'Connor, 2018). This aligns with situated learning theory (Lave & Wenger, 1991), highlighting that professional growth is most effective when embedded in authentic contexts. By integrating PD into the school timetable, Braemar Academy reinforced a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring professional learning remained meaningful, accessible, and directly connected to teaching practice.

Accessing Outside Expertise

As highlighted in the literature review, external expertise can play a crucial role in building capacity for ongoing innovation and change, particularly when connected with on-site learning (Avakian & Clark, 2014; ERO, 2016; Hargreaves et al., 2010; Kools & Stoll, 2017; Sanetti et al., 2014). Braemar Academy took advantage of the funded services provided by the MoE. It used an

external facilitator (Julia) to provide expertise and support for curriculum leaders, senior leaders, and CoL leaders.

My findings confirm that curriculum leaders greatly valued opportunities to work with Julia, who assisted them in developing their action plans in response to the revised school vision and provided ongoing support as they implemented and reviewed them. This collaboration helped them move beyond the day-to-day challenges of school management and focus on long-term, strategic goals. Melanie highlighted this when she commented on how Julia had guided their meetings by encouraging them to consider actions they might have overlooked. This aligns with Sanetti et al.'s (2014) comments about the "blind spots" that can occur when change is facilitated from within an organisation while also demonstrating how external facilitators introduce fresh perspectives that help leaders consider innovative strategies aligned with the school's vision (ERO, 2016).

Hargreaves et al. (2010) observed that many schools globally have progressively turned to external school-based consultants to implement innovation and change. Avakian and Clark (2014) suggested this is because, as non-members of the organisations, they are often better situated to introduce major changes. This is particularly relevant when efforts are being made to change a learning culture to align with a new vision. My findings revealed that participant curriculum leaders used Julia's expertise to develop their action plans and align them with the broader school vision, thus addressing potential resistance and enhancing ownership of the change process.

Braemar Academy's experience demonstrates how external expertise can serve as a catalyst for meaningful organisational change in schools. Julia's facilitation helped curriculum leaders bridge the critical gap between vision and implementation by providing specialised knowledge while fostering sustained reflection and collaboration. Her dual capacity to challenge established practices while simultaneously supporting leaders through the complexities of vision enactment proved particularly valuable as Braemar Academy undertook significant strategic initiatives.

The interplay between inhibitors and enablers at Braemar Academy illustrates how structural and cultural factors significantly influence vision enactment processes. While challenges such as limited change management support, insufficient cross-faculty dialogue, and inconsistent senior leadership engagement hindered implementation efforts, purposeful structures like dedicated planning templates, collaborative spaces, embedded PD, and external expertise provided crucial scaffolding for middle leaders. This delicate balance reveals why intentional leadership at all levels is essential for translating strategic vision into practice. Braemar Academy's experience

demonstrates that even with strong enablers like external facilitation and structured collaboration, persistent inhibitors such as inconsistent senior leadership engagement and insufficient cross-faculty communication can significantly limit the depth and sustainability of vision enactment.

5.5 Limitations/Strengths of My Study

This section examines the methodological limitations and strengths of my research design. While all research inherently contains constraints, acknowledging these alongside the study's strengths demonstrates methodological rigour and enhances the trustworthiness of findings. The following addresses key considerations, including sample size and scope, transferability of findings, researcher positionality, and time frame considerations, offering a balanced assessment of the study's methodological quality.

The research was limited to a single school. It included data from six participants: five curriculum leaders representing half the school's faculties and one senior leader from a leadership team of five within a larger traditional secondary school. While this sample size could be considered a limitation, the in-depth nature of the single-case study allowed for rich, nuanced insights that might be difficult to achieve with a broader sample.

Because my research context is small, the findings are most relevant to the school. While the findings from my study are not directly generalisable across different participants in other school communities, they may raise issues and questions relevant to those communities. To enhance the possibility of transferability, I provided a detailed description of my study's context to enable judgements about how well the findings may match with or be applied to other schools (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Suter, 2012).

My dual role as an insider/outsider researcher added both complexity and richness to the research process. My insiderness (prior to data collection) necessitated heightened reflexivity to identify and manage potential biases. I addressed this challenge through several strategies: participant checking of interview transcripts, regular discussions with supervisors about my developing interpretations of data and findings and maintaining a personal research journal. This journal documented observations, thoughts, and reactions throughout the research journey, offering a structured approach to reflexivity (Ortlipp, 2008).

Conversely, during data collection, my new role as an outsider emerged as a strength, as it created a safer space for participants to share their experiences candidly without fear of judgement or professional repercussions. This positioning allowed participants to articulate perspectives they might not have shared with a current insider, potentially enriching the depth and authenticity of the data collected.

My interviews were conducted over a single school year. Although I interviewed participants twice, this was not a longitudinal study. Therefore, I cannot report individual faculty progress in embedding the school vision beyond the first year since a longitudinal study was not my focus. My research question specifically targeted understanding participants' experiences enacting a school vision during its initial phase.

The timing of the interviews enhanced the quality of the data collected from the participants. For the curriculum leaders, the first interviews occurred during the second half of the first school term when the participants had settled into the school year. They had several weeks to meet with their faculty/department staff and met with the external facilitator to discuss and refine their action plans. The second interview occurred late in the school year following a scheduled faculty review day, during which the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* documents were updated and prepared for inclusion in the annual report to the principal. On both occasions, vision implementation was uppermost in the participants' minds. The interview timing for the senior leader was near the end of the school year when regular school-wide reflection and planning for the following year occurred.

While this study has several limitations, including its focused scope and time boundaries, these constraints also contributed to its methodological strengths. The insider/outsider positioning created a unique research opportunity, while the timing of data collection captured critical moments in the vision enactment process. By acknowledging these limitations and leveraging the study's strengths, I have sought to produce research findings that, while context-specific, offer valuable insights into the complexities of school vision implementation that may inform practice and future research in educational leadership related to other secondary schools in AoNZ, and, potentially, in other parts of the world.

5.6 Recommendations

This analysis informs the following recommendations, offering practical guidance for Braemar Academy's middle leaders and SLT. It also offers broader recommendations that other schools might find helpful.

For Middle Leaders

Middle leaders might be well positioned to:

1. Consider taking advantage of study support grants and awards from the MoE (2025b) to engage in personal study programmes to develop leadership practice.

2. Strongly advocate for the timetabled opportunities to actively engage in cross-faculty collaboration and share successful practices for implementing student-centred approaches.
3. Advocate for coordinated project-based learning frameworks and develop expertise in curriculum integration methodologies that connect capabilities with disciplinary knowledge.

For Senior Leadership

Opportunities exist for senior leadership to:

1. Establish structured forums for collective sensemaking to develop a concrete, shared understanding of vision enactment. This includes prioritising strategic dialogue in leadership meetings, modelling collaborative practices, and providing targeted PD in change management.
2. Create systems for monitoring and evaluating vision-aligned initiatives.
3. Advocate for externally led Middle Leadership Programmes at regional and national levels.

For Other Schools

For schools embarking on vision enactment, it can be beneficial to:

1. Develop context-sensitive strategies that balance traditional strengths with innovation
2. Implement inclusive stakeholder engagement processes for vision development
3. Create structured platforms for interpreting and translating vision language
4. Establish integrated support systems, including planning templates, collaborative structures, embedded PD, and external partnerships
5. Regularly evaluate how structural supports serve different faculties and adapt as needed.

5.7 Future Research

This case study explored how five curriculum leaders and one senior leader with curriculum leadership responsibilities enacted a school vision to initiate changes in learning culture during the first year of implementation. While this study provides valuable insights, several avenues for future research emerge from this work. In particular, extending time boundaries, broadening perspectives, and focusing on practical applications to better understand how educational visions become changing realities in school settings.

Longitudinal studies tracking the complete three-year implementation cycle would reveal how leadership approaches evolve beyond initial phases and whether cultural changes are sustained

over time. Such research could identify critical points and strategies for long-term vision implementation success.

Future research could also expand beyond curriculum leaders' perspectives to include other stakeholders. For example, incorporating student voices would reveal how intended cultural shifts translate to lived learning experiences. Similarly, investigating how teaching staff, not in leadership positions, interpret, adapt, and potentially resist vision-driven initiatives. This could provide a more nuanced understanding of how change filters through an organisation.

Finally, research bridging the gap between case study findings and practical application could develop frameworks that help school leaders navigate vision-driven cultural change and translate these insights into effective PD.

5.8 Conclusion

This study examined how curriculum leaders in a traditional secondary school in AoNZ interpreted and translated the school's vision into actions, revealing important insights into the complex interplay between context and professional agency in educational change processes.

