Judging What They Do:

Formal, Informal, and Self Appraisal of

New Zealand (Rural) Primary School Principals

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ABSTRACT

As in other western market economies, New Zealand government education policy reflects neoliberal economic thinking, neo-conservative ideals and practices of an audit culture. New Zealand's self-managing schools' policy, introduced in 1989, changed significantly the complexity of school principals' work. Leadership frameworks and professional standards have 'captured' this complexity and support appraisal of principals.

Neoliberal/neoconservative thinking has also influenced educational leadership research by focusing on individual leader characteristics and specific cases of 'successful' school principalship. Instead in this study formative assessment research provides the lens to (re)consider appraisal experience of six school principals in small rural primary schools. Using a contemporary-pragmatist approach, interviews, abductive processes of analysis and literary forms of representation were chosen as appropriate research design elements. The research concern was: to what extent does principal appraisal recognise the nature and complexity of expectations of principal work in specific school settings and consider the human being undertaking this work?

Insights from this study come under the umbrella phrase *it is people that matter*. Thus, appraisal in this study reflects the nature of principals' work—in the significance of interaction, management and professional judgement—more than aspects of administration or assessment. Recommendations include: future appraisal policy values principal-appraiser interaction; principal preparation and professional development programmes advocate for the importance of self-care and management in principalship; and research further explores the nature and influence of school communities on principals' decision-making and the judgement of principals' work.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

x

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I dedicate this work to

Noela Olive Earl (née Cook) and

Anthony Colin Earl

CHAPTER ONE

THE INTRODUCTION

We only see what we look at. To look is an act of choice. As a result of this act,
what we see is brought within our reach - though not necessarily within arm's
reach ... We never look at just one thing; we are always looking at the relation
between things and ourselves.

-John Berger (1972, pp. 8-9)

My Interest in this Research

Growing up on a farm on Banks Peninsula with my sister and brother our
adventures made use of creeks and lookouts, old dumps and hideouts. There was
an exploratory nature to our play, with open spaces to roam accompanied by adult
confidence in our general safety and ability to look after each other. We had the
freedom to make mistakes through physical and imaginative play. This
exploration gave us opportunities for integrated problem solving and growing
self-confidence. During my study at teachers' college I recognised that my
experience of learning in childhood illustrated some facets of John Dewey's
(1859-1952) philosophy of education.

In my work as a teacher educator my research interests include aspects of
assessment and evaluation, appraisal and judgement, and particularly
conceptualisation and practices regarding the ways we, as individuals, may judge
our own work. Deciphering experiences of judgement is at the core of this thesis.
The challenges school principals face in relation to judgements made of their
work was brought home to me by a conversation I had with a woman principal in
a sole-charge position. The following account, *Whose judgement counts?*, is a
story related to teaching practice but the type of situation depicted could also
occur regarding decisions and actions within principalship.

Whose judgement counts?
Joan is well read, well qualified, and has a great deal of experience, including principalship
of more than one rural school. Students and staff love her for how she understands and

encourages each one. At the time she had moved to a new district, another schoolhouse, and was a sole charge principal.

During our usual catch-up, Joan began a story about a time she was teaching a group of children on the mat and a woman from the Ministry of Education, who had arrived early for a meeting, came into the classroom to wait for her. Joan started her story in a quiet thoughtful way, which signalled extra significance and caught my attention. She explained that one little girl on the mat was really the only one at her particular learning level, a level lower than the rest of the group. She told me the child displayed attentive behaviour during this time, although she made no attempt to answer any questions or otherwise contribute. After close to 10 minutes, the rest of the group went off to work independently while Joan and that one child relocated to work one-to-one at the girl's level. At the end of the session, Joan said, the Ministry representative criticised her for wasting the learning time of this lower-achieving student. As Joan told of this interaction I was convinced we would laugh and mock the Ministry observer for the lack of experience and poor understanding that was expressed in her judgement. I could immediately see benefits to the child from being included in this group session. However, Joan ended seriously and asked me what I thought. I thought the feedback given by the Ministry person was short-sighted, and that it should be dismissed immediately and I told Joan so. It was not as though the child was learning nothing!

Later on though, the subject came up again and I realised Joan was still considering the validity of that Ministry person's feedback. Could it be that the authority of government was influencing the power of that feedback? I reasoned with Joan that the time the child spent on the mat was not a waste. I suggested this experience modelled learning and conveyed a sense of progression in that subject. This short session may arguably have supported the girl's language development, certainly supported her sense of belonging to the class as a learning community, and reinforced the girl's inclusion for other members of that mat group. This was all reasoning that I was sure Joan already understood. This did not resolve the internal debate Joan was having, and she was not reassured. Nor, I found out later, was I the first or last person whose opinion she had sought on this matter.

How could one person's evaluation from so short a period of observation challenge the decision-making and confidence of this expert practitioner? What counts and who counts in the making of such judgements, and for the one observed and judged? For the purposes of this study, I categorised expectations and judgements of primary school principals as coming from three main directions: formal requirements and processes; local community expectations; and expectations these principals had of themselves.

John Dewey advocated examining the present with consideration and foresight of the future. He saw this aspect of inquiry as key to refining our actions in the

present for 'better' human experiences in the future (2006[1916]). Reading Dewey from my contemporary standpoint, this study became about (re)considering 'normal' expectations and practices of the judgement of New Zealand principals' work in order to contribute to any deliberations on change that will influence appraisal of school principals in the future.

The Significance of this Research

It is appropriate and timely to focus attention on judgement of New Zealand school principals in an increasingly audited educational environment. Education policy in New Zealand, as in other western market economies, reflects neo-conservative ideals and practices of an audit culture through calls to get back to the basics, and standards for accountability. Policy, in one form or another, influences the way school leaders generally, and principals in particular, think about and enact their work. The level of prescription and reporting in policy reflects the increased use of measurement that is made possible by rapid advances in digital technology and routine use of this technology in our public, professional, and private lives. It becomes apparent that performative knowledge(s) and capabilities are important criteria. In education, in common with shifts in all public services over last 30 years, there is increased regulation with tighter accountability and more reporting in exchange for a shrinking share of taxpayer money in government budgets. How does this focus on criteria and evidence relate to what is valued and prioritised in appraisal of New Zealand principals and by whom? To what extent are these economic and accountability trends already obvious in appraisal of principals? Whether this efficiency and control is the way we want to go, or if it is not, it would benefit us to know.

Internationally, there is no agreement that formal processes to appraise school principals are necessary. Different countries do things differently. In some European countries, such as Austria and Italy (OECD, 2013), school principals are not appraised because principals are not seen to be individually responsible for the quality of teaching and learning in the school. In New Zealand, however, the education policy of self-managing schools (introduced at the end of the 1980s) increased significantly the breadth and complexity of responsibilities for

individual principals (see Chapter 4). Gronn (2003) described principalship under self-management educational reforms as 'greedy work' meaning a role that takes up more and more time and involves high levels of engagement in performative work. Other New Zealand studies and reports have also identified principalship as highly stressful due to the quantity of work and long work hours. How do principals experience the demands of appraisal as an aspect of this intense and time-consuming work? How are work expectations weighed in appraisal judgements?

Since 1989, members of schools' local communities have had a voice in school operations through the parent-elected board of trustees (Wylie, 2012). Along with a board's formal and regulatory responsibilities, parents and the school community have expectations of principals and provide feedback through more informal interactions and communications whether such feedback is sought or volunteered. As the authors of *School Leadership and Student Outcomes: Identifying What Works and Why* (a Best Evidence Synthesis) made clear, "it is also important to find out how the regulatory, policy and *community contexts* [emphasis added] in which our school leaders work influence the priority they give to engaging in the particular leadership practices that have the greatest impact on student outcomes" (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009, p. 48). There is little in the literature on how to take into account the nature and expectations of 'community' when judging principals' work.

Expectations of principals include personal attributes. Educational leadership literature has given much research attention to the attributes or characteristics of individual leaders. Influenced by neoliberal and neoconservative ideas of individual responsibility, the ongoing search for a best descriptor of educational leaders defined by their style or model (e.g. 'charismatic', 'transformational', or 'values-led') is arguably going round in circles. Even if the 'ingredients' list of personal characteristics could be agreed upon, there is likely no one recipe for *effective and successful* principals in specific school settings. Meanwhile research work waits on how to recognise, develop, and judge desirable growth in principals' knowledge and skills.

Leadership frameworks and professional standards are influenced by educational leadership research, both directly and indirectly. These documents have been developed in a variety of national and state contexts, with the aim of clarifying the range of qualities and capabilities required of educational leaders (see Chapter 2). Reference to leadership frameworks and professional standards is a tool that principals, and their formal appraisers, use to evaluate their work. Bolden, Gosling, Maturano and Dennison (2003) point out that most of these frameworks "go beyond simple definitions of behaviours, to also consider some of the cognitive, effective and inter-personal qualities of leaders" (p. 37). For principals to meet these expectations is both a personal and professional undertaking. To what extent are judgements made of principals' work personal *as well as* professional? Considering the personal aspects of leadership and the importance of professional growth, the opportunity to research how people in principalship judge themselves becomes important.

Previous research on principals as educational leaders, discussed in Chapter 4, has examined the nature and extent of their work, looked for the most successful or effective leadership style(s), and contributed to the literature around leadership frameworks and professional standards' documents. Appraisal processes have also been reviewed (see Chapter 2). Despite research and policy efforts it appears that a 'best' way to appraise school principals has not been developed. Given the history of education policy shifts in New Zealand it is predictable that appraisal of principals is due for greater government attention. The Ministry of Education's Four Year Plan (2016) identified 'Quality pedagogical leadership and management' as one of the 'enabling conditions' for achievement of New Zealand's education goals. As I began this study I saw the exploration of these influences and trends on the appraisal of principals' work, from the perspective of the principal as important if not urgent.

An Overview of this Research Study

This is an exploratory study. Eisner said, "seeing requires sustained attention to the qualities of an object or situation; it is exploratory in character" (1988, p. 17). A theme of 'seeing' (noticing and recognising, Bell and Cowie, 2001) is threaded

through this work. Berger (1972) said, "we only see what we look at" (p. 8). My act of choice was to 'look at' appraisal of school principals in a way that would value the individuals in the complex and demanding work of principalship. Features of rural school principalship—having the same regulatory responsibilities but few staff and regular contact with students and parents—indicated that these principals were the appropriate participants for this study. The special nature of principalship in rural school settings made more visible, and more significant, their experience of mandated appraisal processes, local judgement, and self-judgement or 'self-appraisal' (see Chapter 2).

I use the word judgement in this thesis because the term encapsulates process and outcomes: the act of judging by one who judges, and/or the action on a person being judged. Judgements are made in relation to what is being used as a reference—the judge's point of view, values and what is valued, standards or other identified criteria, perceived norms or, more likely, a mixture of these things. As Garside (2013) said, "judgment is both common and central to human experience" (p. 11) and "judgment might be considered to be a 'common term' that conceptually relates various forms of decision and appraisal together" (p. 12). Judgement as a concept includes "assessment, interpretation and practical know-how, exercising the virtue of judgment, making judgments, evaluating well, and judging how to proceed" (Garside, 2013, p. 10). The application of judgement as a conceptual umbrella includes what I refer to in this study as local or informal appraisal, that is, local interactions between principal and school community members according to predominantly non-specified (ill-defined, even unspoken) expectations or criteria. Using Garside's unpacking of "judgment and its linguistic relations" (pp. 10-11), when I use the term appraisal in this study I am drawing on 'softer' humanistic connotations (prais[e] is part of ap*prais*al), a descriptive and more passive option within terms related to judgement. To appraise is to examine and consider the qualities, worth, or significance of something, to appreciate, describe, interpret and judge (cf. Eisner's connoisseurship and educational criticism, 1976).

I use the term *work* to refer to what principals do. In educational leadership literature it is more common to use the term *practice* as in *leadership practice* or *professional practice*. Connotations of the word practice include a sense of trial

and error, improving with practice, practising, having and making choices and exercising judgement. Principals do exercise judgement in their work just as medical doctors practice medicine, however, what is appraised is the work principals are held accountable for and paid for. By using the term *work* it is my intention to resonate with other peoples' experience of employment in other settings and to consider not only the tasks or episodes of school principalship but also the contribution of the individual.

Self-appraisal is an appropriate term for use in this thesis to refer to a principal's assessment by self and *for* self. Alternative terms have other connotations. The term 'self-review' is already being used to refer to a school's processes of review[1]. 'Self-assessment' has become commonplace in formal educational settings (Boud, 2000) and refers to students completing worksheets that ask them how they feel or to rate their work, and to self-report on perceived strengths and weaknesses. Self-assessment in classrooms could also refer to self-marking exercises. Thus self-assessment in classrooms tends to be assessment *of* self or assessment *by* self rather than assessment *for* self (Earl, K. 2013). In educational leadership literature the term self-assessment is rarely used instead the term 'reflective practice' is often used. The practice in reflective practice can refer to *reflection* or to *principalship* and, therefore, may cause confusion. Boud and Associates (2010) said that it is particularly important that individuals in complex and dynamic professional positions are able to be 'self-monitoring' and 'self-directing'. The dispassionate-sounding combination of self-monitoring and self-directing suggests a more-mechanistic process than the humanistic connotations of self-appraisal.

My word choice is worthy of comment because language influences our point of view—what we see and do not see—and also helps us curate our experiences and connect to the experiences of others. Crotty (1998) stated, "language is pivotal to, and shapes, the situations in which we find ourselves enmeshed, the events that befall us, the practices we carry out and, in and through all this, the understandings we are able to reach" (p. 87). Terms are dependent for meaning on

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[1] Refer to the Education Review Office website (ERO) for more information (http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/framework-for-school-reviews/self-review/)

how they are used. Language is socially developed (Charon, 2010) and language conventions—shared understandings of meanings—are socially constructed through 'interchange' within groups or cultures (Gergen, 2009). Williams (1985) highlighted that 'clusters' of words can help us determine meanings intended by 'user' groups and how key words can change meaning when in clusters, thus making clusters of words very powerful in capturing thinking by association or connotations. The word 'accountability', for example, is associated with words like control, reporting, performance, quality assurance, measurement, responsibility, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness, benchmarks and standards; some of them are positive sounding and some of them are not, depending on the audience. Terms such as mission statement, strategic plan, staff appraisal, outputs, efficiency, effectiveness, performance review, and performance indicators associated with the business sector and corporate management are now evident in education policies.

Drawing heavily on Dewey's pragmatism as a philosophy of education my contemporary-pragmatist research approach allowed me to 'see' this work from my own experience as a primary school teacher. At the same time I could also acknowledge more recent theoretical influences through attention to 'problemisation' and reflexivity in inquiry (more on this in Chapter 3). Interviews as method, abductive analysis processes, and three text forms in representation were chosen to suit the research focus and my research approach.

All knowledge is partial and underscored by our language use and how different societies and groups use language differently (Blumer, 1969; Charon, 2010). The language we use continues to be shaped by experiences of interaction in the present. Echoing Dewey and others, Davis, Sumara, and Luce-Kapler (2008) asserted:

> once something is presented to awareness, we can act on it. That doesn't imply control, but it does present at least some form of choice. Clearly, subsequent events are not *determined by* what is in the spotlight of consciousness, but those choices are usually *dependent on* what is highlighted. What we perceive matters. (pp. 34-35)

By drawing attention to my deliberate language use—"being attentive to vocabulary and to webs of association" (Davis, et al., 2008, p. 6)—I hope to avoid the idea that knowledge is 'fixed' or that my attention is anything but selective.

Statement of the research concern and research questions

In this thesis I assumed that the appraisal of principals acknowledged them as learners. I used educational assessment research as a disciplinary perspective to (re)consider aspects of appraisal. In particular I used Clarke's (2005) aspects of assessment *for* learning or formative purposes (i.e. questioning, shared criteria, self and peer assessment, and feedback) and Crooks' (1993) four questions to evaluate assessment practice (see Chapter 4). My research project was an inquiry into the extent principals' appraisal, as experienced by six New Zealand primary school principals in rural settings, reflects the nature of the purposes and practices of quality assessment, recognises the complexity of formal and informal expectations in school settings, and gives consideration to the human being undertaking this work. The research questions used as the basis of the interviews then became:

- How do New Zealand rural primary school principals experience formal appraisal requirements and practice?
- How do these principals experience 'being judged' by local community members such as parents?
- How do principals self-appraise their work?

To address appraisal aspects and not 'work' aspects in the content of this report was problematic. How can the judgement of a person's work be separated from the work? What is expected of principals may influence how individuals in this work perceive and enact principalship. These expectations, whether official and acknowledged, or informal and perhaps unacknowledged, also influence how the work of an individual principal is judged.

While I researched experiences of a given time and place within particular settings and contexts, insights from this thesis are intended to cross educational and perhaps leadership sectors, and differences in circumstances to link to more universal concerns. I advocate a reconsideration of principals' appraisal,

particularly factors that have led to conceptual dualities such as *effective* and *ineffective*, *successful* and *unsuccessful* (or *successful* and *failing*). Through this thesis I make a contribution to re-contextualise judgement of principals' work and draw attention to the humanity of any person who does the work of a school principal.

The thesis outline

This is a contemporary traditional thesis in education. As such, it has many traditional characteristics, particularly in its structural elements including titles and subtitles. It also has contemporary elements, such as the presentation of evidence using three different text formats including the use of research poems.

In Chapter 1, the Introduction, I talk about the development of this study, the significance of the research, give an overview of this study and research questions, introduce some key terms, and outline what is to come.

Chapter 2 is the background and context chapter designed to focus attention from the very broad to the particular. I begin with a discussion of the neoliberal market economies and audit cultures that influence education policy in countries such as New Zealand and introduce George Ritzer's model of McDonaldisation as a 'summary' for these broad trends. I describe educational policy (self-managing schools, leadership frameworks and professional standards for principals) as relevant to this study. I then focus on the nature of rural school settings to provide a rationale for my decision to choose principals from rural schools as participants.

Chapter 3 is my research approach and research design chapter. In this chapter, I set out the key tenets of my use of contemporary pragmatism. I then describe my qualitative methods of interviewing and analysis. I relate my decision-making processes for the three evidence chapters (Chapters 5, 6 and 7) and argue for my use of three different representations of quotations, stories, and poems. This chapter concludes with a section on ethical considerations and briefly introduces the participants.

In Chapter 4 I present four pillars of literature review. To start with there is an exploration of judgement as a concept used in philosophy and practice. I review then what is understood in assessment for formative purposes literature, based on

research in classroom settings, as a potentially useful perspective on appraisal of principals. To look at 'self' and self-appraisal I review sources from psychology and educational leadership theory and then examine what is known about appraisal of school principals, or more specifically what has been given research attention. In this chapter I set out the scope and place of the study.

Chapter 5 is my first evidence chapter. In this chapter I present, using quotes from the interviews, an exploration of factors in the principals' experience of formal appraisal (or mandated performance review). This chapter is concerned with what participants said about purposes, appraisers, processes, and reporting. The role of the boards of trustees, Ministry of Education, and Educational Review Office in principals' appraisal concludes this chapter.

Chapter 6 is the second evidence chapter. I use stories to illustrate these principals' experiences of, and responses to, local expectations and judgements (informal appraisal) from parents and other members of the schools' wider community.

Chapter 7 is the final evidence chapter in which I draw attention to the six different principals who participated in this study through the presentation of six poems I crafted from their words. In the second section, I more explicitly address their practice(s) of self-appraisal.

Chapter 8 is my discussion chapter. In this chapter I draw together commentary from literature and my interpretation of the evidence from this study. Insights on formal principal appraisal, local informal appraisal and principals' self-appraisal are discussed. The significance of interaction, school-specific knowledge, and professional judgement is discussed along with what was less significant.

In the closing chapter, Chapter 9, I present a review of the study and its contributions, along with recommendations for principals, professional development and future research. This chapter represents a temporary pause in the inquiry for 'better' principal experience through 'better' appraisal of principals' in the future.

CHAPTER TWO

THE GLOBAL AND LOCAL CONTEXT

My experience is what I agree to attend to. Only those items which I notice, shape my mind.

~ William James (2013[1890], pp. 380-381)

Broader global economic and political trends affect more localised moves in New Zealand government policy. In this chapter I begin with a discussion of the economic-political trends of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism and their influence on education. After attending to New Zealand's self-managing school policy–including the introduction of school boards of trustees[2] and the intensification of principals' work, particularly in rural contexts–I narrow the lens further to outline official expectations of principals' work and of annual appraisal. In the final section, I present my rationale for inviting principals of rural schools to participate in this study. These 'items', that I give attention to, shaped my thinking and the design of this study as well as contextualise principals' work and the appraisal of their work.

Broader Economic-Political Context

In this section, I attempt to distil neoliberalism and market economies with neoconservatism and an audit culture and their influence on education, on which there is extensive literature, into basic tenets useful to this study.

Neoliberalism and market economies

What is termed 'neoliberalism' has been recognisable since the Thatcher and Reagan years (British Prime Minister 1979-1990 and President of the United States 1981-1989 respectively). Conceived as a solution to the changed post-war political environment for ruling or wealth classes and fuelled by civil unrest in the

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[2] School boards of trustees are also referred to as school boards and boards in this thesis.

1960s and 70s, neoliberalism is now largely used as a derogatory term by critics particularly in education (e.g. Michael Apple, 2006, 2015; Stephen Ball, 1997; Henry Giroux, 2003; David Harvey, 2005, 2007; Cris Shore and Susan Wright, 1999, 2015). Other terms to refer to neoliberal economic and political contexts (also used by supporters) are 'market economies' or 'free market economies'.

Neoliberal government beliefs in markets as self-correcting, allocating resources efficiently, and serving the consumer has allowed the concept of 'the market' to be extended to a nation's economy (Dunning, Heath & Suls, 2004; Hammersley-Fletcher & Qualter, 2009; Skidelsky, 1996, 2005; Stiglitz, 2008). Skidelsky (1996) described how classical economics espoused the falsehood that: "markets are in general self-correcting, with market discipline a more effective tool than regulation or supervisory oversight" (p. 39). Key economic players in government, finance and banking, and major corporates have believed this[3]. Thus, in market-driven economies the state has been called on to create markets where there were none, such as in the public sector: education, health care, social welfare and environmental protections (Harvey, 2007; Shore & Wright, 1999, 2015). The values and practices of the private sector have been behind the privatisation of many public sector services and this is particularly evident in the United Kingdom and the United States of America but also in New Zealand. As Shore and Wright (1999) argued, "the assumption was that market forces provide the best model of accountability and, where they are absent, it is the duty of government agencies to introduce them through pseudo-market mechanisms"(p. 571). Davies and Bansel (2007), who used Foucauldian theory, also refer to 'quasi-entrepreneurial' and 'market models of action' and extend these ideas of the market to institutions, groups and individuals.

Neoliberalism, as an arguably more complex liberalism, holds individual rights as a core tenet. Harvey (2005) defines neoliberalism as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human wellbeing can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional

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[3] Skidelsky (1996) went on to say that global "events have raised fundamental issues about the extent to which different markets are or can be made to be efficient, rational and self-correcting" (p. 174).