Braemar Academy's experience demonstrates that successful vision enactment requires more than a compelling statement. It demands an understanding of contextual dynamics, which Ball et al. (2012) argued is often overlooked. Despite structural advantages like stable leadership, strong governance, and resource availability, Braemar Academy faced significant barriers embedded in external policy pressures of performativity and internal traditions of highly valuing academic success. This tension between aspirational goals of inclusivity, equity, and excellence and the reality of entrenched practices reveals how contextual factors can enable or constrain change efforts, particularly when senior leadership is not deliberately and actively supporting the initiative. The school’s experience also reflects what Harris (2020) described as the “push and pull of context” that characterises the everyday experiences of school leaders at all levels.

Braemar Academy's inclusive approach to vision development created a strong foundation for implementation by fostering collective ownership and stakeholder engagement. This collective ownership enhanced meaningful buy-in, minimised resistance, and nurtured long-term engagement (Kools & Stoll, 2017; Kose, 2011; Torre & Murphy, 2016). However, senior leaders' absence of structured guidance for interpreting aspirational language led to multiple understandings among curriculum leaders, although there were many commonalities in their interpretations.

Successful translation of vision into practice depends on curriculum leaders who play a pivotal role in the centre of the school hierarchy (Bassett, 2016), acting as agency enablers. The curriculum leader participants demonstrated agency by interpreting and translating the school's vision into actionable, student-centred strategies to enhance equity, maintain excellence, and develop capabilities. These strategies included targeted pedagogical frameworks (Biggs & Collis, 1982; Mitchell, 2020), access to deep learning (Fullan et al., 2017), PBL (Scott, 2015), and curriculum integration (McDowall & Hipkins, 2019; McPhail, 2020). Their agency was supported through the ETP framework (Bishop & Berryman, 2009), which guided culturally responsive practice, particularly through the professional conversations following observations using the ETP observation tool. This highlights that curriculum leaders' professional agency is the essential bridge between aspirational vision and sustainable cultural change. At Braemar Academy, the curriculum leaders interpreted and translated abstract ideals into concrete practices that authentically began to reshape school culture through their deliberate, contextualised professional decisions and actions (Ball et al., 2012).

The study identified both inhibitors and enablers that significantly impacted curriculum leaders' ability to enact the school vision. Inhibitors included inadequate support for managing change, limited cross-faculty collaboration, and inconsistent senior leadership engagement. Conversely, enablers such as planning templates, collaborative faculty structures, embedded PD, and external expertise formed an integrated learning environment supporting curriculum leaders' efforts. The interplay between these factors reveals that successful enactment requires not just distributing leadership responsibilities but also providing necessary support systems (Solly, 2018; Iannini, 2019).

This study demonstrates that successful school vision enactment will depend on the interplay between contextual realities and professional agency. My study possibly offers insights for educational leaders seeking to implement meaningful change. By recognising both the enabling power of curriculum leaders' agency and the contextual factors that shape their work, schools can build more effective pathways from aspirational vision statements to meaningful, sustainable change in teaching and learning practices.

References

Alliston, L. (2019, December). *The government's changing role in the governance of New Zealand's schools since 1847.* Parliamentary Library and Research paper 2019/3. Retrieved from school-administration-research-paper.pdf (www.parliament.nz)

Amos, C. (2014, February 3). A beginner's guide to Hobsonville Point Secondary School. *Claire Amos*. https://teachingandelearning.blogspot.com/2014/02/a-beginners-guide-to-hobsonville-point.html

Arthur, J. (2020). The turn to character education. In J. Arthur, J. Cleverdon, N. Morgan, J. O'Shaughnessy, & A. Seldon (Eds.), *Educating for a characterful society* (pp. 1–24). Routledge.

Au, L., Wright, N., & Botton, C. (2003). Using a structural equation modelling approach (SEM) to examine leadership of heads of subject departments (HODs) as perceived by principals and vice-principals, heads of subject departments and teachers within 'school based management' (SBM) secondary schools: Some evidence from Hong Kong. *School Leadership & Management*, *23*(4), 481–498.

Australian Council for Educational Research (2019). *PISA.* https://www.acer.org/au/pisa

Avakian, S., & Clark, T. (Eds.) (2014). *Management consulting* (Vol. 1). Edward Elgar.

Ball, S. (1994). *Educational reform: A critical and post-structuralist approach*. Open University Press.

Ball, S. (2003). The teacher's soul and the terrors of performativity. *Journal of Education Policy*, *18*(2), 215–228.

Ball, S., Maguire, M., & Braun, A. (2012). *How schools do policy: Policy enactments in secondary schools*. Routledge.

Barker, M. (2023). When tomorrow comes: Contextualising the independent review of Tomorrow's Schools. *Policy Quarterly*, *19*(3), 11–18.
DOI: https://doi.org/10.26686/pq.v19i3.8307

Bassett, M. (2016). The role of middle leaders in New Zealand secondary schools: Expectations and challenges. *Waikato Journal of Education*, *21*(1), 97–108.
https://doi.org/10.15663/wje.v21i1.194

Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 544–559. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1573

Benade, L. (2011). *From technicians to teachers: Ethical teaching in the context of globalised education reform.* Continuum.

Bendikson, L., & Robinson, V. (2013). *Establishing academic goals and expectations*. The University of Auckland, Centre for Educational Leadership.

Bendikson, L., Robinson, V., & Hattie, J. (2012). Principal instructional leadership and secondary school performance. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, *1*, 2–8.

Bento, F. (2011). A discussion about power relations and the concept of distributed leadership in higher education institutions. *The Open Education Journal*, *4*(1), 17–23. https://doi.org/10.2174/ 1874920801104010017

Bento, F., Adenusi, T., & Khanal, P. (2023). Middle level leadership in schools: A scoping review of literature informed by a complex system perspective. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, 1–27. DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2023.2234329

Berger, R. (2015). Now I see it, now I don't: Researcher's position and reflexivity in qualitative research. *Qualitative Research, 15*(2), 219–234. https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794112468475

Berkowitz, M., Bier, M., & McCauley, B. (2017). Toward a science of character education: Frameworks for identifying and implementing effective practices. *Journal of Character Education*, *13*(1), 33–51.

Berryman, M., Lawrence, D., & Lamont, R. (2018). Cultural relationships for responsive pedagogy: A bicultural mana ōrite perspective. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, *1*, 3–10. https://doi.org/10.18296/set.0096

Bezzina, M. (2007). Educational leadership: An essential approach. In M. Bezzina (Ed.), *Leading educational change: Global issues, challenges, and lessons learned* (pp. 7–20). Springer.

Biggs, J., & Collis, K. (1982). Towards a model of school-based curriculum development and assessment using the SOLO taxonomy. *Australian Journal of Education*, *33*(2), 151–163.

Bishop, R., & Berryman, M. (2009). The Te Kotahitanga effective teaching profile. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, *2*(2), 27–33.

Bishop, R., Berryman, M., Cavanagh, T., & Teddy, L. (2009). Te Kotahitanga: Addressing educational disparities facing Māori students in New Zealand. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *25*(5), 734–742.

Bjorklund-Young, A. (2016). *What do we know about developing students' non-cognitive skills?* Johns Hopkins School of Education. https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/bitstream/handle/1774.2/63014/noncognitiveskillsmastheadfinal.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

Blackmore, J. (1999). *Troubling women*. Open University Press.

Blackmore, J. (2006). Social justice and the study and practice of leadership in education: A feminist history. *Journal of Educational Administration and History, 38*(2), 185–200.

Blackmore, J., & McNae, R. (2021). Educational reform and leading school change. In S. Courtney, H. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds.), *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives in and approaches to educational leadership* (1st ed., pp. 237–253). Bloomsbury Academic.

Bolstad, R., Gilbert, J., Mcdowall, S., Bull, A., Boyd, S., & Hipkins, R. (2012). *Supporting future oriented learning & teaching: A New Zealand perspective*. Ministry of Education.

Bolton, S. (2017). *Educational equity in New Zealand: Successes, challenges and opportunities*. Fulbright New Zealand.

Boon-Falleur, M., Bouguen, A., Charpentier, A., Algan, Y., Huillery, E., & Chevallier, C. (2020). *Measuring socio-emotional skills in schools: Simple questionnaires outperform behavioral tasks.* https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/w7pr6

Boston, J., & Eichbaum, C. (2014). New Zealand's neoliberal reforms: Half a revolution. *Governance: An International Journal of Policy, Administration, and Institutions*, *27*(3), 373–376.

Boutte, G., & Johnson, G. (2014). Community and family involvement in urban schools. In H. R. Milner & K. Lomotey (Eds.), *Handbook of urban education* (pp. 167–187). Routledge.

Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative Research Journal*, *9*(2), 27–40.

Boyland, J. (2019). A social constructivist approach to the gathering of empirical data. *Australian Counselling Research Journal*, *13*(2), 30–34.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. doi:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research*. Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2019). Reflecting on reflexive thematic analysis. *Qualitative Research in Sport, Exercise and Health*, *11*(4), 589–597.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2020). One size fits all? What counts as quality practice in (reflexive) thematic analysis? *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *18*(3), 328–352.

Brown, L (2008). A review of the literature on case study research. *Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education*, *1*(1), 1–13.

Brown-Jeffy, S., & Cooper, J. (2011). Toward a conceptual framework of culturally relevant pedagogy: An overview of the conceptual and theoretical literature. *Teacher Education Quarterly*, *38*(1), 65–84.

Bryk, A. & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation. http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7758/9781610440967

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Bryson, J. M. (2018). *Strategic planning for public and nonprofit organizations: A guide to strengthening and sustaining organizational achievement*. John Wiley & Sons.

Burnard, P., Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Analysing and presenting qualitative data. *British Dental Journal*, *204*(8), 429–432.

Byrne, D. (2021). A worked example of Braun and Clarke's approach to reflexive thematic analysis. *Quality & Quantity*, *56*(3), 1391–1412. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11135-021-01182-y

Caldwell, B., & Spinks, J. (1988). *The self-managing school.* The Farmer Press.

Caldwell, B., & Spinks, J. (1992). *Leading the self-managing school.* Routledge.

Cardno, C., Robson, J., Bassett, M., & Howse, J. (2018). Middle-level leaders as direct instructional leaders in New Zealand schools: A study of role expectations and performance confidence. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice, 33*(2), 32–47.

Chavez, C. (2015). Conceptualizing from the inside: Advantages, complications, and demands on insider positionality. *Qualitative Report*. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1589

Chen, C., & Yang, Y. (2019). Revisiting the effects of project-based learning on students' academic achievement: A meta-analysis investigating moderators. *Educational Research Review, 26*, 71–81. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.edurev.2018.11.001

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2018). *Research methods in education* (8th ed.). Routledge.

Collins, J. C., & Porras, J. I. (1996). Building your company's vision. *Harvard Business Review, 74*, 65–78.

Condliffe, B., Quint, J., Visher, M., Bangser, M., Drohojowska, S., Saco, L., & Nelson, E. (2017). *Project-based learning: A literature review.* MDRC. https://www.mdrc.org/publication/project-based-learning

Connolly, M., James, C., & Fertig, M. (2017). The difference between educational management and educational leadership and the importance of educational responsibility. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 47*(4), 504–519. https://doiorg.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1177/1741143217745880

Courtney, S., Gunter, H., Niesche, R., & Trujillo, T. (2021). Introduction. In S. Courtney, H. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds.). *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives in and approaches to educational leadership: Critical perspectives in and approaches to educational leadership* (1st ed., pp. 1–6). Bloomsbury Academic.

Cowie, B., Hipkins, R., Boyd, S., Bull, A., Keown, P., McGee, C., with Bolstad, R., Cooper, B., Ferrier-Kerr, J., Hume, A., Mckim, A., Moreland, J., Morrison, M., Spiller, L., Taylor, M., & Yates, R. (2009). *Curriculum implementation exploratory studies: Final report*. Ministry of Education

Creemers, B. P., & Reezigt, G. J. (2005). Linking school effectiveness and school improvement: The background and outline of the project. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, *16*(4), 359–371.DOI: 10.1080/09243450500234484

Creswell, J. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Creswell, J. W., Hanson, W. E., Clark Plano, V. L., & Morales, A. (2007). Qualitative research designs: Selection and implementation. *The Counseling Psychologist*, *35*(2), 236–264.

Creswell, J., & Creswell, J.D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Allen & Unwin.

Crow, G., Wiles, R., Heath, S., & Charles, V. (2006). Research ethics and data quality: The implications of informed consent. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, *9*(2), 83–95.

Cuban, L. (1988). *The managerial imperative and the practice of leadership in schools*. State University of New York Press.

Daniëls, E., Hondeghem, A., & Dochy, F. (2019). A review on leadership and leadership development in educational settings. *Educational Research Review*, *27*, 110–125.

Darawsheh, W. (2014). Reflexivity in research: Promoting rigour, reliability, and validity in qualitative research. *International Journal of Therapy and Rehabilitation*, *21*(12), 560–568.

Darling-Hammond, L. (2010). *The flat world and education: How America's commitment to equity will determine our future*. Teachers College Press.

Darling-Hammond, L., Hyler, M. E., & Gardner, M. (2017). *Effective teacher professional development*. Learning Policy Institute.

Davies, B. (2003). Rethinking strategy and strategic leadership in schools. *Educational Management & Administration*, *31*(3), 295–312.

Day, C., & Grice, C. (2019). *Investigating the influence and impact of leading from the middle: A school-based strategy for middle leaders in schools*. The University of Sydney.

Day, C., & Sammons, P. (2013). *Successful leadership: A review of the international literature*. CfBT Education Trust.

De Nobile, J. (2021). Researching middle leadership in schools: The state of the art. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, *49*(2), 3–27.

Denscombe, M. (2010). *The good research guide for small-scale social research projects* (4th ed.). Open University Press.

Diem, S., Young, M. D., & Sampson, C. (2019). Where critical policy meets the politics of education: An introduction. *Educational Policy*, *33*(1), 3–15. https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1177/0895904818807317

Dobbins, M. (2010). Education policy in New Zealand: Successfully navigating the international market for education. In K. Martens, A. Nagel, M. Windzio, & A. Weymann (Eds), *Transformation of education policy* (pp. 153–178). Palgrave Macmillan.

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement.* Solution Tree. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED426472

DuFour, R., DuFour, R. B., Eaker, R. E., Many, T. W., & Mattos, M. (2020). *Learning by doing: A handbook for professional learning communities at work* (3rd ed.). Solution Tree Press.

Dwyer, S., & Buckle, J. (2009). The space between: On being an insider-outsider in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *8*(1), 54–63. https://doi.org/10.1177/160940690900800105

Dye, S. (2004, August 24). Cambridge High School catch-up credit scheme blasted. *New Zealand Herald.* https://www.nzherald.co.nz/nz/cambridge-high-school-catch-up-credit-scheme-blasted/Q7NIGWHBN7DAJ6PUTCOB4BVGQA/?c_id=35&objectid=3586337

Edmund Rice Education (2023). *Beyond the borders*. https://www.erebb.org/who-we-are/our-vision/

Education Act 1989. https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/1989/0080/latest/DLM175959.HTML

Education and Training Act 2020. https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2020/0038/latest/LMS170676.html

Education Review Office. (2016). *School evaluation indicators*. *Effective practice for improvement and learner success.* New Zealand Government.

Education Review Office. (2018). *Leading innovative learning in New Zealand schools.* New Zealand Government.

Edwards, R., & Holland, J. (2013). *What is qualitative interviewing?* Bloomsbury Academic.

Edwards-Groves, C., Grootenboer, P., Hardy, I., & Rönnerman, K. (2019). Driving change from 'the middle': Middle leading for site based educational development. *School Leadership & Management*, *39*(3–4), 315–333.

Egalite, A. J., Mills, J. N., & Greene, J. P. (2016). The softer side of learning: Measuring students' non-cognitive skills. *Improving Schools*, *19*(1), 27–40.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1), 1–4.

Fadel, C., Bialik, M., & Trilling, B. (2015). *Four-dimensional education: The competencies students need to succeed*. The Centre for Curriculum Redesign.

Finlay, L. (2002). “Outing” the researcher: The provenance, process, and practice of reflexivity. *Qualitative Health Research*, *12*(4), 531–545. https://doi.org/10.1177/104973202129120052

Florian, L., & Black-Hawkins, K. (2011). Exploring inclusive pedagogy. *British Educational Research Journal*, *37*(5), 813–828.

Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In G. Burchell, C. Gordon, & P. Miller (Eds.), *The Foucault Effects: Studies in Governmentality* (pp. 87-104). University of Chicago Press.

Fragile To Agile (2023, October 23). *Aligned leadership vs. disparate directions: A comparative analysis on effective change management*. https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/aligned-leadership-vs-disparate-directions-comparative#:~:text=The%20Impact%20on%20Employees%20When%20leadership%20is,intricacies%20of%20the%20change%20with%20fewer%20hesitations.

Friedman, M. (2002). *Capitalism and freedom: Fortieth anniversary edition.* The University of Chicago Press.

Fullan, M. (1999). *Changing forces: The sequel*. Falmer Press.

Fullan, M. (2007). *The new meaning of educational change*. Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M. (2020). *Leading in a culture of change*. Jossey-Bass.

Fullan, M., & Quinn, J. (2016). *Coherence: The right drivers in action for schools, districts, and systems.* Corwin Press.

Fullan, M., Quinn, J., & McEachen, J. (2017). *Deep learning: Engage the world change the world*. Corwin Press.

Future Policy.org. (2021). *Finland’s basic education act & general education policy.* https://www.futurepolicy.org/rightsofchildren/finlands-basic-education-act/

Garcia, E. (2014). *The need to address non-cognitive skills in the education policy agenda* (pp. 31–64). Brill Sense. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED558126.pdf

Gay, G. (2000). *Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice*. Teachers College Press.