13

framework characterised by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade" (p. 2). Neoliberalism is based on the economic-political belief that individual liberty and freedom are central values of society and are, therefore, 'sacrosanct' (Harvey, 2007). Human nature is defined in individualistic terms of rationality and self-interest. Society and community become viewed as a burden on taxpayers ('unaffordable') and an imposition on the 'free' individual. A nation's economic prosperity, rather than being a collective good experienced in society, is linked instead to individuals and private good. Traditionally public-funded 'social services' are included in neoliberal market 'reforms'. Peters commented that from a neoliberal viewpoint "there is nothing distinctive or special about education or health; they are services and products like any other, to be traded in the market place" (1999, p. 2 cited in Davies and Bansel, 2007, p. 254). Increased private funding and control are expected to replace public services.

Neoliberal ideas have spread across capitalist countries participating in a global economy, with powerful consequences. Under market globalisation those countries not participating fully in the market economy are talked of as 'being in the past' rather than as representing alternatives to the dominant (Massey, 2005). Massey also described how, in the same way, space is turned into time when countries that have not embraced neoliberal economic policy are not seen, and respected, as being on different paths (past and future), but are viewed as 'being behind' on the one and only conceivable path. Neoliberalism has become a single storyline, inevitable, 'common sense' approach to all aspects of government and the public sector in Western capitalist countries (Apple, 2006; Giroux, 2003; Harvey, 2007; Shore & Wright, 2015). The "rhetoric of competition, choice, quality and in particular, accountability, dominate" as desirable features of a healthy market economy (Cranston, 2013, p. 134). This rhetoric is "incorporated into the common sense way we interpret, live in and understand the world" (Harvey, 2007, p. 23). Cranston (2013) claimed that the concepts are "uncritically well established" (p. 134).

Massey describes such globalisation (neoliberal and capitalist) as a *project* (along with Giroux, Harvey, and others), "not a description of the world as it is so much as an image in which the world is being made" (2005, p. 5). Note, however, that although government implementation of neoliberalism is similar, we see different

versions in how different countries have taken up and applied neoliberal economic-political practices due to the political, traditional and historical forces within these different countries (Harvey, 2007). The continued global spread of neoliberalism and its apparent stranglehold on government policy in capitalist economies may not, therefore, be as inevitable at it seems (Harvey, 2007).

Massey (2005) summed up one contradiction, "neoliberal capitalist globalisation ... [is a] duplicitous combination of the glorification of the (unequally) free movement of the capital on the one hand with the firm control over the movement of labour on the other" (p. 4). 'Borderless' economic and regulatory environments result in a movement of capital and stricter controls on labour in favour of corporate 'owners' increasing wealth inequality, and undermining democratic principles. Under neoliberalism, the social collapses into the private, part-time labour replaces full-time work, trade unions are weakened, everyone becomes a customer, and 'the economy' takes precedence over social justice, socially responsible citizenship, and the building of communities. Where control is held in neoliberal systems of power, there are differences between claims made in political and economic rhetoric and relations in practice as experienced by people within organisations.

Neoconservative standards and audit cultures
Neoliberal systems of power operate through neoconservatives' audit systems and managerialism. Neoliberals, who call for *evidence* on which people and organisations can plan for improvement (to be more competitive in their markets), join forces with the neoconservatives who want to impose and monitor *standards* (Apple, 2006; Harvey, 2005, Smyth, 1993). The market is seen as "natural and neutral and governed by effort and merit" (Apple, 2006, p. 471). The neoliberal with an individualistic 'survival of the fittest' understanding of 'how the world works' demands that you 'pull yourself up by your own bootstraps' in a (stacked) system of market forces, while the neoconservative proposes regulatory standards and forms of accountability to ensure 'the best' (the 'fittest') receive the rewards.

The audit culture of market economies grew out of the financial management field of accounting (Shore and Wright, 1999). 'Audit culture', as a term, reflects a focus on imposed accounting. Accountability is "justified on the rational and

15

democratic grounds that those who spend taxpayers money should be accountable to the public" (Shore & Wright, 1999, p. 557). This advocacy of accountability extends to claims of the benefits of self-auditing (monitoring one's self rather than only being monitored). It is worth quoting Shore and Wright (1999) at some length.

> One of the main claims made by advocates of auditing is that it 'enables' individuals and institutions to 'monitor' and enhance their own performance and quality, and to be judged by targets and standards they set for themselves. This suggests that audit is an open, participatory and enabling process; so uncontentious and self evidently positive that there is no logical reason for objection. The new 'habitual grouping' of 'audit' with words like 'efficiency', effectiveness', 'best practice', and 'value for money' disguises its hierarchical and paternalistic roots and plays down its coercive and punitive implications. (p. 559)

Government policy and other systems in an audit culture propose that public trust in public institutions, and in public workers, is "to be secured by specifying performance compliance" (Møller, 2009, p. 38). Audit culture is also referred to as performance culture due to the need to perform what is to be counted (accounted for)(Ball, 2001). Auditing of what is to be performed and measured by or for 'an accountant,' is more than a benign collection of information. More than a record of accounts, "an audit is essentially a *relationship of power* between scrutinizer and observed (Shore and Wright, 1999, p. 558). Significantly "accountability is by and large located in a [sic] hierarchical practices of bureaucracy" (Møller, 2009, p. 38). Møller (2009) observed that accountability has replaced responsibility in audit cultures. Within audit or performance cultures, accountability assumes individual responsibility.

Citizens now experience surveillance at a number of levels by accountability systems, supported by the technological capabilities that make it possible. Shore & Wright (2015) claimed:

> [v]irtually every aspect of contemporary professional life and organisational behaviour is now subject to elaborate systems of audit and

inspection: everything from the provision of public services, education, policing and security, to health care, safety, energy conservation, information systems and the performance of individuals. (p. 22)

By auditing performance to prescribed standards, neoconservatives appease their ideas of maintaining 'acceptable' standards. In an audit culture "an entire global industry of measuring, ranking and auditing organisations and individuals has arisen based around ideas of enhancing 'quality', 'efficiency' and 'transparency'" (Shore & Wright, 2015, p. 22).

There is the assumption of positive outcomes from the measuring of efficiency and effectiveness. Consistent with notions of individualistic self-interest, those who criticise these assumptions are accused of being self-serving. Those in opposition are labelled anti-effort and anti-merit, 'going against nature', being biased, and anti the use of evidence (data), which makes it hard to argue against this rhetoric.

Neoliberal-education

In neoliberal market economies, education policy is founded on the notion that 'good' schools will succeed in the market. The consumers in an education market are the students and their parents, and schools compete for their custom. Competition is valued in neoliberal markets. Factors–or indicators–of quality, efficiency, and costs come under close scrutiny. Audit measures are needed to provide information as a basis for comparison so that parents and students can make their choice. Shifts to more private sector controlled education also reflect government beliefs that market-driven sectors are able to respond more rapidly to changing demands (of the 'knowledge economy', 'digital age', '21st century'). Apple (2006) commented: we have the "seemingly contradictory discourse of competition, markets, and choice on the one hand and accountability, performance objectives, standards, national testing, and national curriculum have created such a din that it is hard to hear anything else" (Apple, 2006, p. 469). These seemingly contradictory positions are working together (Apple, 2006; Ball, 1990; Smyth, 1993; Thrupp & Wilmott, 2003).

The influence on the education sector of both neoliberalism and neoconservatism has grown out of public criticism of schooling as being 'too soft', bureaucratic (costly) and slow to respond to the changing needs of the consumer (parents, carers, and students) (Hammersley-Fletcher & Qualter, 2009). Neoconservative rhetoric views state or public schools of the pre-1980s as undisciplined, failing to teach 'the basics', and suffering from the fallacy that 'everyone's a winner for participating'. Neoconservatives speak of an essentially mythical but nostalgic education past of greater control, meaningful competition, and a regulated foundational curriculum of reading, writing and mathematics. Apple (2006) suggested that what neoconservatives see as high standards is the preservation of a 'common' culture (revealed in the US as white middle class and Christian norms). Apple, who seems to find neoconservative agendas more objectionable than neoliberal, said neoconservatives are after tougher standards in "an attempt by the middle class to alter the rules of competition in education in light of the increased insecurities their children face" (Apple, 2006, p. 476). Feeling threatened that their way of life is dissolving, neoconservatives, often of the middle classes, want to keep control of management and accountability systems to motivate people to keep to 'their' standards.

Apple (2006) emphasised that the strength of neoliberalism is in combination with neoconservatism. The overall aims of this alliance, Apple said, "are in providing the educational conditions believed necessary both for increasing international competiveness, profit and discipline, and for returning to a romanticised past of the 'ideal' home, family, and school" (p. 469). When accompanied by neoliberals who want to punish those who do not meet the standards (in order to 'encourage' them to try harder, to make more effort), Apple (2006) concludes we have a 'meritocracy with punishment'.

There have been studies, particularly in the United Kingdom and New Zealand, on the effects of these trends on education for students, teachers, school leaders including principals and society (Bagley, Woods & Glatter, 2001; Ball 1993, 1997; Blackmore, 1999; Bottery, 2006; Gewirtz, Ball, & Bowe 1995; Thrupp, Harold, Mansell & Hawksworth, 2000; Thrupp 2014, 2015; Walford, 1993). One example is Lauder and Hughes' (1999) longitudinal study on effects of education markets on school performance in the United Kingdom and New Zealand. They

claimed that market approaches to raise standards and promote equality of opportunity in education have been countered by research that "has shown that there is considerable inequality of parental choice based on social class, gender and ethnicity" (p. 1). These authors found that in effect education markets do not work because they "trade off the opportunities of less privileged children to those already privileged (1999, p. 2). Lauder and Hughes concluded that "markets in education are likely to lead to a decline in overall educational standards because they have a negative effect on the performance of working class schools, while leaving middle class schools untouched" (1999, p. 3). In short, an education market does not impact on outcomes for students as proposed because it is not efficient or equitable, but has an impact on both staff and students' experience of schools.

Others focus on democracy as the agenda for education rather than economic interests. In Cranston, Kimber, Mulford, and Keating's (2010) article 'neoliberalism' as a term is noticeable by its absence. They reminded readers of three purposes of education. These three purposes are democratic equality, social efficiency and social mobility (pp. 183-184). They define *democratic equality* as " preparing all of its [society, Nation-state] young people to be active and competent citizens" (p. 183). Education is then about public good and social justice. *Social efficiency* is "preparing young people to be competent and productive workers" (p. 184) and *social mobility* is "providing individuals with a credential which will advantage them in a competition for desirable social positions" (p. 184). Thus the purposes of social efficiency and social mobility are for more personal or for private benefit than for public good. The key words 'efficiency' and 'competition' in these two quotes highlight neoliberal concepts and these authors recognised there has been what they call "a diminishing focus on the public (democratic equality) purposes of schooling" (p. 184) through policy and funding initiatives.

Governments struggle with public education. They have problems with costs, control and performance (Thrupp & Wilmott, 2003). Well-educated, professional staff and the complex relational nature of teaching and learning make public education systems and policy difficult to control. International rankings allow comparisons between 'national education systems' putting educational

performance on a world stage. Governments respond to these challenges within the particular 'progress' (trajectory) of their own nation's history.

Education Policy in New Zealand

An example of self managing schools

The New Zealand government introduced a devolved education system of self-managing schools in 1989[4]. Under this system many responsibilities for education provision in schools (administration, staffing and professional development, maintenance and resourcing) shifted from national Department of Education, regional Education Boards and school inspectors to a Ministry of Education, school boards of trustees, and the staff of individual schools (Crooks, 2003). This system was "implemented faster" and the changes "have gone further than anywhere else in the world" (Lauder and Hughes, 1999, p. 36). The *Tomorrow's Schools* reforms have been described as 'extreme' (Wylie, 2012) or 'highly autonomous' (e.g. Morris, 2014; Wylie & Bonne, 2014).

The central tenet of New Zealand's *Tomorrow's Schools* reform was school governance by a local school board as a means of increasing parent influence on their children's schools and making schools more responsive and accountable to parents and the community (Smyth, 2011; Wylie, 2012). One of the issues with centralised control was the recruitment of school staff. Until 1989, Education Boards had considered seniority and grading in appointing principals to vacancies (Alcorn, 2011). Noeline Alcorn commented, "The issue of 'fit' between an applicant and the school community was not always accorded high priority" (p. 127). Through the board of trustees, a school community would be able to hire the school principal, determine 'local curriculum' and be involved in school decisions particular to their concerns (Wylie, 2012). At the time of implementation, the new primary school boards of trustees were said to be particularly keen to have more control over property, equipment and staffing (Wylie, 2012).

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[4] The 1988 government White paper *Tomorrow's Schools: The Reform of Education Administration in New Zealand* based on a Taskforce report (Taskforce to Review Education Administration, 1988).

Board of trustees' members are elected parents, the principal, and a teacher representative in primary schools (with the addition of a student representative in secondary schools). The board sets priorities and determines how budgets will be spent, buying their goods and services directly from public or private providers with most of the funding coming from central government. Boards make decisions about upkeep of their local school and also the kind of working relationship they want between school and community (Wylie, 2012). Reporting and commentary in the media, particularly to encourage nominations for board of trustees' elections, emphasises school responsiveness to community and parent wishes raising expectations. Local, even individual, expectations were added to the growing list of broader political and social expectations of schools.

Market models of educational reform have also revealed tensions between public and political understandings and professional understandings of education. Lauder and Hughes (1999) pinpointed funding and zoning as two central issues of ongoing contention between the understandings and values of education professionals and parent groups, and between community and market priorities. Although New Zealand public school policy has not gone this far, under a full-market model schools would have control over salary funding[5] enabling boards to employ more, and cheaper teachers, or, for example, deciding to buy digital technology instead. These authors claim that school control of salary budgets could lead to a huge variation in teacher-student ratios across schools, and employment insecurity would affect parent/board of trustees-teacher cooperation. Still the decentralisation of an education system reveals tension in the power relations between politicians and professionals (Møller, 2009).

The shift to less direct forms of government control through the introduction of school boards of trustees did not last. The new Ministry of Education (MoE) soon set up new planning and reporting requirements through a school's charter. Each charter includes a strategic plan, annual targets and priorities. A school's charter needs to be ratified by the Ministry of Education and is a 'quasi-legal contract' between the government and each school (Lauder and Hughes, 1999). The

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[5] This was proposed and trialled as 'bulk funding' but was stalled by professional and public concerns.

Education Standards Act (2001) requires an annual report that clearly identifies what was achieved and reports on "an analysis of any variance between the school's performance and the relevant aims, objectives, directions, priorities or targets set out in the school charter" (section 87, clause 2 of the Act) (Crooks, 2003). The Ministry also set guidelines that schools are expected to implement to operationalise government policy (Alcorn, 2011; Wylie, 2012). The Ministry determines National Education Guidelines (NEGs being education goals and curriculum policy, National Standards policy[6]) and National Administration Guidelines (NAGs, which "set out statements of desirable principles of conduct" that school boards with Principals and teaching staff, are *required* to demonstrate). There is also the Education Review Office (ERO)[7], which is a monitoring arm. This legislation (Crooks, 2003) and the Education Review Office (Codd, McAlpine & Poskitt, 1995; Crooks, 2003) saw the strengthening of central over local control.

Although 1989 is the quoted date for the introduction of New Zealand's *Tomorrow's Schools*, the process of various reports and amendments to the Education Act along with a change of government meant the New Zealand version of self-managing schools reform took place over the period 1987-1991 (Lauder and Hughes, 1999). Crooks (2003) suggested:

> [t]here is no doubt that there is merit in schools establishing goals for improvement, finding ways to monitor progress towards these goals, and reviewing their success or lack of success in making the desired improvements. … A key point, though, is that people need to own such strategies–to adopt them because they believe in their value, rather than be forced reluctantly to adopt them. (Crooks, 2003, p. 6)

Lauder and Hughes (1999) had come a similar conclusion regarding these developments.

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[6] See http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/legislation/the-national-education-guidelines/ and http://www.education.govt.nz/ministry-of-education/legislation/nags/

[7] ERO acknowledges that "ERO's reports contribute sound information for work undertaken to support the Government's policies" Rob McIntosh, Acting Chief Review Officer (Forward in ERO, 2014).

> The overriding point to be made about the history of this struggle is that by and large the new system of schooling was imposed. It had little popular support, but was driven by an ideological blueprint supported by the rather scant evidence in favour of markets. (p. 41)

Self-management gave schools and their communities a wide range of decisions to make, gave parents more choice of where to enrol their children in school, and brought schools under a competitive model. The government at the time saw both choice and competition as essential for improving educational outcomes. The dictates of the market would champion parental rights to send their children to the school of their choice. As Lauder and Hughes (1999) explained, even if a relatively small percentage of parents could afford to drive past their neighbourhood school then the viability of that school, and the right for a community to have a local school, come into question. Rural areas, in particular, are vulnerable to student enrolment numbers for the viability of their 'local' school.

Rural school settings

In New Zealand 34.9% of the population are estimated to live rurally[8] (New Zealand Government Statistics for 2014). Views of rurality (and small schools) are contested (Starr & White, 2008). Rural places tend to be defined by characteristics they have or do not have so could be defined simply as 'non-metropolitan' or 'non-urban'. Research literature in North America and Australia paints a negative picture of 'the rural' as perceived by many. Balfour, Mitchell and Moletsane (2008) found the term rural has associated "contextual assumptions concerned with deficit and disadvantage" (p. 98). Perceptions of 'rurality' being as passive, static, and backward with 'the rural' being in need of rescue, help, or pity (Budge, 2006; Corbett, 2007; Corbett & White, 2014). Corbett (2007) suggested, perhaps the most positive views people hold are of nostalgia or romantic ideal of simplicity and innocence. Others say 'rural' is more about a way of life than about location (Howley, Theobald, & Howley, 2005).

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[8] Total of population estimates, all ages, in district areas outside of 12 identified cities and Auckland as territorial authorities [TA] (NZ Government statistics from NZdotstat.stats.govt.nz/wbos/index.aspx# retrieved 14/15/15).

Rural communities can be conservative, news travels quickly, and community networks can be invasive (Hill, J., 1993).

'Rural' education in New Zealand cannot be captured by descriptions of poverty and disadvantage. New Zealand rural schools tend to have small class sizes, open playgrounds with extensive grass areas and trees, and often a 20 - 25 metre swimming pool (if the community has supported the ongoing upkeep of this facility). There is reportedly a 'family atmosphere' with children mixing across age groups in class time as well as intervals (recess), lunch breaks, and regular school-wide events. A significant feature noted across national contexts about many rural schools is the high standards of children's behaviour and participation as well as learning achievement (Barley and Beesley, 2007). These factors may prompt parents to seek out small rural schools for their child's education through their primary school years (Walker & Clark, 2010).

The boundaries between school and the school's community are often blurred in rural areas. Community members, not just parents of children at the school, are highly likely to be involved in a rural school (Dunning, 1993). Schools typically act as an employer in the area providing work for a small number of other staff (mainly part-time) – relief teachers, a school administrator/receptionist, perhaps a groundskeeper, bus driver(s), and teacher aides. Although parents and businesses support the local school in urban settings too, in rural settings it is a small number of people who are available to volunteer for fundraising, working bees, as drivers of private vehicles to get children to field trips and other cultural or sports events, act as judges and prize-givers, parent helpers in class and on camp, set designers and costume makers for the school production, and as the audience.

In rural areas, the local school has a role in the community beyond government-regulated teaching and learning during school terms. The school buildings, the school grounds, adjacent or near to a community hall, sees the school act as a gathering place, "a venue for the community" (Barley & Beesley, 2007) and hub for a community events. The use of the school might be based on convenience of the location as a venue (e.g. acting as polling stations in government elections) or because of the amenities (e.g. the school pool during summer holidays) or based

24

on the importance of this meeting place socially in the school's community (e.g. parents meeting in the school car park when picking up children).

Governments, like the urban public, have a 'metro-centricity' in views (Bartholomaeus, Halsey, & Corbett, 2014). Budge (2006) stated, "rather than viewing rural communities as places where people live, policy makers have viewed rural areas as sectors of a national economy" (p.2). In equating 'quality of life' with 'levels of income', as Gruenewald (2003) commented, a government's "educational concern for local space is overshadowed by both the discourse of accountability and by the discourse of economic competitiveness to which it is linked" (p. 3). Education policy implementation is simply rolled out like carpet over all settings with compliance requirements being the same for all schools no matter their size or location (Dunning, 1993; Miller, 2015).

At the same time, every school (as a community) and the community in which schools operate are different. All schools are geographically situated but they are also dynamic and evolving. School-specific factors include student background, community type, school history, organisational structure and school culture, human resources such as teacher experience and competence, fiscal resources, material conditions, and school size (Corbett & White, 2014; Thrupp, 2012). Responding to diversity, inequities and the special needs of students and the school's unique community has arguably significant local influence on schools (Dunning, 1993; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003;Thrupp, 1999) and on principals' work (goals and priorities) (e.g. Alcorn, 2011; Collins, 2004; Robinson, et al., 2009; Strachan, 1997, 1999). Robinson et al. (2009) suggested it was "important to find out how the regulatory, policy and community contexts in which our school leaders work influence the priority they give to engaging in particular leadership practices" (p. 48). There is little or no attention in the literature, to date, on how to take into account the complexity and constraints of local conditions and expectations in the appraisal of principal work.

Principals' work
New Zealand's self-management policy for schools, and subsequent amendments to the Education Act, increased and intensified school principal responsibilities. This has been well documented in the literature (e.g. Gronn, 2003; Keown,

McGee & Oliver, 1992; Harold, 1995; Robertson, 1995; Wylie, 1995, 2011, 2012). An OECD report spelt it out: "analysis of practice has shown that in increasingly decentralised and accountability-driven environments school leaders take on a broader set of tasks" (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008. p. 61). Primary school principals have a broad range of responsibilities requiring significant levels of expertise: regulatory and administrative, financial, public relations and communication skills, human resource, marketing and communications, and educational aspects of school operations.

Principals were given greater regulatory and compliance responsibilities through the reforms. The National Education Guidelines, NEGs, and the National Administration Guidelines, NAGs, involve administration in the preparation of various forms of evidence and reports including development of school charters, annual strategic plans, school-based policies and budgets along with records of achievement data, all of which are audited. This increase in 'paperwork' in increasingly digitised forms presents challenges for principals in regard to accuracy of their record keeping, organisational skills, and information and communication technology skills (ICT). The administration associated with these regulatory responsibilities is time-consuming and increases workload pressures (Robertson, 1995). Tackling new tasks is likely to be stressful and high accountability systems can lead to high blame environments (Crawford, Kydd, & Riches, 1997). Principals complete much of a school's compliance work. Research into school compliance has found that principals believe that government accountability has increased pressure on them (Alcorn, 2011; Gronn 2003; Wylie, 2012).

Strategic planning, budgeting, fundraising, and partnering arrangements are all aspects of primary school principals' increased financial responsibility. At the time of the introduction of self-managing schools in New Zealand principals were keen on having this flexibility (Alcorn, 2011; Keown, et al., 1992). However, along with greater flexibility in financial decisions came the time consuming task of fund-raising (Gordon, 1994: Lauder, Hughes & Watson, 1999). Principals and boards of trustees communicate with commercial organisations, foundations and charities in efforts to gain financial support and sponsorship.

26

Principals are responsible for the appointment of staff and teacher performance appraisal. This requires skills in personnel management and the management of the relationship between principal and teachers. Principals are increasingly held accountable for teacher excellence. The *Best Evidence Synthesis* on school leadership and student outcomes (Robinson, et al., 2009) identified a key action for a school leader is to promote and participate in teacher learning and development.