Gibbs, G. R. (2007). *Analysing qualitative data*. Sage.

Gill, P., Stewart, K., Treasure, E., & Chadwick, B. (2008). Methods of data collection in qualitative research: Interviews and focus groups. *British Dental Journal*, *204*(6), 291–295.

Gordon, L. (1994). Some schools are more equal than others... Schools and market choice in Aotearoa, 1994. *Set: Research Information for Teachers*, *2*, 1–6. https://doi.org/10.18296/set.0972

Grace, G. (1995). *School leadership: Beyond education management*. The Falmer Press.

Grahame Robb Associates (2022, April 22). What are the consequences of a misaligned leadership team? https://www.gra.uk.com/blog/what-are-the-consequences-of-a-misaligned-leadership-team

Gray, D (2014). *Doing research in the real world* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Greene, M. (2014). On the inside looking in: Methodological insights and challenges in conducting qualitative insider research. *Qualitative Report*, *19*(29), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1106

Groff, J. (2012). *The practitioner guide: The nature of learning: Using research to inspire practice*. OECD.

Grootenboer, P. (2018). *The practices of school middle leadership: Leading professional learning*. Springer.

Grootenboer, P., Edwards-Groves, C., & Rönnerman, K. (2015). Leading practice development: Voices from the middle. *Professional Development in Education*, *41*(3), 508–526. https://doi.org/10.1080/19415257.2014.924985

Guba, E. & Lincoln, Y. (1994). Competing paradigms in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 105–117). Sage.

Guillemin, M., & Gillam, L. (2004). Ethics, reflexivity, and "ethically important moments" in research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *10*(2), 261–280. https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800403262360

Gunter, H. (2001). Critical approaches to leadership in education. *Journal of Educational Enquiry, 2*(2), 94–108.

Gunter, H. (2016). *An intellectual history of school leadership practice and research*. Bloomsbury.

Gurley, D., Peters, G., Collins, L., & Fifolt, M. (2015). Mission, vision, values, and goals: An exploration of key organizational statements and daily practice in schools*. Journal of Educational Change, 16*(2), 217–242.

Gurr, D., & Drysdale, L. (2013). Middle-level secondary school leaders: Potential, constraints and implications for leadership preparation and development. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *51*(1), 55–71.

Gurr-Mark, D., Drysdale-George, L., & Mulford, B. (2010). Australian principal instructional leadership: Direct and indirect influence. *Magis. Revista Internacional de Investigación en Educación*, *2*(4), 299–314.

Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *49*(2), 125–142. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111116699

Halstead, M., & Pike, M. (2006). *Citizenship and moral education: Values in action*. Routledge.

Haque, B. (2014). *Changing our secondary schools*. NZCER Press.

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2012). *Sustainable leadership*. John Wiley & Sons.

Hargreaves, A., & Fullan, M. (2012). *Professional capital: Transforming teaching in every school*. Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A., & O'Connor, M. T. (2018). *Collaborative professionalism: When teaching together means learning for all.* Corwin Press.

Hargreaves, A., Lieberman, A., Fullan, M., & Hopkins, D. (Eds.) (2010). *Second international handbook of educational change.* Springer.

Harris, A. (2013). Distributed leadership: Friend or foe? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 41*(5), 545–554.

Harris, M. (2017). *The New Zealand Project*. Bridget Williams Books.

Harris, A. (2020). Leading school and system improvement: Why context matters. *European Journal of Education*, *55*(2). https://doi.org/10.1111/ejed.12393

Harris, A., & Jones, M. (2017). Middle leaders matter: Reflections, recognition, and renaissance. *School Leadership & Management*, *37*(3), 213–216. https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1080/13632434.2017.1323398

Harris, A., & Spillane, J. (2008). Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in Education*, *22*(1), 31–34.

Harrison, H., Birks, M., Franklin, R., & Mills, J. (2017). Case study research: Foundations and methodological orientations. In *Forum Qualitative Sozialforschung/Forum: Qualitative Social Research, 18*(1).

Hastings (2019, 23 May). Neoliberalism and education*. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Education.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190264093.013.404

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

Highfield, C. (2017). *Middle leadership: The possibilities and potential*. Education Council, New Zealand Education.

Hipkins, R. (2010). *Reshaping the secondary school curriculum: Building the plane while flying it?* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Hipkins, R. (2017). *Weaving a coherent curriculum: How the idea of 'capabilities' can help*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Hipkins, R. (2018). *How the key competencies were developed: The evidence base.* New Zealand Council for Educational Research

Hitt, D. & Tucker, P. (2016). Systematic review of key leader practice found to influence student achievement: A unified framework. *Review of Educational Research, 86*(2), 531–569. doi: 10.3102/0034654315614911

Hixson, N., Ravitz, J., & Whisman, A. (2012). *Extended professional development in project-based learning: Impacts on 21st century teaching and student achievement*. West Virginia Department of Education.

Hmelo-Silver, C. E., Duncan, R. G., & Chinn, C. A. (2007). Scaffolding and achievement in problem-based and inquiry learning: A response to Kirschner, Sweller, and Clark (2006). *Educational Psychologist, 42*(2), 99–107. https://doi.org/10.1080/00461520701263368

Holmes, A. (2020). Researcher positionality - A consideration of its influence and place in qualitative research - A new researcher guide. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, *8*(4), 1–10.

Hood, N. (2019). Manifestations of autonomy and control in a devolved schooling system: The case of New Zealand. *On Education. Journal for Research and Debate, 2*(5). https://doi.org/10.17899/on_ed.2019.5.6

Hook, P., & Mills, J. (2011). *SOLO Taxonomy: A guide for schools. Book 1. A common language of learning.* Essential Resources New Zealand.

Hopkins, D. & Reynolds, D. (2001). The past, present and future of school improvement: Towards the third age. *British Educational Research Journal*, *27*(4), 459–475.

Hopkins, D. (2001). *School improvement for real*. Routledge.

Hughson, T. A. (2021). The New Zealand curriculum's 'knowledge-in-action' concept: A critical analysis*. Curriculum Matters, 17*, 9–33.

Hughson, T. A. (2022). Disrupting Aotearoa New Zealand's curricular consensus: From 'world-leading' curriculum to curriculum refresh 2007–2021. *New Zealand Journal of Educational Studies, 5*7, 53–67. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40841-021-00238-9

Iannini, M. (2019). *Hidden in plain sight: Realizing the full potential of middle leaders*. Michael Iannini.

Jensen, B., Sonnemann, J., Roberts-Hull, K., & Hunter, A. (2016). *Beyond PD: Teacher professional learning in high-performing systems. Teacher quality systems in top performing countries.* National Center on Education and the Economy.

Kelsey, J. (1997). *The New Zealand experiment: A world model for structural adjustment?* Bridget Williams Books.

King, M (2023, March 20). *7 reasons why schools need strategic planning*. Envisio. Retrieved from https://envisio.com/blog/7-reasons-schools-need-strategic-planning

Kingston, S. (2018). Project based learning & student achievement: What does the research tell us? *PBL Evidence Matters, 1*(1), 1–11.

Klompus, B., Corburn, J., & Frazier, D. (2023, June 22). *Strategic storytelling: A school leader's guide to annual strategic planning*. Relay Graduate School of Education. Retrieved from https://www.relay.edu/resources/strategic-storytelling-a-school-leaders-guide-to-annual-strategic-planning

Kokotsaki, D., Menzies, V., & Wiggins, A. (2016). Project-based learning: A review of the literature. *Improving Schools*, *19*(3), 267–277. https://doi.org/10.1177/1365480216659733

Kools, M., & Stoll, L. (2017). *What makes a school a learning organisation?* OECD.

Kose, B. (2011). Developing a transformative school vision: Lessons from peer-nominated principals. *Education and Urban Society, 43*(2), 119–136.

Kotter, J. (1996). *Leading change.* Harvard Business School Press.

Kouzes, J. & Posner, B. (2017). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations* (6th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Kurland, H., Peretz, H., & Hertz-Lazarowitz, R. (2010). Leadership style and organizational learning: The mediate effect of school vision. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *48*(1), 7–30.

Kvale, S. (1996). *Inter views: An introduction to qualitative research interviewing*. Sage.

Kvale, S. (2007). *Doing interviews*. Sage.

Ladson-Billings, G. (1995). Toward a theory of culturally relevant pedagogy. *American Educational Research Journal*, *32*(3), 465–491.

Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, *84*(1), 74–84.

Lave, J., & Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral participation.* Cambridge University Press. https://books.google.co.nz/books/about/Situated_Learning.html?id=CAVIOrW3vYAC&redir_esc=y

Leithwood, K. (2012). *Ontario leadership framework.* Institute for Education Leadership.

Leithwood, K., & Riehl, C. (2005). What we know about successful school leadership. In W. A. Firestone & C. E. Riehl (Eds.), *A new agenda for research in educational leadership* (pp. 22–47). Teachers College Press.

Leithwood, K., & Sun, J. (2012). The nature and effects of transformational school leadership: A meta-analytic review of unpublished research. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 48*(3), 387–423.

Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, *40*(1), 5–22.

Levinson, M., Geron, T., & Brighouse, H. (2022). Conceptions of educational equity. *AERA Open*, *8*(1), 1–12. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1177/23328584221121344

Lincoln, Y. & Guba, E. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry.* Sage.

Lincoln, Y., Lynham, S., & Guba, E. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, *4*(2), 97–128.

Lincoln, Y. S. (1995). Emerging criteria for quality in qualitative and interpretive research. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *1*(3), 275–289.

Lipscombe, K., Tindall-Ford, S., & Lamanna, J. (2021). School middle leadership: A systematic review. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *51*(2), 270–288. https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1177/1741143220983328

Locke, E., & Latham, G. (2002). Building a practically useful theory of goal setting and task motivation: A 35-year odyssey. *American Psychologist*, *57*(9), 705–717.

Louis, K. S., Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, *33*(4), 757–798.

Lovat, T., & Toomey, R. (2009). *Values education and quality teaching*. Springer.

Mathias, S. (2023, September 29). *Strategic planning in education – 3 keys to success*. Thought Exchange. Retrieved from https://thoughtexchange.com/blog/strategic-planning-in-education-3-keys-to-success

Maykut, P., & Morehouse, R. (1994). *Beginning qualitative research: A philosophic and practical guide*. Falmer Press.

McDowall, S., & Hipkins, R. (2018). *How the key competencies evolved over time: Insights from the research.* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

McDowall, S., & Hipkins, R. (2019). *Curriculum integration: What is happening in New Zealand schools?* New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

McGinty, R., & Fuller, K. (2021). Critical perspectives in and approaches to educational leadership in England. In S. Courtney, H. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds.), *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives and approaches*? (1st ed., pp. 29–44). Bloomsbury Academic.

McMaster, C. (2013). Working the 'shady spaces': Resisting neoliberal hegemony in New Zealand education. *Policy Futures in Education*, *11*(5), 523. https://doi.org/10.2304/pfie.2013.11.5.523

McPhail, G. (2017). Curriculum integration in the senior secondary school: A case study in a national assessment context. *Journal of Curriculum Studies, 50*(1), 56–76. https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2017.1386234

McPhail, G. (2020). *An introduction to curriculum integration*. https://theeducationhub.org.nz/an-introduction-to-curriculum-integration/

McTighe, J., & Wiggins, G. (2012). *Understanding by design framework*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD).

Menter, I., Elliot, D., Hulme, M., Lewin, J., & Lowden, K. (2011). *A guide to practitioner research in education*. Sage.

Mergendoller, J. R. (2018). *Defining high quality PBL: A look at the research*. Buck Institute for Education.

Merriam, S. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2002). *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass. Retrieved from http://stu.westga.edu/~bthibau1/MEDT%208484-%20Baylen/introduction_to_qualitative_research/introduction_to_qualitative_research.pdf

Merriam, S., & Tisdell, E. (2016). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation.* Jossey-Bass.

Metcalf, M. (2023, April 19). *Leadership cohesion: A foundation for organizational performance*. Forbes Coaches Council. https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbescoachescouncil/2023/04/19/leadership-cohesion-a-foundation-for-organizational-performance/

Meyer, F., Bendikson, L., & Le Fevre, D. M. (2020). Leading school improvement through goal-setting: Evidence from New Zealand schools. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *51*(2), 365–383.

Miles, M., Huberman, A., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis: A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Ministry for Culture and Heritage. (2023). *The 1980s.* https://nzhistory.govt.nz/culture/the-1980s/1988

Ministry of Education, Singapore (2019). *Singapore students show well-developed thinking and reasoning skills: OECD PISA 2018 Study.* https://www.moe.gov.sg/news/press-releases/20191203-singapore-students-show-well-developed-thinking-and-reasoning-skills-oecd-pisa-2018-study

Ministry of Education. (2007). *The New Zealand Curriculum*. Learning Media.

Ministry of Education. (2019). *Supporting all schools to succeed: Reform of the Tomorrow's Schools system*. Ministry of Education.

Ministry of Education. (2025a). *Professional learning support for beginning principals.* https://pld.education.govt.nz/beginning-principals-support/professional-learning-support-for-beginning-principals/

Ministry of Education. (2025b). *TeachNZ awards.* https://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leadership-development/Leadership-programmes#:~:text=TeachNZ%20awards,collective%20agreement%20to%20be%20eligible.

Ministry of Education. (2025c). *Education Counts.* https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/number-of-schools

Ministry of Education. (2025d). *The school planning and reporting framework*. https://www.education.govt.nz/education-professionals/schools-year-0-13/administration-and-management/school-planning-and-reporting-framework

Mitchell, D. (2020). *What really works in special and inclusive education: Using evidence-based teaching strategies* (3rd ed.). Routledge.

Mockler, N. (2014). When 'research ethics' become 'everyday ethics': The intersection of inquiry and practice in practitioner research. *Educational Action Research*, *22*(2), 146–158.

Mombourquette, C. (2017). The role of vision in effective school leadership. *International Studies in Educational Administration, 45*(1).

Morrison, A., Morrison, A., Rigney, L. Hattam, R., & Diplock, A. (2019). *Toward an Australian culturally responsive pedagogy: A narrative review of the literature*. University of South Australia.

Murphy, J., & Torre, D. (2015). Vision essential scaffolding. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *43*(2), 177–197.

Murphy, J., Elliot, S. N., Goldring, E., & Porter, A. C. (2006). *Learning-centered leadership: A conceptual foundation*. Wallace Foundation.

Nadin, S., & Cassell, C. (2006). The use of a research diary as a tool for reflexive practice. *Qualitative Research in Accounting & Management*, *3*(3), 208–217.

Netolicky, D. M. (2020). School leadership during a pandemic: Navigating tensions. *Journal of Professional Capital and Community*, *5*(3/4), 391–395.

Niesche, R., & Gowlett, C. (2019). *Social, critical and political theories for educational leadership*. Springer.

Niyozov, S., & Hughes, W. (2019). *Problems with PISA: Why Canadians should be sceptical of the global test.* The Conversation. http://theconversation.com/problems-with-pisa-why-canadians-should-be-skeptical-of-the-global-test-118096

Noddings, N. (2005). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education* (2nd ed.). Teachers College Press.

Nowell, L. S., Norris, J. M., White, D. E., & Moules, N. J. (2017). Thematic analysis: Striving to meet the trustworthiness criteria. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, *16*(1). http://doi.org/10.1177/1609406917733847

O'Connor, P. (2018, 17 December). *End of Tomorrow's Schools neoliberal experiment*. University of Auckland. https://www.auckland.ac.nz/en/news/2018/12/17/equity-wellbeing-tomorrows-schools-review.html

O'Grady, K., Deussing, M-A., Scerbina, T., Tao, Y., Fung, K., Elez, V., & Monk, J. (2019). *Measuring up: Canadian Results of the OECD PISA 2018 Study.* Council of Ministers of Education, Canada. https://www.cmec.ca/Publications/Lists/Publications/Attachments/396/PISA2018_PublicReport_EN.pdf

O'Gorman, K. D., & MacIntosh, R. (2014). *Research methods for business and management*. Goodfellow Publishers Limited.

O'Neill, J. (2010). Teachers and teaching. In M. Thrupp & R. Irwin (Eds.), *Another decade of New Zealand education policy: Where to now?* (pp. 1–19). Wilf Malcolm Institute of Educational Research.

O'Neill, J. (2023). The Beeby-Fraser ideal: Is it time to abandon it? *Policy Quarterly*, *19*(3), 6–10.

Opdenakker, R. (2006). Advantages and disadvantages of four interview techniques in qualitative research. *Forum: Qualitative Social Research*, *7*(4).

Openshaw, R. (2009). *Reforming New Zealand secondary education: The Picot Report and the road to radical reform*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Openshaw, R. (2014). Picot Report/Tomorrow's Schools. *Dictionary of educational history in Australia and New Zealand (DEHANZ),* 7 January. Picot Report/"Tomorrow's Schools" - DEHANZ

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2018). *The future of education and skills: Education 2030.*

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2021). *Education at a glance 2021: OECD indicators*.. https://doi.org/10.1787/b35a14e5-en.

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2023). *Equity and inclusion in education: Finding strength through diversity*.. https://doi.org/10.1787/e9072e21-en.

Ortlipp, M. (2008). Keeping and using reflective journals in the qualitative research process. *The Qualitative Report, 13*(4), 695–705. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2008.1579

Pekarsky, D. (2007). Vision and education: Arguments, counterarguments, rejoinders. *American Journal of Education*, *113*(3), 423–450.