Principals are also required to monitor and gather evidence of educational effectiveness using student achievement data at the school level and are seen to have a key role in influencing student outcomes (see Dinham, 2009; Hattie, 2009; Robinson, et al., 2009). Robinson et al. (2009) summed it up: "in a nutshell, the closer leaders get to the core business of teaching and learning, the more likely it is that they will have a positive impact on their students" (p. 201). Less than 10 years after the introduction of the New Zealand version of self-managing schools, Wylie (1997) found that principals' attention had been deflected away from concerns of classroom teaching and learning and student achievement by the demands of self-management. Since then the tide had turned again, researchers began advocating for principals to focus more on student achievement. Then in 2010 the government introduced a National Standards policy that set clear targets that students need to meet in reading, writing and mathematics in the first 8 years at school. Assessment and reporting on student progress and achievement in relation to the standards is now a major focus of the work of primary schools.

Principals also have a role in communicating government policy to their communities. This has included changes regarding learning, teaching, curriculum[9] and assessment[10] with government rhetoric advocating education for economic advantage (Court & O'Neill, 2011) and policy with an emphasis on students gaining skills to engage in a global marketplace (Fitzgerald & Gunter,

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[9] For example, literacy and numeracy programmes, and the 1990s and 2007 revised curriculum documents including new key competencies, vision, principles and values.

[10] Introducing National Certificate in Educational Achievement (NCEA) in secondary schools and National Standards in primary schools.

2011). Principals are also required to turn more attention to public relations and sustaining their school's reputation.

Due to competition between schools for student enrolments, it is important that principals develop positive public perceptions of their school through communicating with parents and the community that their school has the resources and skills to provide a quality education. This often involves drawing favourable media attention, which needs additional communication and media management skills. The nature of student, parents and community populations have increased in ethnic and linguistic diversity, and there are widening income gaps, which require more nuanced approaches to communication with the schools' community.

This relationship between schools and school communities as partners in children's education is in some tension with attracting the loyalty of the school's 'customer' students and their parents (Thrupp, Harold, Mansell, & Hawksworth, 2000). Thrupp and Wilmott (2003) pointed out that competition for students (roll numbers equates to funding), and competition for the best students (contributing to school achievement data and reputation) impact on any relationship with the customer to continue custom: "*markets and marketization undermine the conditions for authentic trust and commitment*" (p. 86). Even in rural areas, children will be transported to the parents' school of choice or allegiance (O'Neill, 2013; Walker & Clark, 2010), which reflects parents' confidence that the school is a 'successful one' (O'Neill, 2013, p. 72).

Alongside official expectations, parents as boards of trustees and a school's 'community' also have expectations of school principals. The promotion of schools as being tailored to the nature and needs of their local communities combined with principals being in the employment of the school's board of trustees has led to increased parent expectation of 'their' school's responsiveness to their interests. Accountability in New Zealand education goes from schools to government authorities, from schools to their communities, and schools to the public with principals caught in the middle (described by Alcorn as 'meat in the sandwich', 2011). This also means there are a number of 'judges' and sources of judgement of principal work.

28

New expectations have demanded new knowledge and skills, and new professional, organisational and relational capabilities. Depending on how skilled individual principals are in various aspects of their role, these tasks can be difficult and time consuming. The challenge for principals centres on the range of responsibilities requiring extensive expertise in an environment of limited system-level support, limited formal professional development for principals, and few opportunities for collaboration (see Wylie, 2012). Literature from the last three decades has made clear that New Zealand principals have a broad range of responsibilities as school leaders and that they work in complex and dynamic environments.

Changes in demands and expectations on school principals accompanied by higher levels of accountability has increased uncertainty and instability ("Are we doing enough? Are we doing the right thing? How will we measure up?" Ball, 2001, p. 212). The "constant doubts about which judgments may be in play at any point" (p. 212) can mean that a principal prioritises those aspects that will be 'counted', often the aspects that are more easily observed and measured. A conscious prioritising of what is visible becomes a performance (Ball, 2001). Performativity is in itself recognition of the power relationship within judgements and it is this perceived power (by principal and/or by community members) that influences the relationship between principals and their communities. The special nature of rural communities adds further complexity for school principals.

Principals' work in rural settings
Although they have the same regulatory and statutory work expectations and responsibilities as urban principals, principals in smaller rural schools have other responsibilities too. In some ways, principals' work in rural schools has not changed. Being a rural principal brings greater pressures on the individual's property maintenance and housekeeping skills. Tradespeople may not be available to attend to any immediate issues so a principal's work could include managing livestock that cross the school boundaries, fixing the plant for the school's water supply or heating, fixing technology issues (computers, the printer), changing light bulbs, and perhaps maintaining the aforementioned swimming pool.

The OECD (in their 28 country report, Pont, et al., 2008) emphasised teaching as a significant responsibility for rural principals in terms of time.

> Principals in primary schools and smaller schools in rural areas must comply with the same accountability and legal requirements (such as employment and health and safety law for example) with fewer resources than their counterparts in larger schools. Some principals, especially in rural schools and or smaller schools, spend a relatively high proportion of their time compared to other schools either teaching classes or covering for colleagues. These factors can exacerbate the burdens on principals. (Pont el al., 2008, p. 77)

Addressing accountability requirements while having a teaching role with multi-age classes adds complexity to the range of expectations of rural principals.

Social and professional isolation may also be factors for rural school principals. A survey of Tasmanian principals of schools with fewer than 200 pupils found: "the special characteristics of small schools may include the absence of senior staff, administrative assistance on a part-time basis only, conservatism and role conflict within the community, and lack of professional interaction" (Ewington, Mulford, Kendall, Edmunds, Kendall, & Silins, 2008, p. 545). These smaller schools have fewer staff, both professional and support staff. Without a senior management team there are a limited number of people with the interests and capabilities for a school principal to delegate to or share professional responsibilities with. Martin (1999) in her New Zealand study found that rural principals missed the range of skills in the staff of a large school. Rural principals have few people around them for peer support (Hill, J., 1993) and to 'bounce ideas off' (Martin, 1999). Clarke and Wildy (2004) had the view that having a limited number of colleagues to discuss practice with was an 'impediment' to professional learning.

Having fewer staff overall, and an absence of senior management in particular, means these schools tend to have a flat management structure with fewer layers of designated responsibility, if any. There are also no intermediaries between the principal and a student with issues or a member of the community with enquiries or concerns. On the other hand, principals and teachers in small schools share a

small school staffroom and this, along with their teaching role, enhances opportunities for collaborative discussion and staff involvement in decisions. Because they are party to staffroom conversations, rural principals are then likely or able to understand the practical implications of policy implementation, be supportive of staff personal circumstances, and recognise opportunities for staff professional growth.

The breadths of duties and roles of a rural school principal are more evident to members of the school as a community and the community in which the school operates. The work of the principal as an individual is also more *visible* to members of the surrounding community, whether they are parents of children at the school or not. Mohr (2000) referred to this as a more 'intimate' way a rural school community relates to the school principal. The school principal may have other roles in the community and expectations of them beyond the school gate. They may be a member of local clubs or committees involved in community events. Nolan (1998) called this an *extended* role that small schools[11] and their school leader have in the community. Some of these roles can become established expectations of 'the school principal' over time. Principals and their families tend to be an integral part of the community. This adds to the challenges of rural principalship (Brown-Ferrigno & Allen, 2006; Duncan & Stock, 2010). In short, the principal is likely to never be off duty (Cruziero & Boone, 2009).

Leadership frameworks
Societal expectations of all school principals are reflected in official documents. Attempts at framing the responsibilities of a school principal were first made in the development of principal profiles (Fullan, 1988; Leithwood & Montgomery, 1982). More recently leadership frameworks have been developed to provide some order and definition regarding the multiple and interrelated aspects of a principal's role. Educational leadership frameworks are important in setting boundaries and clarifying expectations of school principals and have implications for individual workload. There are a great many of these frameworks prepared internationally on behalf of organisations, states (in Australia and the US), and at

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[11] Nolan was referring the one-teacher schools. Also referred to as sole-charge schools where the principal is also the only fulltime teacher.

a national level. In New Zealand, the framework developed is called the Kiwi[12] Leadership for Principals (MoE, 2008).

The Kiwi Leadership for Principals *Framework*
The *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* framework (KLP, MoE, 2008) is New Zealand's national leadership framework. It aims "to present a model of leadership that reflects the qualities, knowledge and skills required to lead New Zealand schools" (p. 5). The content of the KLP "describes our shared expectations of New Zealand principals now and in the years ahead" (p. 6). This document contains generalised coverage of extensive expectations of principals' leadership and management work. These expectations are a mix of individual qualities (e.g. a Kiwi 'can-do' attitude, p. 6) and required activities. Principal activities identified in this document are significant undertakings, such as 'building and leading a community of teachers, staff and board' and 'obtaining and managing resources' (p. 7). In short, the New Zealand Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework states, principals are "ultimately responsible for day to day management of *everything* that happens in their schools" [emphasis added](MoE, 2008, p. 7). It is worth noting that the KLP recognises that a principal's role involves both leadership and management, whereas some other frameworks do not.

The KLP framework has a deliberate title, Kiwi Leadership *for principals,* (MoE, 2008) to differentiate the principal's position from the work of other leaders in a school. Two core principal activities are identified: leading change and problem solving (pp. 13, 16-17). This framework also identifies four qualities (pp. 22-23) "that underpin principals' ability to lead their schools", which are: leading with moral purpose, having self-belief (to maintain motivation and confidence in difficult conditions), belief in making a difference, being a learner, and the last 'quality' is made up of two activities, 'guiding and supporting'. According to this document, 'leading change' requires having central vision and clear goals, high expectations, communication and relational trust. Problem solving activities

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[12] A 'kiwi' is a New Zealand native bird, a national icon, and an unofficial term for a New Zealander. Kiwi is used instead of New Zealand in the title.

include identifying, analysing and solving problems requiring the understanding and managing of collaborative processes.

'Problem solving' has been equated with the managerial aspects of principal work and is contested. The vocabulary used matters, particularly in communicating what is expected of principals in their work and what should be or could be appraised. Potentially useful for consideration in this study is Thrupp's (2012) straightforward (and he acknowledged 'greatly simplified') contrast of 'problem-solving' with 'critical perspectives' (p. 310). As Thrupp saw it:

> problem-solving perspectives reflect 'common-sense', functionalist, ahistorical, individuated and often monocultural views about the purposes and problems of schooling ... Such perspectives dominate the media and policy circles as well as school effectiveness and school improvement research and other related literatures on school change, school management and teacher quality. (2012, p. 311)

Thrupp posits that critical perspectives identify that schools perpetuate:

> social inequality through reproducing the values and ideologies of dominant social groups … and the status rankings of the existing social structure. From this understanding the problems faced by schools are often seen as deeply rooted in their social context. (p. 311)

The problems principals are expected to deal with will be specific to the school setting (Thrupp, 2012).

Mintzberg's (1990[1975]) description of the nature and objectives of a problem-solver is similar to the KLP (MoE, 2008). In his review of a manager's role, he refers to managers dealing with issues in the role of "disturbance handler". The disturbance handler role "depicts the manager involuntarily responding to pressures" (1990, p. 171). Miller (2015) used the terms *strategy* and *maintenance* for principal work of leading and managing. Using the term 'maintenance' for the management aspects of principals' work he emphasised maintenance of the status quo, a satisfaction with how things currently are, and a lack of momentum for innovation and development. However, by using the term 'strategy' Miller

implied that principals hold responsibility for the school's strategic direction, whereas the KLP phrase 'leading change' leaves it open as to who it is that will determine what change needs to be lead.

Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins (2006) make plain their view that "stability is the goal of what is often called management. Improvement is the goal of leadership" (p. 11). These authors appear to undervalue the importance of stability and how difficult it is to sustain while giving all credit for improvement to leadership. Pont and colleagues also see administration and management as of lesser importance than aspects of leadership in principal work. They proposed:

> school leaders should have an explicit mandate to focus on those domains that are most conducive to improved school and student outcomes. Otherwise, school autonomy may lead to role overload by making the job more time-consuming, increasing administrative and management workloads and deflecting time and attention away from instructional leadership. (Pont et al., 2008, p. 43)

In contrast, Grissom and Loeb (2011), in their large US study with multiple data sources, identified 'organisational management' as the principals' skill most significant in school success including improvement in student achievement. Organisational management they defined as "overseeing the functioning of the school" but separate from administration and instructional leadership (p. 1101. Interestingly, these authors also separated internal and external relations in their research). Morris (2014) is another who acknowledged the significance of management in change "because it is difficult to initiate improvement from an unstable foundation" (p. 4). It matters if management is interpreted as maintaining the status quo, because then management and associated problem solving run counter to change initiatives or innovation (progress).

The Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework (MoE, 2008) recognises two tensions for principals in carrying out their role: one, between leading and managing and two, tension prioritising between personal and professional needs. That these individuals have personal as well as professional needs that 'often' take second place is understood by the Ministry: "competing priorities mean that

principals often leave to one side their own personal and professional needs as they negotiate the tensions involved in being both educational leader and manager" (MoE, 2008, pp. 22-23). This recognition of tensions between demands of their work as leader and manager and their needs as a professional and as a person are not further addressed.

The Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework also acknowledges that school settings influence principal work: "context has major implications for leadership and management arrangements, professional development, shaping the curriculum, developing learning environments, managing resources, and engaging with communities" (MoE, 2008, p. 15). Duignan (2012) objected to the separation of performance from context as the context is what principals' professional decisions are based on. The KLP outlines significant aspects of responsibility for school principals. If the specific school setting has such an influence on principals' work then how is this recognised in the 'criteria' used for principal appraisal?

Leadership frameworks, and more recently professional standards, are seen by many as the basis for the design of principal appraisal 'to evaluate effectiveness' (Clifford and Ross, 2011; Ingvarson et al., 2006; Pont et al., 2008). Pont et al. (2008) suggested that it is school leadership frameworks that "can help provide guidance on the main characteristics, tasks and responsibilities of effective school leaders" (p. 10). However, others are more cautious: "the complexity and lack of clarity surrounding the role of a principal makes the formulation of appropriate performance assessment a daunting task" (Catano & Stronge, 2007, p. 382). The intended use of the KLP is vague. The then New Zealand secretary for education, Karen Sewell, commented in the foreword that this framework is "a starting point for aligning and strengthening our support for principals as educational leaders" (MoE, 2008, p. 4. with a similar message on p. 24). Based on the document's content, it is unclear what this 'support' may mean in practice. The design and provision of relevant professional development is one of Ingvarson et al.'s (2006) 'certain conditions' that need to be in place for school leaders to perform effectively due to the wide range of tasks included in leadership frameworks. Martin said, "the fundamental issue in deciding what makes a good principal is defining what the job is" (1999, p. 21). Pont et al. (2008) drawing on Ingvarson et al.'s review (2006) stated, "if too prescriptive and detailed, they [leadership

frameworks] can contribute to increasing intensification of the school leader's role and discourage practitioners" (p. 62). The signal from these authors is that principals' commitment to their work is linked to the quantity and level of prescription of work requirements.

A framework is a broad conceptualisation of all that school principals are expected to do. Professional standards for school principals are documents that set out what a school principal will be appraised on in a performance review. In some contexts, the difference between a leadership framework and professional standards for principals is not clear. The Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP), for example, calls their document that sets out the criteria on which to appraise principals a leadership framework (2014). The way I use these terms in this study is consistent with New Zealand's use. Therefore, using my definitions, professional standards are intended to be more specific and more clearly expressed as criteria than the broader more general language used in leadership frameworks.

Professional standards for New Zealand principals

Perhaps because completed leadership frameworks are often extensive in content, professional standards have been developed to provide more manageable criteria for judging the performance of principals. A key difficulty is the number of standards needed to adequately describe all the significant aspects of a principal's job. In New Zealand the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* (Primary Principals' collective agreement, Schedule 2) were introduced in 1998 (Wylie, 2012, pp.102-103) and four 'areas of practice' ('culture', 'pedagogy', 'systems', 'partnerships and networks') are identified to "provide a baseline for assessing satisfactory performance within each area of practice" (p. 1). For each of these areas there is a general statement of expectation for principals (provide, create, develop and strengthen) with a central theme of student learning. The general statement in the area of practice called 'Partnerships and Networks', for example, requires principals to "strengthen communication and relationships to enhance student learning" (p. 2).

Under each area of practice in this document are a number (4-8) of standards. The language of the standards includes the verbs: develop and implement, promote,

maintain, operate, manage, administer, use, model, demonstrate, exhibit, ensure, analyse, prioritise, work with, actively foster and interact. For example, one of the standards is "actively foster professional relationships with, and between colleagues, and with government agencies and others with expertise in the wider education community" (p. 2). Another standard under the same practice area reads "interact regularly with parents and the school community on student progress and other school-related matters" (p. 2). There are a total of 26 standards. Just as in the KLP framework the term 'school community' goes undefined. Although it is acknowledged that

> the people who make up a school community are not typically of one mind on many issues. There will often be a range of views across different interest groups on educational matters. Effective principals are sensitive to these differences and work with groups and individuals to develop common understandings, and ideally consensus, on key educational issues. (MoE, 2008, p. 21)

Neoliberal influences on individual principal experiences of work are felt through increased individual responsibility with increased accountability and trends towards more monitoring. Control is being experienced in all kinds of ways through growing requirements for evidence gathering, record-keeping and reporting. The amount of prescription and detail in standards for individual work performance is also increasing. Ritzer (2008) conceptualised the social processes and nature of work in neoliberal global capitalist contexts as "McDonaldization", a model of four elements: efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. *Efficiency* is "the optimum method for getting from one point to another" (p. 13). *Calculability* "emphasizes quantitative aspects of products sold and services offered" (p. 14). *Predictability* is about 'sameness' over time and place meeting customer expectations. The notion of *Control* in McDonaldisation is limiting options with systems of management and monitoring/inspection to bolster this control. Ritzer proposed McDonaldisation as a warning and also as a way to point directly and indirectly to counter-trends that may help the settings in which we work and live become 'more human' and 'more humane'. He pointed out that McDonaldisation is not the only social process transforming contemporary society and, like other processes, it is not all or nothing. Just like the broader

neoliberalism there are variations in the ways the concept is adopted and applied. McDonaldisation as efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, are effects of this broader economic-political context influencing principal work and also, potentially, influencing principal experiences of being judged in their work.

Appraisal of primary principals in New Zealand

In New Zealand, school boards of trustees are the legal employer(s) of the school principal, although principals are the Chief Operating Officers of the board. The school principal is "a member of the board, its chief executive, and its key advisor" (ERO, 2014, p. 6). The board is responsible, according to the Primary Principals' collective agreement, (e.g. Section 4.1.1 & 4.1.2), for appraisal carried out against the indicators in a 'performance agreement'. A performance agreement is developed in consultation with the principal and is intended to clarify expectations (Piggot-Irvine, 2003). The board signs off the appraisal report, which may simply take the form of an attestation. Appraisal of principals became a requirement for school boards of trustees in New Zealand in 1997.

Principal appraisal in New Zealand officially has two purposes, accountability and development. Development refers to the improvement of teaching and learning at the school and the principal's professional development. Both boards and principals have access to The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) [13] guidelines on principal appraisal (published 2005, 2008, and 2009). These guidelines state, "performance review is about taking an organisation (the school) and the individual (the principal) forward through setting objectives and establishing indicators by which those objectives will be measured." (2008, p. 6). A principal's work is appraised for accountability as the school leader responsible for implementation of the school's strategic plan and also according to the Professional Standards for Primary Principals.

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[13] The New Zealand School Trustees Association (NZSTA) is a membership-based organisation that according to its website (http://www.nzsta.org.nz/about) represents the interest of 92% (2,200) of the approximately 2,415 school boards of trustees (Dec/2016); has an agreement with the Ministry of Education for delivering services designed to support and enhance board capability in their governance and employer role; is a 'not for profit' incorporated society with charitable trust status.

In 2014 the Education Review Office (ERO) published a report *Supporting school improvement through effective principal appraisal* (May 2014). This study was based on three main sources of information: an online survey of boards of trustee chairpersons (154 chairpersons, a 52% response rate with rural and small schools under-represented), an evaluation of appointment processes and practices through regular review of 173 primary schools (from February to April 2013) and in 27 'selected' secondary schools, and examination of the 2012 documentation of appraisal processes in these schools. Reported 'findings' were based on overall judgements ERO reviewers made regarding how effectively appraisal of the principal contributes to development. By development the authors said they included principal development, staff and school development, and improved student achievement, although the title of the report suggests the professional development of the principal was the least important of these three.

ERO found that for a number of reasons an appraisal of the principal may not be completed every year. ERO (2014) reported:

> eighty-six percent of primary schools (149 schools) reviewed had completed an annual principal appraisal process. Another seven schools had new principals who had been at the school for only a short time, and four schools had not completed appraisal because of ill health of the principal or appraiser. Eight percent (13) of primary schools had not completed an appraisal of the principal in the most recent year. (p. 11)

It does happen that a school does not complete a principal appraisal every year.

Another ERO finding was that boards of trustees use different people to undertake principal appraisal with a range in payment costs. Over half of the schools reported that the board chairperson carried out the principal's latest appraisal (ERO, 2014). ERO noted that some schools 'rotated' between using the board chairperson and an external appraiser, who was either another principal or a contractor. The cost to the board for the principal's appraisal ranged from no cost except time to $5,000, with a median of $1,800. An appraisal review impacted on the principal's remuneration in 25% of secondary and six percent of primary schools (ERO, 2014).

ERO advocates for school goals in the strategic plan to be "linked coherently" to performance agreement goals and appraisal. In ERO's view schools demonstrated *best practice*

> when strategic goals, the annual plan, performance agreement and appraisal were linked coherently, the focus of appraisal was on significant actions to achieve strategic improvement goals. Student achievement data was used consistently to assess progress towards the school's strategic goals, and also to review the principal's effectiveness as a leader in facilitating progress towards these goals. (p. 1)

Note principal effectiveness is a key aim mentioned.

An extract cited in the report illustrates what ERO approved of.

> The principal's development goals also align to the school's strategic direction. Goals include actions for the leader to improve teaching. Good work is being done to analyse student achievement data, which is then used to identify and monitor appropriate targets and support for students. Graphs show good student progress during the year. These are all aspects that the principal monitors closely to determine progress towards meeting the appraisal goal to successfully implement the annual plan. (Medium size, rural, full primary school). (ERO, 2014, p. 10)

In contrast, when principal appraisal was judged *not effective* goals ERO identified three weak points.

- Goals were too general or unrelated to improving teaching and learning.
- Principal appraisal was not 'robust'
- Recommendations were judged as 'unlikely' to lead to improvement (ERO, 2014, p. 2).

ERO's onsite school reviews indicated that schools focused on staff improvement in appraisal processes. They phrased this finding in their report with a suggestion that this was not a good thing: "appraisal was more likely to be focused on the principal's and staff development than on improving student achievement" (p. 10).

ERO's expectation for a clear and direct line between principal work and student academic achievement outcomes was repeated throughout this report. There is room for interpretation apparent in some sentences where the terms 'development', or 'support' are used without identification of whose development (and in what), or the nature of the support (to support who, to do what). Overall the government priority of measurable improvement in student achievement is clear. The strength and repetition of this point in this ERO report seems to suggest that without constant advocacy and monitoring by education authorities, schools as organisations and school staff would not be addressing this aspect of students' education.

It is also clear in this report that ERO approves of the use of external appraisers. They say they look for statements in school principal appraisal policy and guidelines that include: "engaging an external appraiser for some or all of the process" (p. 40). This practice differs from business practice where an employee's line manager' reviews performance. ERO also reported that whether or not boards used an external appraiser made no difference to board confidence about undertaking the appraisal of the school's principal.

Perhaps most importantly ERO's board survey found "the majority of boards believed the principal's appraisal was effective in assuring them of accountability and improving teaching and outcomes for students" (ERO, 2014, p. 10). The majority of board chairpersons reported that they felt confident to undertake the principal's appraisal. Boards felt most confident about assessing principal management of the school and relationships with community and were least confident about writing appropriate indicators of progress or success, and identifying professional development for the principal. Boards saw their main challenges in this area as being their knowledge and understanding of education, the turnover of trustees, and finding a suitable appraiser when the chair of the board was not going to undertake this task (from p. 29).

ERO (2014) underplayed how satisfied boards were with principal appraisal processes and goals when they highlighted eight recommendations for boards to do better *by expecting more*. ERO's recommendations included boards of trustees:

- strengthen links between principal appraisal goals and the school's strategic priorities
- use student achievement information as an indicator and evidence of goal achievement or progress
- use ERO's evaluation questions and indicators and board chairperson survey to review their principal appraisal practices and outcomes (p. 35)

In this last recommendation they propose themselves as the experts. This report also included a number of recommendations for NZSTA to train boards along these lines.

The way school principals can conceive of the purpose of their work appears to be narrowing. In the United Kingdom, Hammersley-Fletcher and Qualter (2009) claimed the pressures of external accountability measures narrow the conceptualisation of available alternatives to principals impacting on professional identity and tightening parameters to policy implementation. Individual stories from school principals is one way to closely examine how principals experience the interaction between government regulation and local context, professional and personal needs, and expectations and judgements from a range of quarters in their work as school leaders.

Rural Principals in Specific School Settings

The invitation to rural school principals to participate

Principals of small rural schools were chosen as participants in this study of principal appraisal because they face increasing complexities in their work along with their urban counterparts, as well as challenges of rural life and culture. Principals often face these challenges with little peer support. I elected to invite principals of schools in rural settings not because rural education is 'simpler' or represents some nostalgic educational past and not because this study focuses on educational problems in a particular place (see Corbett & White, 2014; Thomson, 2000; Balfour, Mitchell, & Moletsane, 2008). Instead the special nature of typically smaller, community-based rural schools, as mentioned earlier, would enable research attention to focus on what this study is about. I was able to more

closely examine influences, tensions, enablers and constraints that might otherwise be more difficult to 'see' if I was to talk to principals in complex organisational structures of larger schools in urban communities.

To recap, I sought rural school principals' experiences of being judged in their work for these reasons:

- fewer staff means fewer layers of responsibility. Principals in these schools tend to be directly involved in all school operations and issues.
- without a 'senior management team', expectations of a school principal, both formal and official and informal and local, are more evident.
- there are a limited number of colleagues readily available for professional conversations about issues, plans and decisions impacting on informal learning.
- principals in small schools tend to be more 'visible' and, including out-of-school activities, they typically have more contact with parents and community members.

In short, the expectations of school principals both formal and official, and informal and local are concentrated in the work situation of a principal of a small rural school.

Another significant reason for rural principals to be interviewed for this study is that education research in rural settings is a field of inquiry in its own right in Australia and North America but perhaps just emerging in New Zealand. Clarke and Wildy (2004) claimed there was limited literature on leadership in small schools and what there was focused on the difficulties. Rural schools and their staff make up a valued and significant aspect of educational history in New Zealand and yet their voices are infrequent in our research records. Finally, rural education in New Zealand is unlikely to be a temporary and historical phenomenon given the nature of New Zealand economic landscape, a dependence on dairy, agricultural and forestry exports, and geography.

Specific school settings

To be 'place sensitive' (Corbett, 2007) I next provide some information on the six school settings where the principal participants work. (I will introduce the

participants in Chapter 3).

The locations of four out of six schools whose principals participated in this study meet the government definition of 'rural area' or a 'rural centre' with the local area population being under 999 (according to the 2013 NZ Census). One of the six principals led a school in a location that did not have enough population to count as an 'area'. None of these six principals were due an isolation allowance due to distance from a population centre of greater than 1500 persons. The schools need to be more than 60 kilometres distant to qualify (Primary Principals Collective Agreement). For more information on the school areas from the 2013 Census see Appendix A.

Two of the principals were in areas where the population was increasing through intensification of land use for lifestyle blocks, small industry and service businesses. Two principals in the study led schools in areas experiencing a level of economic distress. All the principals had at that time relatively stable student rolls, even if there was a significant change of children during any given year. For example, in one school, student turnover was 30% due mostly to the dairy farming system of worker employment transfers mid-year. Two schools had been subject to processes of school consolidation in the past. Both had been the school that received students from those that had closed. Five of the schools had the use of buses to collect students, which helped maintain their enrolment figures. Of these five, three schools used buses because of the sheer size of their geographical 'catchment' area, and for two their school buses brought children out 'from town' to satisfy parent choice.

Principals' experience of being judged on their work within smaller rural school settings and communities enabled me to closely examine the expectations and judgements of the occupation of primary school principal in the New Zealand context generally, and in rural school settings in particular. For these reasons and my having some knowledge of these kinds of schools as a student and as a teacher, I approached this research with an appreciative frame of mind. In Chapter 3 I present details of my research approach and research design.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

To make art is to participate in an activity, to do something. Thus the product the work of art is inextricably tied to the processes of production, including the artist's or writer's subjectivity.

~ Art Bochner and Caroline Ellis (2003, p. 507)

In this chapter I account for my research decisions of process and presentation, and my role in the production of this study. Much could be written on each and all aspects of a research project so I spend the most time here on what I judge to be the most important for *this* project: My contemporary-pragmatist approach (an interpretive theory); use of qualitative methods of interviewing and analysis; and research poetry, one of the three different representations of evidence. I complete this chapter with ethical considerations, particularly anonymity concerns, and introduce the six school principals who took part in this research.

Research Approach

I situated this study within the broad frame of interpretive approaches because it has humanist aims, constructs with interpretation, and speaks of experience. Within interpretivism I use *contemporary pragmatism*, a reconceptualisation of Dewey's pragmatism.

An interpretivist rejects the ontological assumption that reality is stable and fixed, able to be discovered and/or measured (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). Instead an interpretive researcher's framework is based on the understanding that human reality is experience-based, socially constructed, and relative to a particular context, place and time in history (Gergen, 2009). Interpretivism holds that human behaviour is purposive and interpretative research attempts to understand the 'why' and 'how' of human society from that 'point of view' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). Knowledge is created in an interpretivist research inquiry through interaction between researcher and participants together.

Interpretivism is a broad umbrella that includes various methodologies and methods.

Under this umbrella, this study is qualitative. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) offered this generic definition.

> Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. The practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations. (p. 3)

Qualitative research involves interpretation of phenomena in 'natural' settings and the meanings people bring to them. As an interpretivist approach, contemporary pragmatism includes the influence of critical and post-modern perspectives.

Pragmatism, as a philosophy, originated in the United States during the latter nineteenth century through the work of Charles S. Peirce (1839-1914), William James (1842-1910), and John Dewey (1859-1952). I draw primarily on Dewey's pragmatism because he significantly influenced educational pedagogy and curriculum in the mid-twentieth century. Dewey was concerned with using human intelligence to 'work things out' and deal with human problems (Dewey, 1938a; de Waal, 2005). He talks of how foresight requires observation, information and judgement (1938a) and of our experiences in the present as 'a moving force' influencing what will be future experiences. After Dewey, pragmatist thought continued most obviously through tenets of symbolic interactionism, in particular in the work of Herbert Blumer (1969). More recently Dewey's pragmatism is being 'revisited' and reconceptualised (by, for example, Larry Hickman, Roberto Frega, Colin Koopman and Jerry Rosiek). The work of these authors does not have a collective label, and is cross-disciplinary (education, philosophy, qualitative inquiry). Based on this work, I use the term *contemporary pragmatism,* a phrase that appears frequently, to describe the approach I use.

Subjecting our ideas to re-vision is entirely consistent with pragmatist thinking. To modify what Mary Oliver said about Emerson (2016, p. 65)[14], "he is now the Dewey of our choice: he is the man of his own time –his own history –and he is one of the mentors of ours". I read Dewey through my own time and history, and this is how he mentors me. Many of Dewey's views are woven into my work as a teacher and teacher-educator. Dewey promoted learning by experience in social and holistically personal ways through experimentation, interaction, communication and reflection (Biesta, 2014). His emphasis on creating advantageous conditions for shaping learner experience for growth, learner exploration, and language development all resonate with me (Dewey, 2006[1916]; 1938a).

Contemporary pragmatism

'Contemporary pragmatism' acknowledges moves in critical theory (Frega, 2015) and qualitative inquiry since Dewey's time but continues to emphasise pragmatist ideas. Koopman (2011) combined Foucault's 'problemisation' and Dewey's 'reconstruction' to weave a future-orientated consideration of present 'problems'. Koopman called this weaving genealogical pragmatism or transitionalist pragmatism. His approach sets to view our current situations with scepticism (provided by critical theory) in order to define our research problems, and our research representation(s) with a pragmatist hope to influence the future for the better. Koopman (2011) liked the term 'transitional'. This term emphasises the fluidity in our experience but weakens acknowledgment of periods when understandings are largely 'settled'. Hickman (2007) described phases of imbalance with phases of equilibrium. Things 'known' can become 'settled', 'resolved' or 'established' for individuals and groups become 'normal', 'unseen', even 'taken for granted' for *a time*.

Rosiek (2013) shifted contemporary philosophical ways of thinking about pragmatism to a reconsideration of pragmatism as a methodology for education research. He picked up Koopman's interest in pragmatism and added more

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[14] Dewey was himself an admirer of Emerson. See Dewey, J. (1903) Emerson - The philosopher of democracy. In Hickman, L.A and Alexander T. M. (Eds.) (1998). *The Essential Dewey Volume 2*. (pp. 366-376) Bloomington, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press

detailed attention to ways a 'contemporary pragmatism' could respond to poststructuralists such as Foucault. Rosiek commented on the renewed interest in pragmatism in social science for "locating the ontological significance of research in the horizon of possible consequences that might follow from our inquiries" (p. 693). Contemporary pragmatism (CP), therefore, describes an approach that reinstates the classical pragmatist consideration of the future through speculation on practical and 'local' consequences of our inquiries. Contemporary pragmatism gives a label to the renewed interest and potential use of pragmatism in the present (contemporary) times, and also a version of contemporary pragmatism as methodology.

As was the case with classical pragmatism, it is unlikely that there will be a neat list of core tenets agreed on by all contemporary writers on pragmatism. For my purposes as an education researcher, contemporary pragmatism provides four key reference points:

- CP asks us to consider the history of the situation we find ourselves in, to look again/to unsettle/to doubt the 'taken for granted' in identifying our *research questions*;
- CP draws attention to the *importance of language* and the way language influences what we make of our experiences;
- CP is a process of research (the researcher researching) that becomes known through inquiry (*reflexivity*);
- CP is *future focused.*

Contemporary pragmatist research questions
Contemporary pragmatism locates inquiry in the context of historically constituted experiences and this is how research questions are framed (Koopman, 2011; Rosiek, 2013). 'What has gone before' was important to Dewey. He said history is "not only of the present but of that which is contemporaneously judged to be important in the present" (Dewey, 1938b, p. 234). Koopman contended that "both Foucault and Dewey argue that history matters because it helps us specify the conditions of the problems we face in the present, and helps us so specify in such a way that we might then go on to improve the problematic situation in which we find ourselves" (Koopman, 2011, p. 559). Pragmatists, classic or

contemporary, dismiss the idea that researchers can 'start with a clean slate' or are able to find a neutral starting-point for inquiry. They see that we create the future as we live, and inquire, to understand the present.

Approaching research post-Foucault illustrates a difference between classical and contemporary pragmatism. Dewey, as a pragmatist, identified that it is not always accurate or helpful to label the basis of our research question as 'a problem'. De Waal (2005) argued that Dewey would prefer the term *indeterminate situation* to *problematic situation* because "the later points to the existence of a problem" (p.115). An indeterminate situation is one of doubt, novelty, perplexity or disturbance. It is the situation being 'indeterminate' – there being a 'felt difficulty' – that leads researchers to the defining of a problem. Bringing intellectual deliberation to a 'felt difficulty' was, for Dewey, a significant step in locating the 'taken for granted, 'the normalised' and defining the inquiry or research question. Koopman explained, "Dewey generally accepts that the problems we face are already given to us such that our task is to get out there and do something to fix things up. This may often be the case, but often enough it is not" (Koopman, 2011, p. 555). Foucault's attention to the 'problem' is important because things can be hidden from us, unconscious to our noticing, out of sight and, even though sometimes arguably unintended, harms, injustices and immoralities are going on. Foucault helps us see power relations (and potential self-harm). It is not pragmatic, however, as the basis of an inquiry to doubt everything at once. For contemporary pragmatism, a genuine doubt of public concern forms the basis of research inquiry. Koopman (2011) argues Foucault spends more time on problematisation while Dewey was impatient to get to reconstruction. For Dewey 'problems' would be obvious, for Foucault not so.

Research questions are found in the course of the flow of experience and of the situations in which we find ourselves. Rosiek clarified: "experience is, for the pragmatist, the fabric of the myriad phenomenal qualities of living including our sense of identity, community, and anticipations of possible futures" (2013, p. 696). Experience occurs in situations of the present but draws on past experience and influences future experience(s). For Dewey, experience was individual but always in relation in a social context (interaction): "all human experience is ultimately social; that it involves contact and communication … Every genuine experience

49

has an active side which changes in some degree the objective conditions under which experiences are had" (1938a, pp. 38-39). *Interaction* 'intercepts' and 'unites' with *continuity* making up the two aspects of experience: "the principle of continuity in its educational application means, nevertheless, that the future has to be taken into account at every stage of the educational process" (Dewey, 1938a, p. 47). Dewey sees social processes as 'always in the making', and, therefore, always needing to be 'orientated' and 'directed' through 'intelligence' or inquiry (Frega, 2017). For pragmatists, classic or contemporary, nothing is final; there are no irrevocable certainties. What individuals and groups accept as 'truth' is relative to contexts and times (Biesta, 2014; Crotty, 1998; de Waal, 2005).

All knowledge and theories are best treated as working hypotheses which may need to be modified– refined, *revised*, or rejected –in light of future inquiry and experience. Dewey's idea of 'warranted assertibility' is the (temporary) 'truth' judged successful because, as operational knowledge, it can yield improvement in *a* situation and be confirmed or corrected through use and further inquiry (Biesta, 2014; de Waal, 2005). Pragmatism and poststructuralists ask researchers to seriously consider current lived conditions in our 'revisions' through inquiry. For Dewey, it is impossible to separate theory from practice and inquiry from social conditions. He understood the

> impossibility of separating either the theoretical discussion of the course of study, or the problem of practical efficiency, from intellectual and social conditions which at first sight are far removed; it is enough if we recognise that the question of the course of study is a question in the organization of knowledge, in the organization of life, in the organization of society. (Dewey, 1901, *The Education Situation*, p. 276, cited in Frega, 2017, p. 4)

Contemporary pragmatism seeks purposeful change from research acts. Using this approach gives critical attention to a situation and the historical, cultural and temporal influences at play. Contemporary pragmatists also understand that any 'conclusions' reached are temporary and situational, and will require revision at some time in the future.

Contemporary pragmatism and the importance of language
Contemporary pragmatism continues pragmatist and symbolic interactionist interest in the 'everyday' use and meanings of words. Pragmatists interpret situations and experiences though language symbols in broad cultural contexts such as nationality, and narrower ones such as family. Contemporary pragmatism also takes into account post-structural concerns of linguistics and deconstruction, which can arguably lead to blind spots in our 'material' 'embodied' ways of thinking and being. What is accepted as the meaning of the term 'appraisal', for example, may be 'a given' within one group and unlikely to be contested by members of that group (e.g. principals). However, members of another group, such as school boards of trustees or Ministry of Education may have a different conception of the term. Through interviews school principals would describe judgement in their own words.

Dewey saw language and constructions of representations as ways of exploring and communicating experience and as components of inquiry (Hickman, 2007). There is scholarly advantage to the recognition of different and multiple constructions. We are encouraged to take another look, to see what is familiar in another way and not to be bound by traditional or presumed ways. An awareness of assumptions allows new questions to be asked, and other perspectives to be considered. Through contemporary pragmatism we do not have to accept meanings assigned by any group, all 'norms' can be contested.

Contemporary pragmatism and reflexivity
For pragmatists, learning occurs through being reflective about our experience. Dewey used the word 'deliberation' to emphasise the 'operation of intelligence' involved in reflection (1938a). For Dewey, to provide something useful to 'affect our continuing experience' requires intellectual deliberations and these deliberations take time. In educational research, as in other fields, consideration of such reflexivity is part of research work. Bailey and Fonow (2015) recap:

> the concept of reflexivity as a stance, and an analytical and methodological tool, emerged in response to critical and feminist critiques of the 'stance of god' trick (Harraway, 1988) … Contemporary reflexive practice includes diverse considerations of researchers' positioning in relation to the

participants, data gathering, imagined audience, and the broader field of inquiry. (Bailey & Fonow, 2015, p. 64)

Thus reflexivity for researchers is 'a necessary component of inquiry' beyond personal reflection to an "interrogation of the cultural and historical origins of our habits of knowing" (Rosiek, 2013, p. 694). It is important, therefore, to suspend early judgements, to resist premature conclusions or the acceptance of the first 'solution' that arises. Dewey reminds us to maintain a state of doubt throughout an inquiry and that it takes time for 'good' thought. As the researcher, I undertake the three 'attentions' – being mindful of the past, solicitous of the future, and attuned to the present – that Dewey considered "are indispensable to a present liberation, an enriching growth of action" (a. cited in Colapietro, 2011, p.161).

Contemporary pragmatism is 'future focused'.
To say contemporary pragmatism is future *focused* is an exaggeration. Contemporary pragmatists want to decipher the present with the future in mind. I use the phrase intentionally because 'the future' is an important consideration to pragmatist deliberations in the present, and as a move to reclaim it. In New Zealand education 'future-focused' is a term used to suggest the 'new' teaching and learning 'needed' for higher levels of knowledge, thinking, and competencies (use of technology as well as personal and social skills) to meet the challenges of the future. It is consistent with a neoliberal agenda to direct attention away from the past (as 'out of date' and 'behind the times'), and away from examining strengths and weaknesses present systems and forces for strengths and weaknesses in order to look (urgently) towards an 'unknown' (and 'unknowable') future.

The future-focus of contemporary pragmatism is drawn from classical pragmatism. Contemporary pragmatists identify and deliberate on concerns in the present that open up possibilities for an improved, alternative future. Dewey noted that humans only really have control over our present activity. He clarified, "we do not use the present to control the future. We use the foresight of the future to refine and expand present activity" (b. quoted in Colapietro, 2011, p. 161[15]). For Dewey,

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[15] Dewey, John. *The Middle Works of John Dewey, volume 14*. (1988) Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. (Cited as *MW*.) (a. p. 182; b. p. 172)

'taking the future into consideration' is a key tenet. Pragmatist inquiry is action-orientated, 'hopeful' for better experience in the future, and that social change is possible without disorder (Dewey, 2006[1916]). Dewey also used the word growth and saw change as progressive rather than revolutionary (Frega, 2017). Dewey emphasised the importance of drawing out the 'good' or 'desirable' in the present "for the sake of its improvement" (Koopman, 2011, p. 546). Using contemporary pragmatism involves consideration of the future and 'hopeful' action as a result of an inquiry that was based on doubt and scepticism. For contemporary pragmatism being future focused involves consideration of our potential influence on the future, including for researchers, the future of those members of the communities we study, and how our work is 'read' by different audiences.

To summarise, Contemporary pragmatism combines critical thought on a situation with questions of how we might respond. I use contemporary pragmatism for this thesis because the 'material' world gets attention through consideration of the way things work in practice. Contemporary pragmatism asks for attention to language without insisting that linguistic deconstruction is the way to meaning. By using contemporary pragmatism, the discussion shifts to "the plausibility and desirability of narratives about the future" (Rosiek, 2013, p. 701). Contemporary pragmatism makes alternative visions of the future possible.

Research Design

The doubt or 'felt difficulty' that motivated my inquiry was the sheer complexity revealed by current academic and political conceptions of principalship. Studies reported in the literature focus on the work demands of principalship (particularly the intensification of duties under a self-managing school policy) and on the identification of characteristics of 'successful' principals. There has been an ever-increasing list of styles or models of educational leadership and the content of leadership frameworks for principals is overwhelming (Branson, 2014). Despite these attempts by policy advisors and academics to clarify what makes an *effective* and *successful* school leader, deliberations continue regarding how, and on what criteria, to *judge* principals' work in school specific settings. I use Thrupp's

(1999) term here – 'school specific setting'– to refer to school as a community (a geographically, historically, politically and socio-economically located place and space at a point in time) and also to refer to the setting of the community in which the school sits and operates. In my articulation of 'the problem' of school principals' appraisal, I took into account my awareness of educational leadership frameworks providing detailed and extensive expectations, and New Zealand's self-managing school system. In this study, I concentrated on school principals' experience of expectations and appraisal.

In this section I will speak to 'what I did'. To support me I rely on Davidson and Tolich (1999), who made the following two points: research should always be *tailor-made* (p. 21) and there is not *one best way*.

Finding research participants
Potential participants were found using purposive sampling (see Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007, pp. 114-115).

The definition of 'small' and 'rural' schools is rather indeterminate in New Zealand education policy (see p. 23). For school size, I consulted the EducationCounts website (*www.educationcounts.govt.nz*), Education Review Office reports and Te Kete Ipurangi (*www.tki.org*) records. I decided to invite principals of 'smaller' schools (up to 150 students and 6-8 teaching staff). I was looking for rural school leaders within a reasonable driving distance of my home and work so it would be feasible to complete an interview in one day.

Between July and October 2013, I emailed potential participants. An initial nine invitations were emailed using the school information I had. I re-sent my invitations and followed up by phoning principals at school during teaching breaks or after school. Although gender and other demographic characteristics were not defining factors in my sampling, once three men and three women had agreed to participate I stopped sending out invitations. I reasoned that one principal would enable insight into principal experience of appraisal so that six, or even five should one withdraw, would provide rich evidence while being manageable for a project this size.

Interviewing

Within qualitative inquiry the 'interview' is often a key aspect of evidence gathering (see Creswell, 2013; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Polkinghorne, 2005). Hollway and Jefferson (2008) pointed out, "face-to-face semi-structured interviewing has become the most common type of qualitative research method used in order to find out about people's experiences in context and the meanings these hold" (p. 298). Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) describe the research interview as:

- constructed in interaction,
- relational, in that knowledge arises through human relations,
- conversational, involving both question and answer, spoken and body language,
- contextual,
- linguistic (of spoken and written language) and
- reflecting the storied nature of lived human world.