Peterson-Badali, M., Rees-Johnstone, E., Wilson, E., Freedman, B., Belchetz, D., & Grose, K. (2023). Canada (Ontario): A unifying theme for Canadian education is equity. In M. Dobryakova, I. Froumin, K. Barannikov, G. Moss, I. Remorenko, & J. Hautamäki (Eds.), *Key competences and new literacies*: *From Slogans to School Reality* (pp. 57-100). Springer.

Pillow, W. (2003). Confession, catharsis, or cure? Rethinking the uses of reflexivity as methodological power in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *16*(2), 175–196. https://doi.org/10.1080/0951839032000060635.

Post Primary Teachers Association (2008, September 30 – October 2). *Tomorrow's Schools: Yesterday's mistake?* [Conference presentation]. PPTA Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand. https://www.ppta.org.nz/about-ppta/publication-library/annual-conference-papers-2017-2018

Post Primary Teachers Association Senior Positions Advisory Committee (2016, September 27–29). *From the top corridor to the back field: Supporting senior leaders to lead effective change* [Conference presentation]. PPTA Annual Conference, Wellington, New Zealand. https://www.ppta.org.nz/about-ppta/publication-library/annual-conference-papers-2017-2018/document/352

Prain, V., Cox, P., Deed, C., Dorman, J., Edwards, D., Farrelly, C., Keeffe, M., Lovejoy, V., Mow, L., Sellings, P., Waldrip, B., & Yager, Z. (2013). Personalised learning: Lessons to be learnt. *British Educational Research Journal, 39*(4), 654–676.

Priestley, M. & Drew, V. (2019). Professional enquiry: An ecological approach to developing teacher agency. In D. Godfrey, & C. Brown (Eds.), *An eco-system for research-engaged schools*: *Reforming education through research* (pp. 154–170) Routledge.

Quinn, J., McEachen, J., Fullan, M., Gardner, M., & Drummy, M. (2019). *Dive into deep learning: Tools for engagement*. Corwin Press.

Rasmussen, P. (2013). The Folk High School. In Mayo, P. (Ed.), *Learning with adults: A Reader. International issues in adult education* (pp. 219–228). Springer.

Reeves, D (2007, December 1). *Making strategic planning work*. Retrieved from https://ascd.org/el/articles/making-strategic-planning-work

Reimers, F. M., & Chung, C. K. (Eds.). (2016). *Teaching and learning for the twenty-first century: Educational goals, policies, and curricula from six nations.* Harvard Education Press.

Rizvi, F., & Lingard, B. (2009). *Globalizing education policy*. Routledge.

Robinson, K. (2011a). *Out of our minds: Learning to be creative*. John Wiley & Sons.

Robinson, V. (2011b). *Student-centered leadership* (1st ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Robinson, V. (2022). *Virtuous educational leadership: Doing the right work the right way*. Corwin Press.

Sahlberg, P. (2022). Understanding equity in education. Part 1: What is Equity? *Scan: The Journal for Educators*, *41*(6), 4–7.

Saldaña, J. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Sanetti, L.M.H., Chafoulas, S.M., Fallon, L.M., & Jaffrey, R. (2014). Increasing teachers' adherence to a class wide intervention through performance feedback provided by a school-based consultant: A case study. *Journal of Educational and Psychological Consultation, 24,* 239–260.

Schlanger, P. (2018). Culturally responsive teaching: A reflection. *Journal of Pedagogical Research, 2*(2), 105–114.

Schleicher, A. (2014). *Equity, excellence and inclusiveness in education: Policy lessons from around the world, international summit on the teaching profession*. OECD Publishing. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264214033-en

Schollmann, A. (2017). *Briefing note: Background reading for a review of Tomorrow's Schools.* Ministry of Education. R-1093090-Dep-Sec-signed-Briefing-Note-Background-reading-for-a-review.pdf (education.govt.nz)

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, *5*(9), 9.

Scott, C. (2015). The futures of learning 3: What kind of pedagogies for the 21st century? (ERF Working Papers Series, No.15). UNESCO Education Research and Foresight.

Sebring, P. B., Allensworth, E., Bryk, A. S., Easton, J. Q., & Luppescu, S. (2006). *The essential supports for school improvement*. Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Seitz, S. (2016). Pixilated partnerships, overcoming obstacles in qualitative interviews via Skype: A research note. *Qualitative Research*, *16*(2), 229–235.

Senge, P. M. (2006). *The fifth discipline: The art & practice of the learning organization* (2nd ed.). Crown Business.

Service, B. (2016). Performativity in an era of mandated change: New Zealand teachers tell it as it is. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, *31*(1/2), 76–91.

Sewell, M. (n.d). The use of qualitative interviews in evaluation. The University of Arizona. Retrieved from http://ag.arizona.edu/sfcs/cyfernet/cyfar/Intervu5.htm

Silverman, D. (2000). *Doing qualitative research: A practical handbook*. Sage.

Slater, C. L. (2011). Understanding principal leadership: An international perspective and a narrative approach. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 39*(2), 219–227. doi:10.1177/1741143210390061

Smyth, J. (1989). *Critical perspectives on educational leadership*. The Falmer Press.

Smyth, J. (2018). A critical theory analysis of the production of toxic and zombie leadership in the context of neoliberalism. In E.A. Samier, & P. Milley (Eds.), *International perspectives on maladministration in education* (pp. 33–47). Routledge.

Smyth, J. (2021). Forward. In S. Courtney, H. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds). *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives and approaches* (1st ed., xvii) Bloomsbury Academic.

Solly, B. (2018). Distributed leadership. *SecEd*, *2018*(4), 6–6.

Sparks A. (2001) Myth 94: Qualitative health researchers will agree about validity. *Qualitative Health Research 11*(4), 538–552.

Spillane, J. (2006). *Distributed leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Spillane, J., Reiser, B., & Reimer, T. (2002). Policy implementation and cognition: Reframing and refocusing implementation research. *Review of Educational Research, 72*(3), 387–431. https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.3102/00346543072003387

Stake, R. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Stiglitz, J. E. (2012). *The price of inequality*. W. W. Norton & Company.

Strike, K. (2006). The ethics of educational research. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli, & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research* (pp. 57–73). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Strobel, J., & van Barneveld, A. (2009). When is PBL more effective? A meta-synthesis of meta-analyses comparing PBL to conventional classrooms. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning, 3*(1), 44–58. https://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1046

Sudman, S. (1998). Survey research and ethics. *Advances in Consumer Research, 25*, 69–71.

Suter, W. (2012). *Introduction to educational research. A critical thinking approach* (2nd ed.). Sage. Retrieved from http://www.sagepub.com/upm-data/43144_12.pdf

Tamim, S., & Grant, M. (2013). Definitions and uses: Case study of teachers implementing project-based learning. *Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-Based Learning, 7*(2), 72–101. https://doi.org/10.7771/1541-5015.1323

Taylor, P., & Medina, M. (2013). Educational research paradigms: From positivism to multiparadigmatic. *The Journal of Meaning-Centered Education*, *1*(2), 1–13.

Teddlie, C., & Reynolds, D. (2000). *The International Handbook of School Effectiveness Research*. Falmer Press.

The Economist. (2023). *The A to Z of international relations.* https://www.economist.com/international-relations-a-to-z#W

The Education Hub (2019, September 9). *ILE and collaborative teaching.* https://theeducationhub.org.nz/ile-and-collaborative-teaching/

Thomson, P., Lingard, R., & Wrigley, T. (2012). Reimaging school change: The necessity and reasons for hope. In T. Wrigley, P. Thomson, & R. Lingard. (Eds.), *Changing schools: Alternative ways to make a world of difference* (pp. 1–14). Routledge.

Thorpe, A., & Bennett-Powell, G. (2014). The perceptions of secondary school middle leaders regarding their needs following a middle leadership development programme. *Management in Education*, *28*(2), 52–57. https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1177/0892020614529808

Thrupp, M., & Alcorn, N. (2011). A little knowledge being a dangerous thing? Decile-based approaches to developing NCEA league tables. *New Zealand Annual Review of Education, 20*, 52–73.

Thrupp, M. (2007). Education's 'inconvenient truth': Persistent middle class advantage. *Waikato Journal of Education, 13*, 253–272.

Thrupp, M., & Lupton, R. (2006). Taking school contexts more seriously: The social justice challenge. *British Journal of Educational Studies, 54* (3), 308–328. https://doi-org.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/10.1111/j.1467-8527.2006.00348.x

Thrupp, M., & Willmott, R. (2003). *Educational management in managerialist times: Beyond the textural apologists.* Open University Press.

Timperley, H. (2015). *Professional conversations and improvement-focused feedback: A review of the research literature and the impact on practice and student outcomes*. Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL).