An interview is an interactive, relational, knowledge-developing experience of a certain time and place for both researcher and participant (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009).

An interview brings into consciousness, and to a certain extent into words, individual experiences. Roulston, deMarrais, and Lewis (2003) saw the interview process "as a site in which interviewers and interviewees co-construct data for research projects rather than as a setting that provides authentic and direct contact with interviewees' realities" (p. 645). Through interviews evidence is co-constructed but it would be to over claim to say that the researcher had direct knowledge of interviewees' realities.

Relationships in an interview
The relationship between a researcher, who does the asking of the questions in an interview, and the participant, who does the answering, is typically discussed in research methods texts. However, research is not 'typically' done the way research book authors describe (Davidson & Tolich, 1999). The unexpected is just part of how flexible and varied interview sessions can be. Interviewing people you

have never met for the first time adds to the "unavoidable and ubiquitous feature of doing interviews: that is, one can never be sure what will occur" (Roulston, et al., 2003, p. 644). All except one interview was conducted in the principal's own school setting. Interruptions, including alarms going off, children with questions and visitors with notices for the school newsletter, even coughing or the sound of hard rain outside, altered the level of ease at points in conversation during these sessions.

The nature of the interview relationship stems from positioning of researcher and participant in relation to each other. Oakley (1981) suggested that a non-hierarchical relationship between researcher and participant helped researchers to find out about people. In this research context, I wanted to position myself as listener, collaborator, support person, researcher, university staff member and I also sought to position myself as learner. I found the description by Pelias (2011) valuable.

> When I lean in, I am attentive, a listening presence, trying my best to become attuned with the other person … I want to be a good reader of others, sensitive to what they might need, alive to what they are trying to say, open to what they might share. (2011, p. 9)

My approach as a listener was active, appreciative and underscored by my empathy for principals in the context of small rural schools.

I attempted to position myself at the first interview in a way that would encourage the other person to feel a level of trust and comfort, to influence positively what they were prepared to share with me. However, I quickly realised my positioning was only partially constructed by me, and any sense of control of interviews only ever extended to my preparation. In my first interview with Mickey, for example, I felt that the interview had been 'hijacked' (my word from field notes). The interview was an opportunity for her to talk to an interested listener in a confidential context. As we concluded I expressed my thanks that she had agreed to participate and for her time on that particular day. She responded explicitly, "no thank *you* for the chance to talk; it was great". I had readily become a sounding board. All three interviews with Mickey were of the same nature. Listening to the

recordings though I came to trust what happened. What was important to her was what she talked about and what Mickey talked about was rich in her experiences of appraisal and being judged. I would characterise this interaction now as a situation of 'status making' and 'status taking' after Turner (2011).

My behaviour, and that of the person I was interviewing, was influenced by our expectations of members of the 'other' status group: my expectations of primary school principals and their expectations of university lecturers, researchers and/or doctoral students (I was all three). Turner (2011) discussed how individuals seek to determine the status of others and "cues about their relative power, authority, prestige, and claims to honor as well as memberships in differentially evaluated social categories" (p. 332). Research has determined that what our participants' know or assume about us as 'the researcher' influences what they say (Pezalla, Pettigrew, & Miller-Day, 2012). In my study participant expectations of 'research' and 'researchers' influenced even whether they agreed to participate.

As the interviewer I want openness in participant contributions (revelations) but I also understand this is not without risks for individual school principals (in high stakes government interventionist and accountability environments). Also, I was cautious about exchanging stories. I wanted what was important to my participants and what was on their minds to come to the fore more than my response, in the moment, to their experiences. However, Oakley (1981) stressed that by sharing too little, a researcher can unbalance the mutuality in an interview and heighten the other person's sense of vulnerability.

The relationship between researcher and participant can be modified by trust and openness as these are developed and sustained (Lather, 1991; 2004). The development of trust in an interview relationship is more likely if there is a series of interviews. This study's three sets of interviews gave more time for principal participants to share their experiences, and to revise and extend their ideas based on further reflection. It was the case that some participant stories continued over more than one interview when events developed over time. Subsequent interviews also held the opportunity for me to follow-up as well as to gather new evidence. I deliberately attempted to reinforce trust through reference to our previous conversations. I did this to show that I had listened with attention and valued what

they had told me during our previous interview. I also tried to reinforce an openness of interview by not interrupting them, showing I was comfortable in moments of silence, humour and asides, and answering their questions as directly as I could. Conversation often continued after the recording was stopped depending on the principal's other commitments. I was aware of my body language and theirs, and ensured I was fully present in terms of allowing sufficient time, being rested and well prepared. On one occasion I did have another appointment scheduled for afterwards and I still regret this. When the time came for that interview to be concluded, I could feel my need to move on pulling at my presence and influencing us both. Ongoing attention, trust in process, and in the openness of participants supported a "spiralling" closer to shared understandings (Bishop & Glynn, 1999). 'Shared understanding' might be overstating it but some of my emerging understandings were affirmed through explicit checking in later interviews.

Interview sessions and interview questions
From the outset, I intended to hold three interviews with each participant as I had determined there were three key aspects of principals' appraisal to discuss: one, the formal appraisal process; two, informal and local 'appraisal'; and three, self-judgement (Appendix B). In addition, I reasoned three interviews of 50 minutes' duration would be manageable for busy principals.

The first interview was on the Ministry of Education mandated annual appraisal of school principals, primarily the responsibility of their school's board of trustees. I made the judgement that this would be a good place to start. Each principal could tell me his or her experience of 'performance review' using largely descriptive information without the need to reveal more personal practice to a researcher he or she had not previously met.

The second interview focused on their experience of informal 'everyday' and 'local' judgements of their work. Our conversation in this interview was on how these principals came to know the expectations of their community, the nature of feedback and about their professional learning.

The third interview discussed more personal aspects of 'self-appraisal'. I was particularly interested in principal practice in this area. In the interviews I also

asked about previous experience in principalship. However, I largely left it to each one to share what personal (background) information they deemed relevant to a 'fuller understanding' of their story.

The questions for each interview came from a variety of sources. They emerged from my research proposal, and from records including questions prompted by literature and professional conversations. For interviews in Sets 2 and 3, a review of the previous interview recordings and transcripts also contributed possible questions. The wording of questions took some preparation as I realised how the vocabulary and construction I used influenced the level of guidance or openness I provided to participants, and the words they might use.

I provided a general prompt on the focus of each interview in my scheduling email and at its commencement. Each particular conversation was dependant on what the person shared (similar to unstructured interviews discussed by Opie, 1999, pp. 220-230). My prepared questions were not asked in any standard order across all interviews in a set. The questions were modified in minor ways depending on what had previously been discussed with each person. I did not repeat questions that had already been answered nor did I ask all six exactly the same questions within each interview set. Primacy was given to the interaction and, just like other researchers' interviewing methods, "questions were asked in an order and in ways that fitted with the manner in which the interview was progressing" (Mullins & Kiley, 2002, p. 373; Fontana & Frey, 1994). These interviews could also be labelled *guided* because I did prompt and redirect at times and I endeavoured to keep to our guide time of 50 minutes. Over the course of the interview sets, the three key areas of principal appraisal were covered.

The interview process
Interviews were spaced over the period from October 2013 to late 2014. Each set was spread over two months and there were at least eight weeks between each set of interviews. I allowed time for participants to ponder, review what was shared and also, in a way, to 'forget' any inconvenience or irritation. Interviews were scheduled to get all the interviews in one set conducted before moving on (see Appendix C). Completing interviews, transcribing and returning the transcript for member checking before commencing the next interview set also allowed me to

review my conduct, identify subjects for further questioning or clarification, and increase my familiarity with the evidence as a form of early analysis.

The order in which interviews are conducted impacts on what happens (Mishler, 1991). I sought a different order for the interviews within each set so that the same person was not always first or last but the actual order had more to do with the availability of each principal during the period than with my planning. I was aware that responses to one question from a principal generally meant that I was more confident, or less confident, in asking this question in subsequent interviews. Having two people mention similar things in their interviews meant I listened out for this in other interviews and was more likely to ask a follow-up question. In this way, responses from principals also influenced what happened.

The information sheet and copy of the consent form were emailed to each principal (Appendix D). I also took a copy to the first interview. We talked over expectations for our roles in the study and I gathered a hardcopy signature of consent prior to commencing the first interview. Each interview was recorded using Notability on an Ipad and sometimes also on a second device (Iphone).

During Set 1, I developed a routine and I kept to this for subsequent interviews. Before an interview, I reread all the materials I had. For the first interview this included: my research questions, ethics' application, and all the information about the school I had found including ERO reports and information from the school's website. For the second and third sets, I focused on reviewing previous transcripts; listening to recordings; reading my records and the intended interview questions. Through this patterned preparation, I could follow the flow of conversation rather than frequently needing to look down at my notes during the interview. On occasions, if something was very obvious, such as a principal throwing their hands up in the air or shaking their head in disgust, I tried to record these in my field notes along with other visual clues including notes on the interview settings.

Through these interviews I was seeking stories that would communicate principal experiences and also, I envisaged, help readers connect with the thesis. A story that had been told and retold often meant it was short, relatively coherent and

emphasised a 'lesson learned'. If an individual was drawing to mind a more 'distant' story, however, or one not told very often (and sometimes one that had not been previously told) then the version I heard might be long and wandering with a number of pauses and changes of direction. I found it was common for a story to be told in pieces, shared at different times over the course of an interview, and even over all three interviews. The feelings expressed by principals when retelling an experience in a succession of interviews tended to shift from irritation or frustration to resignation, and then to a version with humour.

Before commencing this study, I anticipated that Interview 3 would be the hardest because principal experience of 'self-assessment' would be the most personal. Self-assessment is also not a term we usually use for such adult habits. I need not have worried. Each interview was a mixture of attention on 'formal', 'informal' and 'self' appraisal. During the third interviews, the same stories came up and ideas were reinforced and expanded. 'We' had for the time being 'covered' the topic and reached some kind of *saturation point*.

Collecting evidence

Interview audio recordings and transcripts from 18 interviews made up the core evidence in this study. Mallozzi wrote, "the transcripts did not take the place of the audio recordings because to do so would privilege a text that cannot reflect all parts of the interviews" (from Scheurich, 1995 cited in Mallozzi, 2009, p. 1049). Both recordings and transcripts continued to be used throughout the study. Other material developed through the course of this research included field notes, 'journey book' records, policy documents, information about the schools, and any copies of appraisal reports passed on to me by the principals[16]. I used information on schools to increase my familiarity with the specific school setting of each principal's work.

Audio recordings and transcripts

Both audio recordings and transcripts were used as evidence in analysis. The audio recordings of the interview became significant items as I listened to these

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[16] It should be noted that I asked for access to copies of any of their appraisal reports that they were happy for me to see. I reviewed these in their office or other private space at school.

over and over, before and after transcription was complete. Transcripts of the interviews were 19-23 pages. Two transcribers were contracted to complete the bulk of transcribing. I transcribed at least one interview from each set and one interview from each participant. Listening to audio recording reawakened the social and emotional aspects of the interview situation (see Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009) and aided memory, prompting further details to be recorded on the transcripts. I was aware of the risk that individual participants could elect to withdraw their participation having 'seen' themselves talk (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). However, on receipt of transcripts for member checking most participant comments I received about transcripts focused on the length–how much they had talked–rather than the way their talk looked as text. Repeated checking all the transcripts against the audio recordings at different times was another process of early analysis.

Field notes and journey books
I kept field notes, recorded by hand in a separate exercise book for each participant, during the months of the interviews. Notes were generated prior to, during and after interviews as events. After an interview, I would sit in my vehicle recording impressions, ideas and questions that had arisen from the interview. I also recorded as field notes any points arising from school documentation I had, and more frequently in the latter months, emerging propositions. John Van Maanen (1995) found that there is 'little agreement' on what a 'standard' field note 'might be' (p. 6). However, Goodfellow (1998, p. 113, cited in Wright, 2012) suggested that writing notes in a field diary is: "an essential part of the reflective activity that occurs during the process of meaning making. Reflective comments written in the research journal may act like streams of consciousness, which serve to record the evolution in the researcher's thinking. They provide important insights into one's thinking at a particular point in time" (2012, p. 93). Goodfellow's 'field diary' would also cover another form of recorded reflective activity I kept, what I called 'journey books'.

The content of these journey books, 12 in total dating from December 2012 to June 2017, included thoughts on my interaction with literature, school and Ministry of Education documentation, and interview transcripts. I reflected on previous entries and on field notes. I wrote about myself as researcher, my

biography, and ideas arising from conversations and group events such as seminars and writing retreats. Writing was integral to my thinking. This was also 'generation of knowledge' through a process of 'writing as analysis' (Richardson, 1994). Richardson has argued for much of her career that writing is a "method of discovery and analysis" (1994, p. 516). The writing process, the 'mediation' of transcription and representation in transforming spoken language to written words generates new ideas and understandings (Finley, 2003, p. 291). Richardson suggested, "the more varied and practiced the art of writing, the more possibilities there are "to discover new aspects of our topic and our relationship to it" (2000, p. 923). Recording my thinking over the months, and years, of this study proved invaluable to analysis.

Analysing

Prior to commencing this research, it seemed to me straightforward to take the transcripts as accurate records of the interview exchange (approved by member checking) and review these texts for stories related to my research questions. But I did not get any neatly packaged stories within one interview session in response to my questions. The conversational exchange recorded in transcripts gives few clean and pithy quotes for use in a 'findings' section. Denzin explained:

> language and speech do not mirror experience. They create experience, and in the process transform and defer that which is being described. Meanings are always in motion, incomplete, partial, contradictory. There can never be a final, accurate, complete representation of a thing, an utterance, or an action. There are only different representations of different representations. (2015, p. 200)

According to Denzin (2015), "data are not things that can be collected, coded or analysed; data are processes constructed by researcher's interpretive practices" (p. 202). Denzin calls for a new narrative that "teaches others that ways of knowing are always already partial, moral and political. This narrative will allow us to put our practices [as qualitative researchers] in proper perspective" (p. 203). When I read this, I determined I would use the word evidence instead of data for this thesis. I also decided to try and be consistent and not speak of *the transcripts* privileging this evidence. Instead, in speaking of *the interview,* I include the audio

63

recording, field notes and journey book notes, as well as the transcripts, as evidence. This material, as well as my experience of the interviews and the research, all contributed to my knowledge of what I sought to investigate.

What is important is, in part, determined by what is noticed and what is recognised, and *this attention* is influenced by my experience, my understandings, and the specific events of this research journey. One concern was how to describe my processes of analysis. I could not separate what I was reading in literature from my thinking about what participants had said. I was experiencing what Brinkmann (2014) writes of when he questioned a researcher's coding of 'data' and only data from 'informants' without coding "philosophical or methodological sources of inspiration" (p. 720) that also provide insight. After reading Becker (2007), for example, I tried writing out passages from the transcripts in long hand, even trying different handwriting styles. I took to walking about and reading passages aloud. I began wondering if I would hear something different if a man instead of a woman spoke the passage under my attention or *vice versa[17]*.

Because researcher work is not simply reporting participants' voices, Becker (2007) warns, "if we choose to name what we study with words the people involved already use, we acquire, with the words, the attitudes and perspectives the words imply" (p. 224). I needed to look out for where my sympathies might blind me to inconsistencies, and how my familiarity with the education language being used might leave questions unasked and unanswered. Reading Kleinman and Kolb (2011) prompted me to consider what conditions fostered these insights over others? What am I being reminded of? What conditions prompted this account? What does that word help participants to do? What pictures are being painted and why?

Another example recorded in my journey books was when I was reading Bruner's *Making Stories* (2002). At that time my questions revolved around presentation, concepts of identity, and privacy from Bruner's ideas about 'self-making' and 'self-telling'. Questions like, what sense of self are participants making through

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[17] A notion I explored in a conference presentation, Earl, K. (2015, 20 - 23 May). Multiple 'voices' in analysis: what might be 'heard' when school principals talk about their work. In *Eleventh International Congress of Qualitative Inquiry*. University of Illinois.

telling? How does their current professional and personal context situate this 'response'? How might the balancing of autonomy and commitment be playing out in principals' perceptions of, and stories about, their work?

Brinkmann described a way to think about qualitative analysis "that is neither data driven (induction) [e.g. grounded theory approaches] nor hypothesis-driven (deduction) [using conceptual or theoretical frameworks]" but abduction. "Abduction is not driven by data or theory, but by astonishment, mystery, and breakdowns in one's understanding" (2014, p. 722). Abductive processes have links to pragmatism and according to those that promote this model "there is no hard and fast line between life, research, theory, and methods" (Brinkmann, 2014, p. 724). Charles Peirce had talked of the process of abduction much earlier. Peirce described this intuitive way of working with lived-experience and gathered evidence as a process of being *in tune* or *attuned* (cited in Brinkmann). For Peirce, abduction was that which comes *before* deduction and induction, a third approach. For Brinkmann, abduction is more an ongoing process. Abductive analysis for both Pierce and Brinkmann requires immersion with material. The goal of an abductive process is not to arrive at any fixed and universal knowledge. Rather, Rosiek (2013) wrote of abduction:

> through it new relations are created within the stream of experience that did not exist before. These novel relations are the product–in part–of the exercise of our judgment, judgments that intuitively anticipate future consequences, but that are also products of sedimented past. (p. 699)

Rosiek's 'stream of experience' echoes Dewey's notion of continuity, Denzin's meanings in motion (2015) and Koopman's transitional understanding (2011). Brinkmann (2014) takes a very pragmatist stance when he proposes we "defamilarise ourselves from what we take for granted to come to know it" (p. 724) and "allowing ourselves to stay unbalanced for a moment longer than what was comfortable, for this is where we may learn something new" (p. 724). Dewey wrote many times of the importance of suspending judgement in intellectual deliberation.

My method of analysis included elements of deduction and induction but most closely was a process of abduction, seeking saturation, a *sitting with* and *working with* the evidence. The use of three different text forms (quotations, stories and poems) for presentation 'pushed' me to try out different analytical ideas (Glesne, 1997, p. 216). Cahnmann, speaking directly about the use of poetry in educational research, made a similar point: "a focus on language and variety of writing styles not only enhances the presentation of ideas, but also stimulates and formulates the conception of ideas themselves" (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 31). The complexities of transcripts, what constitutes evidence, and how to represent my participants' voices in the thesis, all posed questions to be investigated. In the next section I turn to my decisions about the (re)presentation of evidence.

Representing participants and evidence

There are three chapters of evidence presented in this thesis. This structure aligns with the three aspects of the judgement of principals' work given attention in this research: formal mandated appraisal, local judgements, and judgement by self. Having three evidence chapters also organised my use of three different forms of representation. These are selected quotations (more traditional participant representation in Chapter 5), stories (Chapter 6), and poems (Chapter 7). Each different form serves to "communicate findings in multidimensional, penetrating, and more accessible ways" (Cahnmann, 2003, p. 29).

My decisions regarding representation are strategic: to position myself as the researcher (as craftsperson), and to foster reader engagement with the principal participants in this study. Forms of representation draw "attention to complexity, feeling, and new ways of seeing" (Eisner, 1997, p. 29). Cahnmann (2003) explained "just as the microscope and camera have allowed different ways for us to see what would otherwise be invisible, so too poetry and prose are different mediums that give rise to ways of saying what might not otherwise be expressed" (p. 31). The ways or forms writing takes affect our sensibilities (Rinehart, 2010). Representational style influences the communication of the content, the connection the reader makes to the work, and the types of claims researchers can make.

From a contemporary-pragmatist perspective, the retelling of experience is already an interpretation of an interpretation. Representation characterises a researcher's evidence according to choices he or she makes. Choices made, ideally, by a responsible, ethical, and reflexive person who, having sought answers to his or her research questions, communicates these insights at some point in written form. Wolcott (2009) argued that description serves to present the researcher as having a well-considered picture of the evidence gathered and as a demonstration of research skill to a reader. Therefore, in Chapter 5, the first evidence chapter, I use edited quotations, or 'snippets' (Richardson, 1994), in 'an authoritative' researcher voice (Sparkes and Douglas, 2007) to convey the extent of similarity in how these principals experienced being judged through mandated appraisal.

Criticism has been brought against researchers who use participants' words to be 'taken as read' as if to suggest there was no selection, no interpretation, and, therefore, no due sense of responsibility on behalf of the researcher (MacLure, 2013; St Pierre, 2013). MacLure protested the conventional use of fragmented quotations as that "which categorises and judges the world through the administration of good sense and common sense, dispensed by the autonomous, rational and well-intentioned individual, according to principles of truth and error" (2013, p. 659). Thus a researcher cannot suggest participants' words written verbatim in a research text are 'exact' and therefore convey a speaker's meaning more clearly. Mazzei and Jackson (2009) argued that "letting readers 'hear' participant voices and presenting their 'exact words' as if they are transparent is a move that fails to consider how as researchers we are always shaping those 'exact words'" (2009, p. 2). These authors point out that attempts to provide "more authentic, spontaneous, or realistic" voice evidence may leave out who was listening, how content decisions were made and who is making the decisions. Using stories and 'poem-like compositions' (Glesne, 1997) reinforces the readers' awareness of the researcher's judgement and craft in what is included and what has been left out in representation: because "poetry makes writing conspicuous" (Faulkner, 2009, p. 25).

For Chapters 6 and 7, therefore, I shift representational styles to stories and poems respectively. These forms "have been chosen for their unique qualities for

communicating about research" (Finley, 2003, p. 283). The use of such literary forms in qualitative research can be traced back to the crisis of representation (1986-1990) (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p. 3) when scholars began questioning the place of researcher in research texts and the relationship between researcher and participants. The post-modern (1990-1995) and post-experimental (1995-2000) stages these authors proposed were "defined in part by a concern for literary and rhetorical tropes and the narrative turn, a concern for storytelling and composing ethnographies in new ways" (2005, p. 3). The 'experimenting' includes literary, poetic, autobiographical, 'multivoiced', visual, performance and co-constructed representations of lived experience (p. 20).

My use of these forms comes from a desire for the evidence to "reflect the thickness of living" through a "systematic, credible and transparent process" (Galvin & Prendergast, 2015, p. xi). I am not intending to be experimental, cutting edge or even artistic (Bochner and Ellis, 2003). However, I acknowledge that evidence presentation is a product of my crafting. There are some similarities in the qualities of stories and poems as research representations. It was for these similarities, as well as their differences, that these two forms were chosen for the respective chapters.

In Chapter 6 I use stories to illustrate the principals' experience of appraisal and expressed by interested parties in the school community. The use of narratives in research representation is now well established. Through narrative inquiry, arts-based research, indigenous methodologies, and through autoethnography the telling of stories has 'made real' researched public issues. Stories convey a sense of the individual experience and humanity through personal voice (words, tone, diction). Stories, like poems, have the power to capture reader attention to connect emotionally as one person to another and that connection helps convey the message, theoretical or practical. The use of stories and the choice of story need to support research themes. These stories are a retelling of stories told to me and have been edited to keep the believability of what occurred without certain specifics. Denzin terms this form of realism 'verisimilitude" (Denzin, 1994) and suggests this as a basis for judging the quality of this writing: is the work life-like and believable? Can the reader/audience imagine this occurring? Although, in Chapter 6, I have used only one principal's words for each story, any one of them

could have told these stories because they all suggested these kinds of occurrences 'happen in every school'. In this way, I generalise experiences while retaining the 'truths' of each story.

Poetry may be used as the subject of study, as a process of analysis, and/or as a form of representation. Lahman et al. (2010) identified six major ways poetry was used in qualitative research in the literature they reviewed and noted that 'new' ways were being adopted adding to this discussion, so I am using broad groupings here. Poetry can be used in one or more of these stages within the research process. Although the crafting of the poems in Chapter 7 did mean ongoing analysis, my focus was on presentation. The main reasons I used research poems were because of what I wanted to communicate and because of how the use of poetry communicates with a reader.

I made the decision to use poetry precisely as Faulkner (2009) suggested, when researchers "feel that other modes of representation will not capture what they desire to show about their work and the research participants" (p. 17). Faulkner (2009) sees poetry as "a means to enlarge understanding, resist clear undemanding interpretations, and move closer to what it means to be human" (p.16), while Rinehart (2010) sees poetry as a tool that bridges a gap between personal experience and a discussion of public issues. In Chapter 7, I consider the way each principal judges what he or she does, and their self-knowledge. This is more personal and individual 'appraisal' than could be represented through quotations or stories. I aimed to convey the human being, the lived experiences, and, if I could, an awareness of the weight of expectations on these individuals in their work as school principals.

The poems in Chapter 7 are *research poems* because they are part of research and I crafted them using transcribed participants' words (Faulker, 2009; Lahman & Richard, 2014). Prendergast (2009) discussed how poetry in research should be concerned with affect as well as intellect; these are not separate in poetry's power to engage and connect. Many argue the accessibility of poetry (Furman, 2006; Nicol, 2008; St Pierre, 1996). The use of poetic form can open up space for the reader to gather impressions and make an emotive, empathic connection to the research participants. Glesne (1997) wrote, "through accessing the senses, poetry

makes one pause, reflect, [and] feel" (p. 213). Poetic 'portraiture' provides a multidimensional and more accessible way of 'seeing, hearing and feeling' participants and contexts (Hill, D. 2005). Hill suggests that poems capture richness, complexity, dynamics and subtlety of human experience (such as work) and can make feelings, events, and perspectives more vivid to a reader. I sought to write with 'more engagement and connection' – to communicate to 'diverse audiences', members of local, national and international contexts, policy and practice settings. And "because of its rhythms, silences, spaces, breath points, poetry engages the listener's body, even when the mind resists and denies it" (Richardson, 1993, pp. 704-705). The space in poetic forms invites readers to engage and respond with feelings and personal reflections (Glesne, 1997), in this case, to 'co-create' 'portraits' of participants' lived experience.

How 'good' research poetry needs to be as poetry is one of the debates around the use of poetry in research presentation. Lahman and Richard (2014) state research poems "are accepted in the field of qualitative research as a valid representation of research participants' experiences" (p. 3). These authors support the use of 'good enough' research poetry while researcher skill in the craft of poetry is developed. Others call for 'training' (Barone & Eisner, 1997; Cahnmann, 2003). The main point is that no matter how good poetry might get, a researcher's 'work' is their message and the connection between their audience and the issue.

Cahnmann (2003) and Richardson (1994) speak specifically of honouring their participants through the *accuracy* of participant speech in representation. Hill (2005) proposed participant descriptions and field note entries on their environments as two essential features of portraiture. My field note entries will have influenced what stood out for me in the transcripts and how each poem became crafted but I did not add these elements into the poems. I instead used different visual and rhythmic layouts to convey individual characteristics. I struggled with the inclusion of any signature phrases an individual might use, except where these might influence meaning and message. One of my first concerns was to maintain what anonymity I could (discussed later in this chapter). I used participant's words from transcripts to illustrate emerging knowledge from all the evidence, not just the transcripts.

Wolcott (2009) proposed that research is not complete until it is disseminated and Chanmann (2003) said "we must assume an audience for our work, an audience that longs for fresh language to describe … experiences" (p. 35). Faulkner (2009) asks that researchers "make transparent the creation and evaluation of poetry" (p. 9). To ensure my methods can be followed and evaluated, some explanation of my crafting of the poems follows with further details included in Chapter 7.

Rather than suggest I had enough evidence and skill to paint an 'oil painting' poem portrait for each of the six with many layers of colour, I chose to represent each of the principals in the style of a Chinese brush painting (Rae, 2008). Rae explained:

> Chinese brush painting is meant to be more than a representation of an object; it is also a symbolic expression. This is why a full plant is never painted, but rather a few blossoms which will represent the plant in it's [sic] entirety, and, in fact, all of life—a TAO principle. Rather than looking at the subject as you paint, you're bringing it forth from your mind and heart and becoming part of nature. (2008, p. 1)

In other words, the painter-author suggests their object in the representation leaving space between strokes (brush or key) for the viewer-reader to bring their own meaning making and understanding to the subject.

Taking the idea of Chinese brush painting further, I identified a *host* and *guest* element for each poem. The primary factors of composition are 'host' and 'guest': "in Chinese art, the major form in a composition is referred to as the "host," and the "guests" play a secondary role, mainly to balance that major point of interest. However, the guests are not insignificant; on the contrary, they are necessary, as essential as the leaves are to a flower" (Da-Wei, 1990, p. 69). Each principal's talk during the interviews could be *characterised* by a core term I identified as the *host*, and a discernable theme of his or her conversation became the *guest* in their poem. For example, Doug came across in our conversations as very organised and capable (capable is the *host*). Through much of his talk he

spoke of opportunities for students such as sports and outdoors, arts, social development, and contributing to school life, therefore, I identified 'opportunities' as the *guest* in the poem composed from Doug's words (see Table 3.1).

In crafting these poetic representations, there was intentionality in the process and something unexamined and intuitive. I aimed to retain something of the complexity and ambiguity of human experience through the use of 'brush strokes', leaving room for reader's own impressions and connections, while at the same time suggesting the *uniqueness* of each participant involved in this study.

Table 3.1: Host and Guest Features in Principals' poems

Principal participant	*Host* feature intended in the poem	*Guest* feature intended in the poem
Nate	*Respect*	*Growth*
Doug	*Capability*	*Opportunities*
Dana	*Positioning*	*Children's futures*
Sydney	*Self-confidence*	*Action*
Mickey	*Team-work*	*Change*
Ruby	*Integrity*	*Learning*

A way of seeing is also a way of not seeing (Berger, 1972) therefore "each form of representation has its own boundaries, its own constraints, and its own possibilities" (Eisner, 1988, p.16). In Eisner's words, "since all forms of representation constrain what can be represented, they can only partially represent what we know" (1988, p. 15). Each participant experience is certainly not fixed. Seen as a snapshot, what is recorded and present in representation is only momentarily 'still' and not 'forever' (MacLure, 2013, p. 659). In the end, having given representation the consideration explained above, what we might learn from this study is only part of what there is to be learned as the forms of representation limit what can be seen and what can be said.

Research Ethics

Snook (1999) identifies three key aspects of a researcher's ethical responsibility: to justify the worth of the research for the imposition on those involved; to endeavour to do no harm on commencing, undertaking and reporting research inquiry; and practicing no deceit.

There was a chronology to the justification of the worth of this research involving several audiences. I had to justify the nature of the project to my doctoral supervisors in the first instance. Then there was the process of satisfying a Faculty confirmation panel. There was also the ethics application and approval process to justify the worth of the project for the imposition caused. I also justified the imposition to potential participants through email and phone communication using a prepared information sheet (see Appendix D). Participants needed to give their informed consent to be involved. This required that they sign a form to say they had a clear understanding of the study and of the implications for their involvement, including attention to anonymity, confidentiality and privacy. Participants, having been 'fully informed' and having had an opportunity to have any questions answered or concerns addressed, were then free to volunteer to be involved in the project or not. Each of these audiences brought different perspectives to the research design and asked me different questions requiring justification to be satisfied.

Endeavoring to do no harm in commencing, undertaking and reporting research officially involves the ethics' application and approval process. This process serves to ensure that all steps are taken to prevent potential foreseeable harm. Consistent with this aim all arrangements for the conduct of this research were approved by the University of Waikato's Ethical *Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations* (2008), including participants' right to withdraw. Ethical guidelines and codes generally, and those specific to this study, along with ethics committees and their processes are there to protect people, not only participants, but researchers and their associated institutions (also, if relevant, funding agencies). Ethical approval from the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee was granted 28 March 2013.

Ethical issues can arise at different stages of the research, and in regards to different aspects of the project (Cohen, et al., 2007). A key research concern has been participant confidentiality, protecting the privacy and anonymity of individuals. Wiles, Crow, Heath and Charles (2008) suggested that confidentiality and anonymity are closely related concepts "in that anonymity is one way in which confidentiality is operationalized" (p. 417). Researchers protect the privacy of participants by not discussing information provided through the privilege of the research that could identify individuals. Researchers protect participant anonymity by 'anonymising' evidence in presentations (Wiles, et al., 2008).

Most method texts address anonymity. Anonymity "simply means that we do not name the person or research site involved but, in research, it is usually extended to mean that we do not include information about any individual or research site that will enable that individual or research site to be identified by others" (Walford, 2005, p. 84). Grinyer (2009) commented on the assumed ('given') importance of anonymity in research guidance.

> Mechanisms to protect the identity of research respondents appear to have become central to the design and practice of ethical research. Consequent assumptions about the desirability of anonymity are embedded in various codes of ethical conduct. (p. 1)

Thus questioning the assumption that anonymity is desirable.

The norm for methods texts and for institutional ethics committees is to emphasise the importance of maintaining anonymity. Some authors have been emphatic about researchers ensuring participant anonymity (e.g. Weiss, 1994) but others raise questions about this practice in presentation of research to its audience (e.g. Nespor, 2000, Wiles, et al., 2008, Wolcott, 2009). Walford (2005) questioned this default option on the grounds that "it often does not work and it is hard to see how it can ever really work if what is being said in reports is significant and worthwhile" (p. 85). The idea that leaving out certain details will mean that an individual or research site cannot be identified is unrealistic and is in tension with ensuring a useful research report. Wolcott (2009) commented that, in qualitative research, "to present material in such a way that even the people

74

central to the study are 'fooled' by it is to risk removing those very aspects that make it vital, unique, believable, and at times painfully personal" (p. 4). Nespor (2000) was also concerned about the "decoupling of events from historical and geographically specific locations" (p. 549) as "anonymisation is likely to be most problematic precisely where it would be most useful –at the local level – and that it can do little to protect the identities of participants from intimates and associates" (p. 548). Deliberately keeping places and settings hidden through a process of anonymising evidence separates the people and events from the historical, social and geographical context. It is the context that would allow systemic policy and power structures to be better understood, and perhaps implicated or challenged (Nespor, 2000: Saunders, Kitzinger, & Kitzinger, 2015).

Given the size and nature of New Zealand's national educational and professional networks, anonymity cannot be guaranteed. Participants were informed of this potential occurrence in the information sheet. They were assured that all procedures regarding secure storage and respect for confidentiality would be taken to minimise this risk. I took care to keep my participant information separate from my other work and separate from each participant. In particular, I took care in talking with colleagues not to reveal any information that might lead them to question how I might know that particular detail. It is usual for research evidence to "be presented in such a way that respondents should be able to recognise themselves, while the reader should not be able to identify them" (Grinyer, 2009, p. 1). Walford (2005) stated "ironically, pseudonyms only act to protect people and organisations where there is little to protect them from" (p. 88). I decided to invite the people I interviewed for this study to select their own pseudonym (one did) and confirmed with others the pseudonym I elected to use. It is also important to pay attention to how evidence of an individual accumulates across chapters (or articles).

When individuals are identifiable through details in research reporting, particularly to someone with close knowledge of the research site, this is termed 'deductive disclosure' or 'internal confidentiality' (Kaiser, 2009; Tolich, 2004). Saunders et al.'s (2015) study, although dealing with more sensitive material, makes several relevant points for this study that impact on the risk of deductive disclosure.

- That researchers use geographically convenient locations mean sites are more likely to be traceable – *as I did* (Saunders, et al., 2015; Tolich, 2004).

- That participants may not have a clear idea of how their words will be used in future, so comprehending potential future harm of being named is difficult and unpredictable – *in this case for both the researcher and participants* (Wiles, et al., 2012).

- The possibility of participants identifying – 'outing' themselves – *with implications for others in the study* (Tolich, 2004). Grinyer (2009) notes some participants elect to use real names not because they do not perceive any harm but more because they want to own their stories.

Saunders et al. (2015) addressed the practical and ethical challenges of maintaining anonymity using evidence from an interview study in the context of brain injury and end-of-life decisions. These authors were clear that researchers cannot guarantee anonymity in qualitative research (Scott, 2005; Van den Hoonaard, 2003). Snowball sampling comes in for particular criticism, for example, and Van den Hoonaard (2003) protested that ethics codes largely ignore the publication stage. Anonymising research evidence in presentations involves researcher awareness and compromises more than practical solutions.

Each project has its specific challenges. In this project, the main challenges concerning anonymity arose once I began to develop my evidence chapters and make decisions about representing my participants on the page, at conferences, and for publication. In particular, when using literary forms such as stories and poems, questions of anonymity and informed consent began to bother me. As Sikes (2006) says, "the relationship between research completed and in the public domain and individual researchers' decisions is by no means a simple or straightforward one" (p. 115). Representing participants, their stories, and settings in research writing is a significant responsibility given participants might be identified by members of the intended research audience (a point made Saunders, et al., 2015): in this case, other principals. Richardson (1992) highlighted for me my responsibility: "when we write social science, we use our authority and privileges to talk about the people we study. No matter how we stage the text, we –the authors –are doing the staging" (p. 131). I took up the challenge to represent

76

the richness of individual life experience in a way that communicates a sense of *a* 'real' person but not *the* 'real' person. To convey individuals that are *believable* rather than *recognisable* to different audiences.

In poetry composition, researcher decisions influencing anonymity were discussed by Soutar-Hynes (2016). She talks of loyalty, truth and explicitness in "the masking of identity, deciding what to remove/ rework, what to name directly" (p. 77) in the process of "documenting, disentangling, and understanding experience through poetry" (p. 78). The decisions any composer of poetry makes involve loyalty (and sensitivity) to their subject and "the constraints/ dilemmas of self-censorship, the tensions between naming/ not naming, telling it 'straight' or telling it 'slant'" (Souter- Hynes, 2016, p. 77). I changed names of third parties in stories, and referred to people by their occupation using general categories only. I did not use such detail at all if not salient to the story. It is hard to evaluate the effect of my deletion and alteration of details on the impact of the research but due consideration was given to these decisions. By generalising descriptions of place names and locations, I still cannot claim that this leaves individuals and settings untraceable but I sought to ensure it would not be easy.

Snook (1999) also asked researchers to practice no deceit. Research projects can be misrepresented early on in gaining access to participants, providing misleading declarations about the use of the resulting evidence, and concerning funding providers. In all dealings with participants, researchers need to treat people fairly. This requires reflexivity, self-awareness, and responsibility. The responsibility is on the researcher to inform participants prior to consent and to minimise or mitigate risks in order to protect participants and the integrity of the research. Although my research was conducted using guidance from methods texts, research policies, and with the appropriate ethical and institutional approvals, I still feel that I had not adequately considered the ethical issues of representation and presentation to a variety of audiences, and that these considerations were missing from the information sheet given to participants. Saunders et al. (2015) talk of this specifically and provide an example of an information sheet stressing the importance of making participants aware of the limitations to researcher 'control'. The official 'informed consent' process I used inadequately considered the ease of information access and communication in digital environments, and it

did not deal with the risks of more literary forms of presentation. I also did not consider the ways that participants may want to be identified or identify themselves (within social or professional circles, with the potential for a 'cascade' of identification (Wiles, et al., 2008)). It would have been entirely consistent with contemporary pragmatism for me consider future, anticipated audiences' /readers' experience of the text as part of preparation for, and information on the use of this research.

Introducing participants

Before leaving this chapter, I want to introduce the six people (Dana, Doug, Mickey, Nate, Ruby, Sydney) who agreed to be part of this study, remembering that they have different personalities and worked in different school and community settings (historically, geographically and socially).

Doug maintained some distance for his personal life by living in town and commuting to school. Ruby also lived out of the immediate area and shared details of her personal life judiciously. That school was likely to be Ruby's last principal job as she regularly reviewed her options and career plans. Mickey had been a principal for many years and lived with her husband in the schoolhouse. Her children had gone to that school. She expected to move away 'to town' at some stage, probably when she retired. Sydney was relatively new to principalship. He lived in the local area with his family. Commuting long distance was not a practical option due to his family's circumstances at the time. Sydney and Dana both had had previous careers before coming into education. Dana was in her second principalship. Living in the nearest town was practical for her personal life and reinforced her 'townie' status. Nate, also in his second principalship, talked of himself as a young principal keen to learn from others. His family had lived in the schoolhouse, and his children went to the school.

These principals interacted regularly and directly with children at the school through a variety of roles. The amount of teaching that principals in this study were involved with varied with school size and provision of staff by boards of trustees, from full-time in the classroom as well as the principal's responsibilities to regular special sessions and projects with small groups. Specific kinds of involvement included teaching one curriculum subject to one class as timetabled,

beginning teacher release, covering teacher illness, and out-of-class involvement such as being on the duty roster for monitoring children during breaks, coaching sports and class camps. It can be difficult to get relief teachers in to teach classes for ill teachers at short notice in rural schools due to location. However, these principals would often intentionally undertake to teach a class themselves rather than get a reliever to save money in the school budget.

At the time of the interviews, all three men in this study could see themselves as a principal of a larger school. One woman also thought a larger school would be her next step if she did not move into a role in tertiary education. Another woman could see herself moving on from principalship to be an advisor or consultant. The third woman could not imagine changing schools at this stage.

Chapter summary

The research aim was to decipher rural school principals' experience of formal and informal appraisal of their work as school leaders and how they 'judge' themselves. I describe my research approach as contemporary pragmatism. The main research method was interviews and the interview questions were framed to be constructive and appreciative. Research decisions involve evaluation and judgement in relation to reference points both in terms of disciplinary and research scholarship and of the continuity of researcher biography and values. The evidence and knowledge from this research study are of a particular place (context) and time (historical moment), and were gained through the particular interactions of particular people (researcher and participants). The presentation of this evidence in poems, stories and quotations constitutes a limited 'snapshot'. The use of these three representational text forms fitted both the nature of my evidence and my desire for the audience to connect with the school principals' experiences but came with anonymity challenges and raised questions about *informed* consent. Through this description of the research design and researcher decisions, the situated, relational, and textual structure of this thesis can be evaluated. In Chapter 4 I review literature relevant to 'the situation' of the judgement of principals' work.

CHAPTER FOUR

ON JUDGEMENT: JUDGING PRINCIPALS' WORK

Albert Einstein kept a sign in his Princeton office that read, *"Not everything that counts can be counted, and not everything that can be counted counts.*[18]

Introduction – On Judgement

This chapter sets out the scope and the 'place' of my study. I focus on the judgement of principals' work. To begin I present an exploration of judgement as a concept using a contemporary interpretation of Deweyan pragmatism. To be explicit about my disciplinary perspective, educational assessment, on principals' experience of appraisal I next look at research in classroom settings, specifically practices for formative purposes. I draw on items from psychology and educational leadership theory to explore judgement by self and for self as aspects of self-assessment. Later I review leadership models and the terms *successful* and *effective* as indicators of quality principalship. I conclude this chapter by looking at reports on appraisal of school principals as assessment.

Dewey's pragmatism viewed judgement as an aspect of the articulation of a felt doubt or disturbance in a situation, which results in the identification of 'a problem'. For Dewey, the problem is the outcome of a first step that then becomes the basis for investigation or inquiry. In his exploration of Dewey's theory of judgement, Frega (2010) proposed "the most critical activity implied in judgement is the articulation that accounts for the selection, from the indeterminate complexity of the situation of the data –facts and ideas –which will be used in the resolution of the problem at hand" (p. 601). Judgements, in Dewey's view, are acts of articulation and evaluation aimed at settling or resolving a felt concern that began the inquiry: the identification of "things to do or be done" (1915, p.

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[18] Allegedly, see for example, Boisot, M., Nordberg, M., Said, Y. & Nicquevert, B. (2011, p. vii). *Collisions and Collaboration: The Organization of Learning in the ATLAS Experiment at the LHC*. Oxford, UK:Oxford University Press.

505) and action that is "better, wiser, more prudent, right, advisable, opportune, expedient etc." (p. 505). Dewey wrote of judgement as the selection and rejection decisions regarding relevant evidence for an evaluation; that is, the gathering of what is important to take into account and what is not. Dewey also identified judgement in the determination of the outcomes, outcomes that reinforce or revise what was previously accepted as known, standard, or normal. Interpreting Dewey's writing (1915, 1938a & b) on the subject of judgement as a process *and* an outcome from my contemporary standpoint, there are interpretative, situational, relational, temporal and continual aspects.

Judgement is interpretative as an individual develops judgement (discernment), exercises judgement and judges how to proceed. That is, the interpretative process of the judge is necessary and is what connects the reference points to the specific situation. Judgements are made in relation to some reference point. This reference may be explicitly apparent, such as formal standards or criteria, more tacitly used such as the judge's point of view or values, or more broadly perceived socio-cultural norms. It is more likely that the reference points used in judgement will be a mixture of these things. The judge uses reflexivity and evaluation in "selection, determination and interpretation" (Frega, 2010, p. 603). Therefore, the reference points used in judgement are not ready-made criteria that require only careful application. For Dewey there is no *judgement* if criteria are simply "taken from outside and applied" (Dewey, 1915, p. 39). Judgements are made in relation to what is valued, whether specified or not and whether it is clear whose values are being used.

In Dewey's understanding, judgement processes and outcomes are situational. He recorded that he assumed that inference and judgement belong "to action, or behaviour, which takes place *in the world*" [emphasis added](Dewey, 2006[1916], p. 91). An appraiser's interpretation is made in relation to the requirements of the situation (Frega, 2010). Frega (2010) found the judge's role is to make "responsible decisions concerning the selection of what should be taken to be relevant for *the situation at hand* [emphasis added] and concerning the correct enactment of the consequences so drawn" (p. 601). The situation is a significant aspect in Dewey's understanding of judgement as this is where judgements are made and enactment of consequences plays out.

Because the reference points used in judgement are interpreted and situational, judgement is also relational. Judging and judgements such as those of principals' appraisal are relational in terms of being multifaceted and subjective (Garside, 2013). Being judged through the interaction with an appraiser along with the resulting judgement can feel very personal, at least, for the person who is the subject. Deweyan judgement, therefore, aims to assess the quality of an 'effect' on a 'situation' and not to define the intrinsic 'value' of something (Frega, 2010). With this understanding, a principal's intrinsic 'value' cannot be appraised because this person is in relation to the 'judge' and to the situation, not a stand-alone individual.