Timperley, H., Wilson, A., Barrar, H., & Fung, I. (2007). *Teacher professional learning and development: Best evidence synthesis iteration (BES).* Ministry of Education. https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/15341

Tobin, G. A., & Begley, C. M. (2004). Methodological rigour within a qualitative framework. *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, *48*(4), 388–396. doi:10.1111/j.1365-2648.2004.03207.x

Torre, D., & Murphy, J. (2016). Communities of parental engagement: new foundations for school leaders' work. *International Journal of Leadership in Education*, *19*(2), 203-223. DOI: 10.1080/13603124.2014.958200

Trilling, B., & Fadel, C. (2009). *21st century skills: Learning for life in our times*. Jossey-Bass/John Wiley & Sons.

Trujillo, T., & Douglass Horsford, S. (2021). Critical Perspectives in and Approaches to Educational Leadership in United States. In S. Courtney, H. Gunter, R. Niesche, & T. Trujillo (Eds), *Understanding educational leadership: Critical perspectives and approaches* (1st ed., pp. 15 - 28). Bloomsbury Academic.

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2015). *Rethinking Education Towards a global common good?*

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2017). *Accountability in education: Meeting our commitments*.

University of Waikato (2008). *Ethical conduct in human research and related activities Regulations 2008*. https://www.waikato.ac.nz/about/calendar/research-assessment-graduation/ethical-conduct/

Unluer, S. (2012). Being an insider researcher while conducting case study research. *Qualitative Report*, *17*(58), 1–14.

Vaismoradi, M., Turunen, H., & Bondas, T. (2013). Content analysis and thematic analysis: Implications for conducting a qualitative descriptive study. *Nursing & Health Sciences*, *15*(3), 398–405.

Vangrieken, K., Meredith, C., Packer, T., & Kyndt, E. (2017). Teacher communities as a context for professional development: A systematic review. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, *61*, 47–59.

Varadharajan, M., Parker, R., Eversole, R., Lester, L. & Lloyd, J. (2022). *Equity and excellence in education: Creating a system that is fair and inclusive for all*. Centre for Social Impact.

Voltage Control (2024, September 17). *Change management for leaders: Essential strategies*. https://voltagecontrol.com/articles/change-management-for-leaders-essential-strategies/#h-5-align-leadership-and-management-teams

Wagner, T., & Dintersmith, T. (2015). *Most likely to succeed: Preparing our kids for the innovation era*. Simon and Schuster.

Wisevoter. (2023). *Freedom Index by Country.* https://wisevoter.com/country-rankings/freedom-index-by-country/

Wood, B. E., & Sheehan, M. (2012). Dislodging knowledge? The New Zealand curriculum in the 21st century. *Pacific-Asian Education, 24*(1), 17–30.

Woods, D. (2014). *Problem-based learning (PBL)* (online). McMaster University. http://chemeng.mcmaster.ca/problem-based-learning

World Economic Forum. (2016). *The future of jobs: Employment, skills and workforce strategy for the fourth industrial revolution*. WEF_Future_of_Jobs.pdf (weforum.org)

Wright, N. (2018). *Becoming an innovative learning environment: The making of a New Zealand secondary school*. Springer.

Wrigley, T. (2004). School effectiveness: The problem of reductionism. *British Educational Research Journal*, *30*(2), 227–234.

Wrigley, T. (2011). Paradigms of school change. *Management in Education*, *25*(2), 62–66.

Wylie, C. (2009). Tomorrow's Schools after 20 years: Can a system of self-managing schools live up to its initial aims. *The New Zealand Annual Review of Education, 19*, 5–29.

Wylie, C. (2012a). *Vital connections: Why we need more then self-managing schools*. NZCER Press.

Wylie, C. (2012b, December 27). Time to learn from mistakes in schooling. *Otago Daily Times*. https://www.odt.co.nz/opinion/time-learn-mistakes-schooling

Wylie, C., & Mckinley, S. (2018). *Educational leadership capability framework*. Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand. https://teachingcouncil.nz/assets/Files/Leadership-Strategy/Leadership_Capability_Framework.pdf

Yazan, B. (2015). Three approaches to case study methods in education: Yin, Merriam, and Stake. *The Qualitative Report, 20*(2), 134–152. Retrieved from https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr/vol20/iss2/12

Yin, R. (2002). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage.

Zhao, Y. (2017). What works may hurt: Side effects in education. *Journal of Educational Change*, *18*(1), 1–19. DOI 10.1007/s10833-016-9294-4

Appendices

Appendix A - Email to recruit participants

Kia ora koutou

As you probably know, I am leaving to pursue my doctoral research project at the University of Waikato. My research project aligns well with the strategic review the BoT has undertaken over these last few months and the more recent development of the Annual Plan 2019.

The overarching question that underpins my research project is "How is a school vision in a NZ secondary school enacted? Sub questions are:

1. How do curriculum leaders and other teachers interpret and espouse a school vision?
2. In what ways and how do curriculum leaders and teachers translate their espoused vision into their pedagogical practices and professional behaviours?

I would like to interview FIVE curriculum leaders about how they interpret and espouse the aspirational goals underpinning the school vision and how they translate these into classroom practice. As a first step, I have decided to invite five curriculum leaders whom I rate very highly and whom I believe would have some really worthwhile perspectives on my research questions. Research ethics means I have had to send this as a blind email. However, I can say there are five of you from five different faculties, and there is a mix of men and women and experience. I have chatted to [the External Facilitator] about my 'Chosen 5'; she supports my selection. Your willingness to be one of my participants now does NOT compel you to participate. If your circumstances change and you can no longer participate, that is fine.

Ideally, I would like you to participate in two recorded semi-structured interviews and provide your *2019 Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* document for analysis – [the External Facilitator] will be helping you to co-construct these in early Term 1. I envisage the timing of the interviews to be as follows:

1st interview in Term 1, around Week 6 (2019), when the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals* action plans have been completed.

2nd interview in Term 3, around Week 9 (2019), when an 'interim' review of the action plans for *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals* would typically occur.

Each **interview** will last no more than 60 minutes, and you don't have to do anything but talk! Questions will be provided prior to the interview.

I have chosen you because your range of experiences will ADD VALUE to my research. You will NOT be named in the research or any subsequent publication, and every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, although this cannot be guaranteed. Ethical considerations will be followed at all times.

If you confirm your willingness to participate, I will provide a *Participants Information Sheet* outlining further research details and an *Informed Consent Form* to complete.

If you are willing to participate in my research OR would like more information about what it would involve, please let me know via email (dlgreenhill@braemar.academy.nz) or mobile (021 XXX XXX) or pop in and see me this coming week.

Nga mihi

Debbie

Appendix B - Participant Information Sheet

Project Title

Creating and sustaining pedagogical change: Enacting a school vision

Purpose

This research is conducted as a partial requirement for a Doctor of Education. It requires me (the researcher) to choose a topic and research it primarily through semi-structured interviews and document analysis.

What is this research project about?

This research project investigates how a school vision is enacted in a NZ secondary school. Specifically, how do curriculum leaders and other teachers interpret and espouse a school vision, and how and to what extent do they translate their espoused vision into their pedagogical practices and professional behaviours?

What will you have to do, and how long will it take?

I would like you to participate in two recorded semi-structured interviews, which should take no longer than 60 minutes each, and provide your 2019 *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* professional document for analysis. I envisage the timing of the interviews to be as follows:

1. First interview in the week of 4 - 8th March 2019 (Term 1, Week 6) when the action plans for the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals* have been completed
2. Second interview in the week of 16 - 20 September 2019 (Term 3, Week 9), when an 'interim' review of the action plans for 'Faculty/Department School-wide Goals' will typically occur.

You will be given an opportunity to review, amend, and approve your interview transcripts on each occasion - this could take approximately 30 minutes per transcript.

In the first interview, questions will focus on, but not be limited to four (4) key areas:

1. Understanding/interpreting the school vision
2. Promoting the school vision to faculty/department staff
3. Use of the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan* as a framework to articulate how the faculty/department will action school goals for 2019
4. Plans for translating the espoused school vision into pedagogical practice this year.

In the second interview, questions will focus on, but not limited to three (3) key areas:

1. The extent to which you, as a curriculum leader, have translated your espoused school vision into your pedagogical practice and professional behaviours
2. The extent to which your faculty/department staff have translated their espoused school vision into their pedagogical practice and professional behaviours
3. Implementing the action plans developed in the *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan* in Term 1: progress, challenges, and support needed.

Please Note:

- Opportunities to raise points that have not been covered sufficiently in the interview will be available

- An interview schedule detailing specific questions will be sent to you well before the interview.

What will happen to the information collected?

The primary use of the information is to produce a thesis for part two of the EdD qualification. However, articles and presentations may be the outcome of the research. Audio recordings, electronic copies of transcripts, notes, and documents will be kept on a password-protected computer. All information will be treated with the strictest confidentiality. No participants will be named in the publications, and while every effort will be made to ensure confidentiality, this cannot be guaranteed.

Declaration to participants

If you take part in the study, you have the right to:

1. Refuse to answer any specific question during the interview, withhold professional documentation, and withdraw from the study.
   Please note: any data collected prior to withdrawal may be used in the study to prevent the compromise of the data set. If you wish to withdraw at any stage, this point will be discussed with you.
2. Ask further questions about the study during your participation.
3. Request a copy of the thesis when it is available after examination.