Dewey also emphasised the temporality of things (Dewey, 1938a). It was this understanding of a temporal dimension of experience—in what is *known*, in the nature of situations, and in personal and professional growth—that justified Dewey's hope for better quality future experiences. Frega (2010) summarised Dewey's idea: "temporality is a constitutive trait both of situations and judgements; situations evolve over time, and judgement is not the punctual utterance of a propositional content but is rather a spatial-temporally complex process subject to contingent constraints" (p. 599). Dewey's understanding that the stability of knowledge (values or norms) is only for *a time* signals an ongoing need for further inquiry, further judgements and further decision-making. As Frega (2010) wrote:

> judgment of practice is … a necessary and ongoing activity. Necessary, because human beings constantly need to make decisions and settle questions and because judgment accompanies situations in their dynamic evolution and should be responsive to the changing nature of factors, needs and aims. (Frega, 2010, p. 599)

According to Deweyan pragmatism, any result of judgement is, therefore, not as fixed or final as commonly held connotations of the term, or uses of the outcomes, might suggest.

Dewey's ideas of judgement emphasised the importance of consideration of the future. The outcome of judgement modifies the consequential action and is the

basis for future action. To Dewey's way of thinking "every experience is a moving force. Its value can be judged only on the ground of what it moves toward and into" (Dewey, 1938a, p. 38). Judgements are, therefore, part of the *continuity* of an inquiry. Frega (2010) interpreting Dewey's writing:

> the judgment of practice, therefore, refers both to the identification and to the application of criteria that enable agents to assess the meaning and values of their actions (whatever they may be) with reference to the *consequences* they bring about and with reference to the *specified ends* [emphasis added]. (Frega, 2010, p. 601)

The word 'agents' is used here to refer to those who are doing the judging, and 'specified ends' refers to intentional and predictable outcomes. Frega (2010) concluded that judgement for Dewey had three facets: "judgement is *the result of previous activities*, *a form of activity* itself and *the origin of further activities*" (Frega, 2010, p. 594). For Dewey the continual betterment of the quality of human experience was *the* desirable 'end'.

These key aspects of the concept of judgement, based on Dewey's propositions, suggest a number of considerations for this study. Judgement is both a process and an outcome. Judgement requires interpretation and decisions about relevance and importance of evidence in relation to the situation 'at hand'. The reference point(s), or expectations, by which an individual is judged, are in relation to explicit and/or tacit values and norms of the situation that both judge and judged find themselves in. At the same time, judge and judged partially constitute these points of reference. Using Dewey's notions of judgement, the appraiser and the school principal cannot be separated from the appraisal situation, nor can the activity of judgement be separated from the school-specific situation. To adopt Dewey's concept of judgement signals that any judgement resulting from an appraisal process cannot define the *intrinsic quality* of the principal as an individual. Because situations change over time any judgement made within appraisal will be temporary, and open to review and revision in the future.

Judgement is a conceptual umbrella that includes assessment, evaluation and appraisal. I now turn to what is understood in educational contexts about

assessment and evaluation that is relevant to this study. Assessment and evaluation (and self-assessment, which I will come to later in this chapter) as practiced in classrooms is not necessarily or likely the same practice as that of adults in professional work. However, life-long learning[19] is seen as an integral component of professional practice. Pont et al. (2008) recommended leadership development be treated as a continuum involving both formal and informal learning processes. Cranston, Ehrich and Morton (2007), who reviewed 12 educational leadership frameworks, identified that educational leadership is 'about learning', with principals seeing themselves (or needing to see themselves) as critically reflective life-long learners. A principal's continual professional growth then is viewed as an outcome of learning and a part of professional practice. The wealth of research in the assessment field and the growth in accountability measures for a wide range of educational outcomes suggests understandings of classroom assessment as a productive lens for this research on principal appraisal.

Assessment and Evaluation

Assessment and evaluation have been a major focus for education research and policy since the 1990s, enhancing their predominance in educational settings. Garside commented: "assessment certainly plays a central role, and is perhaps valorised, in educational settings" (Garside, 2013, p. 11). To describe what is potentially relevant and useful for principal appraisal from scholarship in educational assessment I draw on the work of established scholars, and their associates, who have influenced thinking particularly about assessment *for* learning through research in classroom settings: Terry Crooks from New Zealand, Wynne Harlen from the United Kingdom (UK), from United States, Rick Stiggins, scholars based in Australia such as Royce Sadler, and David Boud, who is concerned with learning in tertiary environments.

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[19] There are alternative views. See Biesta (2006) or Coffield (1999) who presents a "sceptical version of lifelong learning as social control, which treats lifelong learning not as a self-evident good but as contested terrain between employers, unions and the state" (p. 479).

Broadly the term *assessment* can be said to refer to the assessment of work or a situation that involves gathering evidence in order to make a judgement (informative or evaluative) that may or may not lead to further action. The term *evaluation* refers to an overall summative decision at a particular time using a reference point such as a standard or other specific criteria. The term evaluation highlights the normative in relation to "its object of reference and a scale of values respectively" (Garside, 2013, p. 11). The term evaluation may also emphasise a relative lack of, or limited, responsibility on behalf of the person making the judgement for what might happen next. Assessment design influences the quality of evidence and the quality of decisions – judgements –that can be made on the basis of that evidence. It has been identified in the literature that assessment and evaluation have become intertwined in practice and are difficult to separate. Crooks (1992, p. 1), for example, included evaluative decision-making in this description of educational assessment.

> Educational assessment includes *gathering* information in a variety of ways, *collating* the information to throw light on a particular *decision* which is to be made, and *using* the information to make the decision. *Reporting* processes are often very much part of the 'package' [emphasis added]. (cited in Hill, 2012, p. 161)

Crooks included reporting here but did not explicitly emphasise any analysis processes involved in evaluation. Both processes involve judgement and decision-making. Without forgetting evaluation, I will use assessment to refer to both in this study.

To help those involved make decisions necessitated by assessment, Crooks (1993) proposed four considerations in the form of questions.

- Will the assessment do any good?
- Will the assessment cause any harm?
- Will decisions be based on a true and sufficiently broad picture?
- Will decisions be based on stable enough information?

(Restated in Hill, 2012, p. 175).

Crooks' four questions focus on the nature and quality of the process of gathering evidence and the decisions made on the basis of that evidence. The first two questions are about what (potential) impact the process will have on the person being judged. Decisions about process, evidence, and outcomes need to be *fair* to the individual (Gipps, 1998; Stobart, 2012). This includes not subjecting that person whose learning, practice, work or performance is the subject of the assessment to undue stress, undermining his or her motivation or self-esteem, or putting them at risk in some way.

The third consideration Crooks presented asked that the evidence used be important, relevant, and necessary to the purpose. Evidence gathered should not be trivial, too broad, or too narrow. This consideration in assessment design is viewed as 'fundamental' (Darr, 2005a; Sadler, 2009; Stobart, 2012; Wiggins, 1998). What needs to be seen is what is valued according to set requirements or what comes to be valued by both the judge and the person whose work is judged. Therefore, assessment evidence and processes need to align with what is valued. Sadler (2009) argued that because assessment practices and systems are about 'valuing something', assessment is communication. Assessment practices play a role in communicating what is worth noticing and what is judged as representing quality. What is valued will influence what is assessed and what is assessed comes to influence what is valued. What is not assessed comes to be perceived as of lesser or low value (Hay & Penney, 2013). Boud and Falchilcov (2007) found that in directing attention to what is important, assessment can have powerful effects on individual approaches to learning-work including incentives, disincentives and pressure to prioritise just those aspects that will be tested.

In his fourth question, Crooks (1993) proposed that consideration be given to how sound the decisions will be on the basis of the evidence. Such consideration is a necessity for assessment quality (Black & Wiliam, 2012; Chappuis, Chappuis, and Stiggins, 2009). For example, the timing of assessment will likely influence the quality of the evidence gathered. Evaluations will also be influenced by the degree of consistency across evaluators or judges (Darr, 2005b; Earl & Ussher, 2012). The degree of rigour needed for any particular assessment largely depends on the intended use of the consequential interpretations and judgements (Harlen, 2005;

Kane, Crooks, & Cohen, 1999)[20] particularly when decisions have high stakes for the person being judged (Harlen, 2007).

Assessment also needs to be practical (Earl & Ussher, 2012; Sutton, 1992). Consideration needs to be given to the use of resources on balance with the worth of the outcomes; that is, whether the information gathered will be worth the effort (Earl & Ussher, 2012). Sutton (1992) explained that in "real situations … [the] aim of high-quality assessment procedures will inevitably be constrained by the resources at your disposal, of which the most crucial is your own time and energy" (p. 17). Assessment tasks or events, including those involved in principal appraisal, tend to be additional to regular work experiences and, therefore, require extra time and effort, making manageability a consideration in appraisal design.

Performance assessment, when a competency is assessed through observation, has been promoted in the past on the basis of being a more direct and authentic form of assessment particularly when the competency is important and complex (Kane, Crooks, & Cohen, 1999). Observation of a performance is also seen to allow 'safer' inferences –more direct interpretations –that are less likely to contain wide variance. However, all assessment processes involve decisions based on interpretation. Harlen (2005) observed, "all assessment involves judgement" (p. 221) and Hill stated specifically "no measurement is free of decision-making or valuing" (Hill, 2012, p. 161).

Kane et al. (1999) highlighted three main areas of interpretation, or inference, when assessing performance that "may reduce the utility of this kind of assessment in high stakes applications" (p. 5): interpretation of what quality looks like when scoring, comparing performances at different times, and weighing the meaning or significance of what was observed in a performance in relation to broader notions of competency. The processes of gaining competence are also different from those in performing competence[21] with implications for

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[20] At what point the individual can be asked to perform competence is also a judgement.

[21] See Goffman's (1959) presentation of self to Dillon's (2015) comment on the differences between these two in terms of the consequences of associated anxiety: **"**A little anxiety can boost performance when someone is already competent and has some confidence. Anxiety also hinders gaining competence, depresses learning and drains it of its intrinsic value" (para. 6).

understanding what is to be observed. Eisner (1976) would suggest that performance assessment demands 'connoisseurship' on the part of the assessor. Connoisseurship, for Eisner, refers to the qualities of openness, sensitivity, and appreciation for difference in evaluative deliberations.

Assessment design decisions influence what evidence is gathered and how, and, therefore, the quality of evidence that is available to be analysed and evaluated. Drummond, a UK researcher, has repeated her succinct message "assessment is essentially provisional, partial, tentative, exploratory and, inevitably, incomplete" (Drummond, 2012, p. 14). As Harlen (2005) claimed, "all assessment in the context of education involves making decisions about what is relevant evidence for a particular purpose, how to collect the evidence, how to interpret it and how to communicate it to intended users" (p. 207). This assessment literature recommends that the design of assessment be *fit for purpose*. For Sutton (1992) it was 'obvious' that assessment design decisions about *who*, *what*, *when*, and *how* ('techniques or styles' p. 9) largely depend on the *why* question[22]: Why is this assessment being undertaken in this setting, at this time, involving these persons?

There are two other points to note from this literature. One, the gathering and use of more evidence is not seen as the answer to the need for quality evidence. As Chappuis et al. (2009) pointed out, "the use of multiple measures does not, by itself, translate into high quality evidence" (p. 15). Two, policy implementation requirements and situational constraints can impact on the design of assessment and evaluative decisions. However, not all assessment processes are high stakes for the person being assessed (judged). This leads me to a review of assessment purposes.

The purposes of assessment
Back in 1987, Elley, now professor emeritus, University of Canterbury (NZ), answered the question 'why do we test pupils?' with a list of three main purposes: for assessing mastery of "a particular unit or skill", for diagnosis – the identification of major weaknesses, and for reporting progress (1987). A decade

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[22] Assessment and evaluation processes are not always used for legitimate and fair purposes. As an example of inappropriate use, Torrance and Pryor (1998) discuss assessment being used for controlling student behaviour and keeping them on task.

later Harlen (1998), at the time director for the Scottish Council for Research in Education, presented at the annual conference of the New Zealand Association for Research in Education in Dunedin. She said reporting, as records of learning to "be passed to parents, teachers, pupils and others with an interest in what has been achieved" (p. 9), has always been a reason to assess and evaluate "to give account of what has been achieved at certain points" (Harlen, 1998, p. 9). Harlen noted four purposes for assessment: to inform next steps in learning, to inform next steps in teaching, to monitor progress against plans and standards, and to record achievement of individuals. Two decades later, and from an educational psychology standpoint, Brown, Irving and Keegan (2008) identified their three fundamental purposes for assessment for a New Zealand audience – "to improve teaching and learning, make schools and teachers accountable, and make students accountable" (p. 2). The accounting aspect is more dominant in the Brown et al. list (2007). This emphasis on accountability continues to be the case locally, influenced by global comparisons of national education systems (Hay & Penney, 2013; Smith, 2016).

Why we gather assessment information matters. It matters because the purpose should affect the design of assessment undertaken (Elley, 1987). There are two main purposes for assessment in educational assessment literature: assessment *of* learning or assessment for summative purposes and assessment *for* learning or assessment for formative purposes. These two purposes could also be termed 'assessment for accountability' and 'assessment for improvement' respectively (Hay and Penney, 2013).

Assessment for summative purposes
Assessment for summative purposes, "is carried out at intervals when achievement has to be summarised or reported", according to Harlen (1998, p. 7). For *summative* purposes, assessment design provides evaluative information on learner achievement according to a reference point and is determined through a process of comparison and a weighing of evidence. The reference point used for comparison can be other results (norm-referenced), previous performance

(ipsative[23]) or criteria, standard or benchmark (criterion-referenced[24]).

Summative records and reports are a 'summary' usually separated from the evidence used in making the evaluative judgement. When recording and reporting assessment for accountability purposes "a summary is needed … without the burden of too much detail. Summarising often feels very unsatisfactory. It flattens out the unique representation of the child as an individual, and sometimes produces an image more crude and blurred than we would like" (Sutton, 1992, pp. 3-4). For summative purposes, the judge of the evidence may be at a distance and have little or no responsibility for next steps or further progress. Black (1999) proposed that classroom teachers should not make summative judgements because this is "not compatible with their formative role" (p. 130) and Wiggins (1998) wanted those making summative judgements to be "trained and disinterested". Summative purposes typically mean that assessment processes are of extrinsic motivation and about *proving* rather than *improving* competence for the person whose performance is being judged (McMillan, 2007). Summative purposes can involve individuals, groups, organisations and systems, and result in continuing support, reward, award, or censure.

Assessment has an impact on those who experience it. High stakes standardised testing, in compulsory education, has been recognised in the literature as having a significant negative impact on student enjoyment, participation, and motivation. Motivation in classroom settings was described by Harlen (2005) as "a complex concept, embracing several aspects that relate to learning, such as self-esteem, self-regulation, interest, effort, self-efficacy, and a person's sense of themselves as a learner" (p. 210). Harlen and Deakin Crick (2002) completed a literature review on the impact of high-stakes tests on students' motivation for learning and Harlen later summarised their findings.

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[23] Ipsative assessment in education relates to notions of a 'personal best' and not how this term is used in psychology (Latin: ipse, "of the self").

[24] Both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced are credited to educational psychologist Robert Glaser. (1963). Instructional technology and the measurement of learning outcomes. *American Psychologist. 18* (8): 519–522. doi:10.1037/h0049294.

Throughout the 1990s, evidence was accumulating of the detrimental effect of frequent testing on students' enjoyment of school, their willingness to learn, other than for the purpose of passing tests or examinations, and their understanding of the process of learning … Any negative impact on motivation for learning is clearly highly undesirable, particularly at a time when the importance of learning to learn and lifelong learning is widely embraced. (Harlen, 2005, p. 210)

Other authors also have seen significance in the potential negative effects of assessment design. For example, Stiggins (2007) challenged educators by insisting "we must begin to evaluate our assessment in terms of both the quality of the evidence they yield and the effect they have on future learning" (pp. 25-26). Stiggins was concerned that summative assessment results used to differentiate and rank students produced 'winners and losers'. Summative reporting assigns value to those who are judged to have achieved, or at least *demonstrated,* the valued competence (knowledge or skill) in the 'valued manner' (Hay & Penney, 2013).

Several authors suggest that the expectations of what is required (e.g. criteria, standards) are 'best' if they are transparent, shared, and understood by all those involved (e.g. Clarke, 2005; Clarke, Timperley, & Hattie, 2001; Earl, L. 2003: 2013; Harlen, 2005). Any criterion used needs to be an appropriate match to the expectations of an individual's level of achievement and with the situation under evaluation (Brown, Irving, & Keegan, 2008; Stobart, 2012). Harlen (2005) said, "for summative purposes, of course, common criteria need to be applied and achievement is generally summarized in terms of levels or grades that must have the same meaning for all students" (p. 219). However, another UK researcher in this area, Torrance, argued that clarity about criteria rather than being 'fair' leads to what he called 'criteria compliance'.

Transparency encourages instrumentalism. The clearer the task of how to achieve a grade or award becomes, and the more detailed the assistance given by tutors, supervisors and assessors, the more likely candidates are to succeed. But transparency of objectives coupled with extensive use of coaching and practice to help learners meet them is in danger of removing

the challenge of learning and reducing the quality and validity of outcomes achieved. This might be characterized as a move from assessment *of* learning, through the currently popular idea of assessment *for* learning, to *assessment as learning*, where assessment procedures and practices come completely to dominate the learning experience, and 'criteria compliance' comes to replace 'learning'. (Torrance, 2007, p. 282)

Torrance's words echo with warnings of fragmentation (see Bohm, 1996; Senge, et al., 2005) and indicate that attempts to determine consistent and manageable criteria run the risk of undermining learner growth. Hattie and Timperley (2007) said that assessment as "external accountability thermometers" provided minimal feedback to the learner to use for improvement of learning (p. 104).

Assessment for formative purposes
Assessments for formative purposes, in classroom environments, are designed to meet students' needs (Black & Wiliam, 1998, Chappuis & Stiggins, 2002, McMillan, 2007) by providing information that can *form* the direction for improvement (Wiliam & Leahy, 2007). Criteria for formative purposes are then descriptive progressions for use in scaffolding learner progress. Information for formative purposes is generally descriptive, often linked explicitly to evidence, and it is those closest to activities of practice, progress and achievement who make the judgements.

The way to understand assessment purpose is to look at the outcomes (Harlen, 2005). One necessary outcome of assessment for formative purposes is *feedback*. A significant step in understanding the nature of feedback was provided by Tunstall and Gipps (1996). These authors developed a grounded typology of teacher feedback (p. 402). Based on a yearlong study in London with eight Year 1 and 2 classes, they concluded that feedback that is 'rewarding and approving' or 'punishing and disapproving' (Types A & B) could lead to a performance-goal orientation, while feedback that 'specifies attainment and improvement' (Type C) can lead to a mastery goal orientation. Mastery, as the goal, is developing the sought capability and performance being able to demonstrate it for the assessment period. They described feedback that 'constructs achievement and the way forward' (Type D) as learning-oriented. Tunstall and Gipps stressed that both

types C and D are "crucial to pupils" (1996, p. 403).

Feedback that can be used is important if the learner is to improve (e.g. Black & Wiliam, 1998; Brookhart, 2007; Clarke, 2005: Crooks, 2006; Sadler, 1989; Wiliam, 2012). To be useful, feedback needs to be timely, descriptive and task-related rather than evaluative or 'judgemental' (Crooks, 2006; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Sadler, 1989; Shute, 2007; Tunstall & Gipps, 1996). Feedback is complex and highly situational. Crooks (2006) asked that feedback focus on things that the learner can control and be limited to what would make the most difference at that point, rather than identifying multiple weaknesses to be addressed.

Rewards and praise are questioned as types of feedback by a number of authors (e.g. Brophy, 1991; Clarke, Timperley, & Hattie, 2001; Hattie & Timperley, 2007) based on the argument that feedback should provide feed-forward and stimulate a positive response, motivation and involvement for ongoing learning. Such feedback is individualised and meaningful (McMillan, 2007). Feedback can also be discouraging and reduce performance (e.g. Elley, 1987; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Stobart (2012) highlighted the emotional and effort 'costs' of responding to feedback even when task-based and that feedback can be negotiated, accepted, used or rejected. Authors such as Black and Wiliam (1998) and Boud and associates (2010) recommended for classroom settings that any form of assessment concentrate on the task not the 'self' of the learner. Hattie and Timperley (2007) also found that "feedback needs to … [amongst other things] …provide little threat to the person at the self level" (p. 104). The argument is that decentering the ego of the learner would avoid harm to his or her motivation and self-esteem. Ritchhart (2002) commented in reference to the development of intellectual character and based on his extensive classroom observations: "it is hard to control, modify or change things that we aren't fully aware of" (p. 238). His claim was that through feedback individuals could increase their self-awareness and potentially take action to change. Thus it is acknowledged that there is still individual agency in whether to elect to respond to feedback or not.

The purposes for assessment have been researched and discussed for more than half a century. Scriven is credited with coining the terms formative and

summative and making a distinction between them in 1967 (Brookhart, 2007; Taras, 2005). At that time Scriven used *formative* to describe the use of evaluation for educational *process* development and improvement and used *summative* to label the use of evaluation as an aspect of decisions about educational *outcomes* (Brookhart, 2007). Although it is generally agreed that these purposes are different, and a distinction useful, there is debate about whether the purposes can be combined in practice (for manageability) and/or if continued differentiation is necessary. In their advice to the New Zealand Ministry of Education, Absolum, Flockton, Hattie, Hipkins and Reid (2009) acknowledged the usefulness of these two terms to differentiate purposes of assessment and to develop teacher understanding of assessment but they also suggested that it was time for educators to 'move on'. Harlen (2005) acknowledged that in her research

> it is sometimes difficult to avoid referring to these as if they were different forms or types of assessment. They are not. They are discussed separately only because they have different purposes, indeed the same information, gathered in the same way, would be called formative if it were used to help learning and teaching, or summative if it were not so utilized but only employed for recording and reporting. (Harlen, 2005, p. 208)

It has been suggested that in practice the same evidence can be used for both purposes *if* the distinction is maintained. Biggs (1998), who criticised Black and Wiliam's 1998 review for essentially leaving out summative assessment, argued that formative and summative purposes need not be mutually exclusive *if* the process focused on is "deeply criterion referenced" (p. 107). Biggs, therefore, highlighted the significance of what achievement *looks like* in relation to the intended achievement (the reference point). Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, and Wiliam (2002) included the formative use of summative assessment evidence as one practice that teachers found effective in implementing assessment for improvement in learning. Other authors also comment on summative processes and judgements being made, *then* the information being used to identify and address learning needs (Carless, 2007; Stobart, 2012; Taras, 2005). Taras (2005) argued, "all assessment begins with summative assessment (a judgement) and that formative assessment is in fact summative assessment plus feedback which is used by the learner" (p. 466). Others (e.g. Gipps, 1994; Harlen, et al., 1992;

Stiggins, 1992), however, have suggested that combining or blurring assessment purposes in the way educators discuss them and/or in the design of assessment is likely to undermine the quality of formative outcomes. Gipps (1994) pointed out "assessment for formative purposes has quite different properties and qualities from that used summatively for accountability [reporting] purposes. Any attempt to use formative assessment for summative purposes will *impair* its formative role" [emphasis added](p. 14). Harlen (2005) said that, although problematic, the same evidence could be used for the two different purposes using different processes but she warned, "if we fuse, or confuse, formative and summative purposes, experience strongly suggests that 'good assessment' will mean good assessment *of* learning, not *for* learning" (2005, p. 220).