Ownership of data or materials produced

As a participant, you will own THE transcript of YOUR interview and ANY WRITTEN professional documents you have. Any publications I create will acknowledge your input via your pseudonym.

Who is responsible?

If you have any questions or concerns about the project, either now or in the future, please raise them with me in the first instance. If we cannot reach a satisfactory resolution, please raise them with my academic supervisors, Dr Dianne Forbes and Dr Noeline Wright.

Researcher Debbie Greenhill Braemar Academy Mobile: Email:	
Supervisors	
Dr Noeline Wright Faculty of Education University of Waikato Tele: 838 4466 ext YYYY	Dr Dianne Forbes Faculty of Education University of Waikato Tele: 838 4466 ext XXXX

This research has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Ethics Committee on October 29th, 2018. Approval number: FEDU077/18

Appendix C - Consent Form for Participants

Project Title

Creating and sustaining pedagogical change: Enacting a school vision.

I have read the ***Participant Information Sheet*** for this study and have had the details explained to me. My questions about the study have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I also understand that I can:

1. Refuse to answer any specific question during the interview, withhold professional documentation, and withdraw from the study.
   Please note: any data collected prior to withdrawal may be used in the study to prevent the compromise of the data set. If you wish to withdraw at any stage, this point will be discussed with you.
2. Ask further questions about the study during your participation.
3. Request a copy of the thesis when it is available after examination.

I agree to provide information to the researcher and understand that while every effort will be made to protect my identity, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. I also understand that although my identity may be protected, the data shared with me will not remain confidential since it will be reported in the project.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the ***Participant Information Sheet****, specifically to participate in two recorded semi-structured interviews that should take no longer than 60 minutes each* and to provide a 2019 *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan/Review* professional document for analysis.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Date: _____

Researcher Debbie Greenhill Braemar Academy Mobile: Email:	
Supervisors	
Dr Noeline Wright Faculty of Education University of Waikato Tele: 838 4466 ext YYYY	Dr Dianne Forbes Faculty of Education University of Waikato Tele: 838 4466 ext XXXX

This research has been approved by the University of Waikato Faculty of Education Ethics Committee on October 29th, 2018. Approval number: FEDU077/18

Appendix D - Interview Schedules

Faculty/Department Leaders – Interview 1

Scheduled for: Mid - late April (Term 1)

Introduction – establishing trust and rapport

- Meet & Greet
- Talk about the key aim of the research
- Share the origins of my (researcher) own interest in the topic
- Why they have been selected as participants
- Confirm that I have permission to record the discussion
- Reassure participants about the confidentiality of comments made during the interview

Starting the interview – settling in and relaxing
Introductory Questions

1. Would you like to tell me a little about yourself regarding your role and experience as a faculty/department leader?
2. What opportunities have you had to engage in meaningful discussions about the school vision and the aspirational goals that underpin it?

Body of the interview – answering the research questions
*Being "An **inclusive educational community** that prioritises **equity** and **excellence** to enable students to have the **capabilities** and **values** to **positively contribute** to an **ever-changing world**"* are the aspirational goals that underpin the school vision. (Write on flash card for interviewer/participant)

1) Tell me what you understand by the school vision. (Prompt using examples such as - "an inclusive educational community", "equity and excellence", "capabilities", and "positively contribute" to an "ever-changing world")
2) What has influenced your understanding of the school vision? (Professional experiences? Professional readings? School setting?)
3) How do you promote your views to your faculty/department? (Prompt for examples)
4) The "Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan" (which includes detailed action plans) is a framework intended to help you articulate how your faculty/department will action school goals for 2019.
    a) Do you think the aspirational goals that underpin the school vision are captured in the school goals? In what ways …/if not, why not? (Prompt for examples)
    b) Has the framework helped you to link the school goals to classroom and faculty/department practice? In what ways has it…/if not, why not? (Prompt for examples)
    c) What (if any) barriers/impediments have you encountered using this framework as an implementation tool?
5) How will you know <u>when/how/if</u> the school goals link to classroom and faculty/department practices in your faculty/department? (What evidence will you collect?)
6) What evidence collected supporting school goals being enacted would you be willing to share with me as researcher (anonymity important)?

Finishing the interview – catching anything missed

1. The participant is invited to raise any points that still need to be covered and have not been covered so far.
2. The participant is thanked for giving up the time to participate in the interview.

After the recorded interview – things to follow up

1. Inform participants that a transcript from the interview will be prepared and sent to them for checking/revising/adjusting
2. The timing of Interview 2—planned for mid-late September 2019 (Term 3, Week 9-10) - may be better if rescheduled to Term 4 (early/mid-November).

Faculty/Department Leaders – Interview 2

Scheduled for: Mid - late November (Term 4)

Note: The *2019 Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Review* and other negotiated professional documents that provide evidence of pedagogical change will be used for analysis.

Body of the interview – answering the research questions

*Being "An **inclusive educational community** that prioritises **equity** and **excellence** to enable students to have the **capabilities** and **values** to **positively contribute** to an **ever-changing world**"* are the aspirational goals that underpin the school vision. (Write on flash card for interviewer/participant)

1. How have you, as faculty/department leader, been able to model/implement/develop strategies that connect the vision to classroom and faculty/department practice? (Prompt for evidence/examples)
2. How have your faculty/department staff been able to model/implement/develop strategies that connect the vision to classroom and faculty/department practice? (Prompt for evidence/examples)
3. Regarding implementing the action plans developed in the 2019 *Faculty/Department School-wide Goals Plan* in Term 1,
    a. What progress has your faculty/department made so far this year?
    b. Tell me about any challenges that you encountered.
    c. What support is needed to enable you and your faculty to implement your action plans successfully?

Finishing the interview – catching anything missed

1. The participant is invited to raise any points that still need to be covered and have not been covered so far.
2. The participant is thanked for giving up the time to participate in the interview.

After the recorded interview – things to follow up

1. Inform participants that a transcript from the interview will be prepared and sent to them for checking/revising/adjusting.

Senior Leader – Interview

Scheduled for: Mid-December 2019

<u>The focus of Questions for the Interview</u>
Divided into four broad sections:

1. Understanding/interpreting the school vision
2. Specific leadership responsibilities/actions related to vision enactment (Strategic/Annual Plan)
3. Role of SLT in leading/managing school-wide change
4. Future plans/support for vision enactment

Starting the interview – settling in and relaxing
Introductory Question

1. Would you like to tell me how things have gone for you this year regarding your role as a new senior leader?

Body of the interview
This interview will focus mainly on **<u>leading and managing organisational change.</u>**

Understanding/interpreting the school vision
*Being "An **inclusive educational community** that prioritises **equity** and **excellence** to enable students to have the **capabilities** and **values** to **positively contribute** to an **ever-changing world**".*

1. Tell me what you **understand** by the school vision and what you see as its **purpose**.
2. What opportunities have you had to engage in meaningful discussions with your allocated faculties/department about the school vision and how it will be enacted via the Strategic/Annual Plan?

Specific leadership responsibilities/actions related to vision enactment
The *Braemar Academy Annual Plan 2019* has identified you as leading several important areas:

1. Tell me about those key leadership responsibilities.

In reflecting on your overall planning/actions for this year:

2. What **progress** have you made so far? What c**hallenges** have you encountered?
3. What **support** have you had to help you implement your planned actions?
4. What **future support** would be helpful to/desirable?

Role of SLT in leading/managing school-wide change
Implementing the *Braemar Academy Annual Plan 2019* (and beyond) requires **fundamental shifts** in **thinking** and **doing** for many faculties and their teaching staff.

1. What **strategies** does the SLT have in place to **monitor** and **coordinate** the implementation of the Annual Plan across all the faculties and learning centres in the school?
2. What **opportunities** has the SLT taken to engage in **meaningful discussions** about changes in teaching and learning pedagogies across the school?
3. What are the key **outcomes** (successful or otherwise) of the *Braemar Academy Annual Plan 2019* concerning **changes in teaching and learning pedagogies***?*
4. What **strategies** does the SLT have in place to support those faculties (or staff) who have struggled to make the desired shifts in **teaching and learning pedagogies?**

Future plans/support for vision enactment

The *Braemar Academy Annual Plan 2019* is the first part of the Strategic Plan 2019-2021.

1. Tell me about the **plans for 2020**.
2. How have the *Braemar Academy Annual Plan 2019* outcomes been used to **inform planning for 2020**?
3. What support is needed to ensure all faculties and learning centres can implement the *Braemar Academy Annual Plan 2020?*

Finishing the interview – catching anything missed

1. The participant is invited to raise any points that still need to be covered and have not been covered so far.
2. The participant is thanked for giving up the time to participate in the interview.

After the recorded interview – things to follow up

Inform the participant that a transcript from the interview will be prepared and sent to them for checking/revising/adjusting.