From this review of assessment research in classrooms, a number of considerations can be identified that have potential for exploring principal experience of appraisal. What is the purpose of appraisal? Do the criteria used align with what is significant to be assessed? What feedback occurs within appraisal? What is the impact of principal appraisal process and outcomes on principals' motivation, commitment, and professional growth? Clarke (2005) proposed four elements of classroom assessment that enhance learning: questioning, self and peer assessment, feedback, and a shared understanding of criteria. Of these four, I next spend some time on self-assessment as of particular interest to this study of formal and informal principal appraisal including appraisal by self.

Assessment *by* self, *for* self, *of* self

In the early part of the twentieth century, Dewey advocated for children to actively participate in their own education. Largely based on observations of children, he understood that if "the pupil has no initiative of his own ... the result is a random groping after what is wanted, and the formation of habits of dependence upon the cues furnished by others*"* (Dewey, 2011[1916], p. 34). The phrase 'random groping', with its sense of insecurity, powerlessness and dependence on extrinsic guidance, rather vividly contrasts with Dewey's ideas of the work of intelligence, self-control, the development of our own purposes and goals, and organisation of resources to bring these about.

The importance of learner responsibility, self-monitoring and having knowledge of assessment are points made in assessment *for* learning and assessment *as* learning literature. Black and Wiliam, two key advocates for assessment *for* learning (1998), updated Crooks' literature review (1988) summarising a decade of research on the relationship between classroom assessment and student achievement. They concluded that learners must ultimately be responsible for their own learning, be independent in their monitoring of their own progress, and hold knowledge of assessment for themselves. Lorna Earl (2003) observed how monitoring one's own progress, setting one's own goals, identifying what to do next, and gaining knowledge of how assessment works requires the active participation of the learner in assessment. That is, 'assessment by the learner' or self-assessment.

A number of benefits of self-assessment are identified in classroom assessment research. Boud (1995, 1999) defined self-assessment as: "identifying standards and/or criteria to apply to their work and making judgements about the extent to which they have met these criteria and standards" (p. 122). Self-assessment then supports individual growth of his or her ability to make judgements about quality (Clarke, 2005; Green & Johnson, 2010; McDonald & Boud, 2003; Tan, 2007, Taras, 2003, 2010). Self-assessment practice has been found to develop the critical skills needed to conduct and evaluate one's own learning (Tan, 2007). For Green and Johnson (2010), self-assessment 'teaches objectivity' and 'empowerment': "being able to get beyond your own point of view and look at yourself in relation to a standard" and "if you eventually understand the standard yourself, you are not as dependent on an authority to make judgements about your own work" (p. 11). Self-assessment by the learner with benefits for her or his self is assessment *for* self.

Psychology literature highlights that it is important to distinguish between the person and the work being assessed (Kluger & DeNisi, 1996). Assessment *of* self and focusing on the 'self' can have negative effects and although a need for accuracy in assessment of self is identified, authors suggest that this is not necessary or even useful. Sedikides (1993) and Trope (1980) identified three motives for self-evaluation (their term): confirmation, improvement (or self-

enhancement[25]) and accuracy. But Brown and Dutton (1995) reported, from their studies with undergraduates, that accurate self-knowledge was not necessary or sought after by most people. They suggest that people are better served by hearing views of themselves that are a bit more positive than realistic. The explanation given was that a person's ability level is only one factor in determining performance outcomes. Effort, perseverance, and effective application of individual talents are also important (Brown, 1998; Brown & Dutton, 1995). Bandura (1989), a psychologist known for his work on self-efficacy reasoned, "if self-efficacy beliefs always reflected only what people could do routinely, they would rarely fail but they would not mount the extra effort needed to surpass their ordinary performance" (p. 1117).

Self-assessment as assessment *of* self may ultimately lead to an individual weighing his or her sense of self-worth and that could be harmful. A lack of confidence in their ability to 'succeed' or to organise resources to meet their own goals, can have a negative effect on an individual and their ability to perform a specific task (Bandura, 1977; Bandura & Cervone, 1986; Friedman, 2002). Gergen (2009) was concerned that assessment of self can easily turn personal and introspective. He maintained that if such assessment enhanced individualism or sought self-esteem then this could lead to 'narcissism', 'vanity', 'egotism' or 'selfishness' (Gergen, 2009, p. 17). It is possible for individuals to 'fall short' of their expectations of themselves, with a potential negative impact an individual's self-esteem. Trope (1980), however, thought self-assessment could be a reality check with a potential positive impact as a stimulus to work harder and to achieve more. Much depends on the individual's response to the outcome of assessment. If feedback signals that achievement is below one's own judgement then this can be a knock, but this setback may not be long lasting.

It is also important to note that situations and circumstances (of stress, for example) may influence our ability to be self-aware and to respond to feedback. Developing self-efficacy through self-assessment practice may support a sense of

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[25] Brown and Dutton (1995) see self-enhancement as not about "a need to *think* well of oneself or to focus on improvement for improvement's sake but as "a desire to maximize *feelings* of self-worth" (p. 712).

purpose, a sense of control over self and work, and recognition of worth from self and from others[26]. Self-efficacy, as defined by Bandura, is "the exercise of human agency through people's beliefs in their capabilities to produce desired effects by their actions" or the exercise of control (Bandura, 1997, p. vii). This core belief is the foundation of human motivation, accomplishments, and wellbeing (Bandura, 1997), which in turn supports commitment and autonomy in behaviour and decision-making (Bandura & Cervone, 1986). Friedman (2002) drawing on Bandura (1977) claimed "if people believe they can deal effectively with potential environmental stressors, they are not perturbed by them. But, if they sense that they cannot control negative events, they tend to suffer distress leading to impaired functioning" (p. 247). Self-assessment practice provides the evidence and knowledge on which an individual may base their self-efficacy and have a deep influence on a person's sense of control.

Self-knowledge and high levels of self-control are needed in any challenging situation. Heifetz and Linsky (2002) pointed out that sustaining leadership requires "first and foremost the capacity to see what is happening to you and your initiative, as it is happening. This takes discipline and flexibility, and is hard to do" (p. 73). For Daniel Goleman, self-awareness involves a match between self and context, enabling conviction and authenticity to one's position (sense of confidence and genuineness, 'a comfort level'). Thus self-awareness and self-knowledge influence how principals interact in their relational work. Ross and Bruce (2007) called on individual principals to *manage* their physiological and emotional states to strengthen positive feelings and *reduce* negative feelings such as stress. Self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management are important aspects of emotional intelligence (Goleman, Boyatzis, & McKee 2002).

The importance of principals' self-knowledge of their personal values for conducting themselves in potential stressful (and ethically challenging) situations

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[26] Glasser (1998) identified a sense of self-worth as one of our *needs*; "A person gains strength by progressing along four success pathways: giving and receiving love; achieving a sense of worth in one's own eyes and in the eyes of others; having fun; and becoming self-disciplined" (also see Macfarlane, 1997, p. 164).

of principalship has been emphasised in research with principals in Australian contexts. Duignan (2012) proposed that insight gained from self-knowledge would assist in awareness and navigation towards moral action: "educational leaders need to have clear insights into their own and others' value sets in order to develop their moral compass as a guide for their actions" (p. 11). Branson (2007), one who suggests how this might happen, advocated for the self-review of autobiography (self-history) as a way to develop this insight and 'gain' self-knowledge.

Kouzes and Posner (1995) who write case studies about leadership and leadership development from a business school perspective said, "we'll find in years to come that the most critical knowledge for all of us – and for leaders especially – will turn out to be self-knowledge" (p. 335). Begley and Johansson (2003) suggested that "leaders of future schools must become both reflective practitioners and life-long learners that understand the importance of the intellectual aspects of leadership, and authentic in their leadership practices" (p. xvii), which can only be properly achieved through "a degree of *improved* self-knowledge" [emphasis added](p. xviii). If the calls of these authors are sound, then New Zealand school principals may be at a disadvantage. Notman (2010) claimed that there was little research evidence of New Zealand principals understanding self-development, knowledge of self, engaging in critical self-reflection, and building personal resilience.

As part of an international study into the leadership practices of successful school principals, Notman (2010) thought that a capacity for critical self-reflection and understanding of self has a positive influence on successful leadership practice. Critical self-reflection is a version of reflective practice, taking a critical stance to develop self-knowledge. Other writers have explored reflective practice as a field of inquiry in education literature (e.g. Brookfield, 1998; Costa & Kallick, 2000; Loughran, 2002; Schön, 1983; 1987; Smyth, 1992). In fact, Calderhead, back in 1989 and talking of teacher education, noted that the concept of reflective practice could become more of a slogan than 'an effective strategy' due to the many alternative models and Gibbs (2006) noted that reflection has many definitions. Over time reflective practice has become referred to as critical reflective practice or reflexivity to link critical thinking explicitly with reflective practice.

Self-assessment is about seeing self as learner, having intentionality and directionality for learning and progress towards one's goals. Learners are individuals who are open to feedback from environment, from self and others, are able to clarify their own goals, establish their own learning path, and self-initiate change. The benefits of self-assessment are developing self-knowledge and maintaining self-efficacy. However in New Zealand Thorogood (2008), in her Masters' research, found that "little is known about the role of self-assessment in leaders' practice" (p. 122). If principals need to be able to assess themselves and understand how to improve, how do they do this? How is self-assessment undertaken in principalship?

Educational Leadership: Seeking The Answer(s)

In this section of this chapter I present what is known regarding models or styles of leadership and what is meant by effective and successful in terms of school principals. There is a preoccupation with the nature of criteria in educational leadership and principal appraisal literature while the terms effective and successful are used widely to describe principal quality.

Model or style of leadership

Educational leadership theory has been searching for the most appropriate label or model of educational leadership for some time. Attention to the 'person' (the personal) as well as the 'work' of an educational leader is apparent. Duignan believed that "educational leaders to be credible have to be capable human beings as well as capable professional educators" (p. 116). He cited Kelly (2000) who suggested that leadership is not a matter of knowing something but of 'becoming' someone. Notman also stated that "leadership is not simply a case of doing; it is also a matter of being" (2010, p. 25). Blackmore (2011) identified that emotional intelligence, along with other characteristics, are "taught, measured and mobilised as the new mode of distinction and differentiation" between 'good' leaders and others (p. 221). There is a blurring of the personal and professional, with increased attention on *who* the principal is as much as on what they *do*.

There are many models currently in use. Transformational leadership has been a popular model in a variety of sectors and settings, as an approach for progress and development (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004). Burns introduced transforming leadership as a concept in his 1978 work. His idea was that transformational leaders "raise [their followers] to higher levels of motivation and morality" with "mutual support for a common purpose" (Burns, 1998, p. 134). This style of leader leads using *charisma* and *virtue*. Burns included Robert House's notion of charismatic leadership (acting as a role model, being enthusiastic, optimistic and articulate). In their model, Bass and his colleagues (e.g. 1990, 1994) emphasised that transformational leaders 'inspire', 'challenge' and 'empower' those around them. However, criticism arose over how 'followers' would be 'transformed'. Servant leadership was compared favourably to transformational leadership by Stone and colleagues (2004), who proposed leaders focus on their followers' needs, rather than focus on the needs of the organisation and organisational objectives as a transformational leader would. Criticism of one model leads to another label of leadership style being promoted (see Bush & Glover, 2014; Yukl, 2002).

Each style of leadership identified personal characteristics and key aspects of principal practice. The personal qualities of heroic leadership, for example, *courage*, *wisdom* and *strength*, used to be perceived as inherited traits that 'leaders' were born with. A return of hero styles or models of leadership can be seen in education texts that report on how personality influences recruitment and hiring decisions, and the role of performance in accountability. Morris (2014), speaking of the New Zealand context, described "the qualities and talents the job requires – strong, creative, effective and inspiring principals who can create an environment supportive of better teaching and learning" (p. 1). Values-led models (see Begley & Johansson, 2003; Branson, 2007; 2014b; Duignan 2012) emphasise the ethical aspects of leadership, and the need for principals, and other educators, to work with ethical codes and standards, which will lead to ethical and moral behaviours and a commitment to social justice (see Rucinski & Bauch, 2006).

Educational leadership literature on successful and effective leadership models or styles *look back* from the conclusion that an individual's leadership was/is successful or effective. Even then it can be hard to isolate determining factors in

success or causes of failure (Gewirtz, 1998). Case studies examine what 'kind' of person the leader is and their career or preparation pathway towards the 'apparent' success. For example, see Leithwood and Strauss (2008) who use a relatively new term of 'turn around' leaders for those who have been able to change a school's reputation from poor to excellent. It is much harder to *look forward* to with an understanding of the career pathway or kind of leader who will be successful and or effective. Kegan and Lahey (2009) asserted that educational leadership literature is 'overloaded' in the area of what effective and successful leadership might look like in terms of a defining style or model. Catano and Stronge (2007) warned that

> bombarded with multiple theories of leadership and management, school
> principals will likely experience a significant amount of role conflict and
> role overload as they work to fulfill the perceptions of what they are
> expected to accomplish, and how. Role conflict has the potential to impact
> a principal's effectiveness. In addition, external forces for improved
> student outcomes may cause role strain as principals strive to exert greater
> control of instructional issues while simultaneously working to empower
> staff through increased shared governance. Scholars of leadership theory
> have fueled the debate regarding the distinctions between types of
> leadership, whether or not they are contextually driven and whether or not
> they are all present within a general leadership dimension of educational
> leadership. (p. 382)

It is doubtful that the efforts to define what makes a 'successful and effective' school principal are getting closer to *the* defining characteristic(s) of leadership style or *the* one 'recipe' for effective principalship. There is also the question of what individual principals are to do with such 'lists' of personal characteristics. Can an understanding of their own characteristics allow principals to compare themselves with the personal traits of models of *effective* or *successful* leaders? Such characteristics are difficult to change and arguably, self-awareness may not be a factor. For example, if a principal is gregarious they are gregarious, self-aware or not. The level of scrutiny of personal characteristics of principals has increased, and yet remains largely unquestioned and can overshadow notions of development and growth. Is this level of attention on one person as school

principal justified given the importance of leadership to student achievement or are these expectations crossing personal professional boundaries? Is appraisal of principals about 'the leader', 'leadership' or 'leading'?

Effective and successful principalship

The terms *effective* and *successful* are often used in reference to quality principalship. I now unpack what can be meant by these words. Researchers in educational leadership internationally tend to combine the terms effective and successful[27], or use them interchangeably, when referring to school leadership. Pashiardis and Johansson (2016) claim there is no definition or agreement on what these terms mean. These authors found that in their synthesis of the cases presented, successful and effective were defined differently according to "the degree and level of (1) centralization/decentralization of the educational system of a specific country as well as on (2) the accountability and evaluation mechanisms in place and (3) the ability of parents to choose schools for their children" (Pashiardis & Johansson 2016, p. 2; Hoy, 2012). They said they did not seek to 'homogenise' what these two terms mean, rather they came to this explanation: *successful* is "a more inclusive term, a kind of umbrella term, which includes effectiveness" (p. 3). These authors suggest that 'success' is about principals putting 'the right systems and structures' –perhaps also culture, communication, relationships, support–"in place and improving on them so that we can get the necessary results required" (p. 3). Publications from the International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP, e.g. Day, 2007; Leithwood et al., 2006; Notman, 2010) define successful principalship by 'outcomes'. The debate continues over what outcomes should be focused on when judging the success of individual principals. Effectiveness, according to Pashiardis and Johansson, is about 'the necessary results', the desired outcomes, and success is about the processes for getting these desired outcomes. What constitutes the desired results

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[27] Perhaps borrowing from sport as a discipline some authors (e.g. Hutton's 2016 article investigating principal appraisal ratings according to gender) use the term 'high performing' to label those individuals highest scoring on appraisal measures. Using the term high performance may be a deliberate attempt to claim the same connotations as 'elite athletes' as a group of individuals set apart or 'in another league' to the ordinary, non-sporty, or amateur athlete and thus deserving of special support and rewards.

or outcomes is another question. (The answer for Pashiardis and Johansson is *social mobility*).

The terms 'successful' and 'effective' as valued qualities of principalship are problematic for principal appraisal for two reasons. One is the obvious dualism or binary that the terms effective and successful set up. What is not judged as effective can be said to be ineffective and what is not successful can then be labelled unsuccessful. If a school principal is not judged effective, does that mean he or she is ineffective? If not entirely successful, is it accurate to say that he or she is unsuccessful? Crooks (2003) reminded us that effectiveness and success in education is "extraordinarily difficult to judge" (p. 12). Consideration of what is expected of principals, what they do in day to day work, and the outcomes of their influence all colour judgements of the 'effectiveness and success' of principals. Which brings me to my second point of issue with these terms and again I draw on Dewey's notions of judgement and, in particular, his theory of valuation (1939). Valuation, according to Dewey, shifts attention from a fixed sense of 'endowed' value to something that has value—that is towards what is, in the current circumstances, worthy of pursuit or desirable. Something being desirable and interesting is different from the claim that something is desired and of interest. One is fixed as a 'given' or accepted state. The other is active, future focused, and suggests transformation. The fixed does not allow for future improvement and growth, or even suggest that ongoing improvement would be needed, even in changing circumstances.

Finally in this chapter, I report on what researchers and report writers have determined about the judgement process and outcomes of formal principal appraisal. Appraisal of principals is charged with multiple purposes. The work of principals is recognised as significant, influenced by context and influential in student achievement. Evidence used to make judgements in principal appraisal can be what is readily measureable and the weighting of the evidence depends on the appraiser.

Appraisal of Principals

Appraisal involves the exercising of judgement in assessing the work that principals do. Arrangements for appraisal of individual principals may be called supervision, appraisal, evaluation, review or mentoring. In this thesis formal appraisal of a school principal refers to an annual work review process that is mandated by the relevant government authority.

It is interesting to note that the OECD (2013) found there is no one best or highly effective way to conduct principal appraisal and there is not even unanimous agreement that such a specific process is needed. Different countries do things differently. Not all countries have a mandated appraisal process specifically for individual school principals. Such a requirement within a national education system depends on whether the responsibility for public schooling and student learning is viewed as shared, seen as *the* principal's responsibility, or the degree these points of view apply. Austria, Iceland, Italy and Luxembourg, for example, do not appraise individual principals because in those contexts principals are not expected to be solely responsible for the quality of teaching and learning in schools (OECD, 2013; Radinger, 2014). Principal appraisal also depends on the level, or centrality, of governance and administration for such a policy. In some countries evaluation of school principals is at the discretion of local authorities (e.g. Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden). In other nations appraisal is conducted according to central requirements and formal frameworks. In Europe this includes Belgium, France, Poland and Slovenia and Spain (OECD, 2013; Radinger 2014).

Appraisal of principals' work receives attention at different times reflecting levels of political attention accorded education systems at national and international levels. A 2011 WestEd report[28] highlighted how attention given to practices of principal evaluation was due to "the new policy environment [that] magnifies the importance of being able to accurately, effectively, and fairly assess the level of a principal's performance" (Davis, Kearney, Sanders, Thomas, & Leon, 2011, p. 1).

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[28] Results from a literature review conducted by the San Francisco company, WestEd, "a nonpartisan, non-profit research, development, and service agency" according to their website. http://www.org/about-us/, accessed 3/12/15

This ongoing attention signals continuing doubts about purposes and processes of principals' appraisal.

Of those countries that do appraise principals as individuals, it is most common that appraisal is intended to serve both summative and formative purposes. These terms are sometimes used explicitly. Cardno's New Zealand study (1999) was commissioned by the Ministry of Education to deliver part of the first National Training Programme in Performance Management Systems to all secondary schools in the Auckland and Northland areas. Of a total of 103 schools that were invited to participate, 80 schools (77.5 per cent) were involved. The aim was to assist schools with the implementation of teacher performance appraisal guidelines and prescribed requirements. Looking at appraisal of teachers, Cardno referred to the purposes of appraisal as *performance* evaluation and *needs* evaluation. These two purposes were found to be undertaken under differing conditions and, potentially, with significantly different consequences. Cardno found that some principals involved had concerns about a mixing of evaluation of an individual's previous year's performance (summative purpose) with the aim of identifying professional development needs (formative purpose). Participants in her study were aware that one seeks to emphasise strengths and the other to identify weaknesses.

Radinger (2014), who reviewed OECD 2013 evidence, used the terms summative and formative explicitly: "combining formative and summative ends in one single appraisal process can be challenging" (p. 387). Although distinct in focus and outcomes, in practice it is argued the same appraisal evidence *could* [emphasis added] be used for both summative and formative purposes: summatively, to provide the basis for evaluation and judgement of principal work "for decisions related to promotion, rewards, or sanctions" (Radinger, 2014, p. 379) and formatively, to provide descriptive feedback used to identify specific needs for principal development.

The research and review literature on the implementation of principal appraisal, the majority of it from the US, shows a mix of purposes: to ensure benefit to the school and students, for improvement in leadership practice and professional

growth, and to motivate principals in their work efforts or determination of priorities.

Appraisal of principals for benefit of school and students

An aim for principal appraisal is to ensure "a positive impact on students and schools" (Clifford & Ross, 2011, p. 2). Literature has highlighted the relationship between school leadership and improving student achievement (see Hargreaves & Robinson, 2011; Robinson, et al., 2009). This evidence, a focus on standards in policy and the perceived measurability of student achievement, has given rise to student achievement data being used (in some states in the US) in principal appraisal. However, Rowan and Denk (back in 1984) concluded, "the increasing accountability of principals for instructional outcomes is overdrawn and unrealistic" (p. 354). Other research literature recognises a principal's influence on student achievement as indirect (e.g. Mulford, Kendall, Edmunds, Kendall, Ewington, Silins, 2007). Clifford and Ross (2011) stated a principal's influence on students and schools is through "creating conditions and cultures that lead to better teaching and learning, and on shaping the long-term impact of school improvements" (p. 1).

Appraisal of school principals for improving principal practice

Principal appraisal "can reinforce and strengthen leadership practices" (Clifford & Ross, 2007, p. 2). To ensure this formative outcome, certain conditions are viewed as needed, such as timely and trustworthy feedback (Clifford & Ross, 2011; Friedman, 2002; Goldring, et al., 2009; Kimball, Milanowski, & McKinney, 2007). However, it has also been noted that principals receive little feedback overall. Clifford and Ross (2011), "principals report that they have few sources of trusted feedback on their practice and commonly feel isolated from colleagues due to the rigor of their position" (p. 2). Principals view appraisal of their work as having limited feedback to inform future professional development (Clifford & Ross, 2011; Derrington & Sharratt, 2008).

I found one study that examined principal experience of appraisal in regards to their ongoing professional growth. This study highlights a number of points relevant to my study. Parylo, Zapeda and Bengtson's study (2012) drew on

developmental supervision and adult learning theory and argued "evaluation ought to be a developmental process situated to promote principal learning and growth" (p. 219). The authors of this research also assumed that "principal evaluation is a system of professional learning, support and accountability" (p. 216). From 16 principals in Georgia they sought indicators of what these principals revealed that *helped* them. What 'helped' was the co-construction of evaluation goals and planning with their superintendent evaluator (transparency), and the ongoing nature of the process (supportive and "no surprises" in the final report). The communication within a yearlong appraisal process of multiple visits, one-to-one conferences and observations with the evaluator increased principal awareness of the process. Having been through an appraisal process before also made these principals more comfortable, despite the unsettling nature of 'rules' that kept changing in terms of required criteria and standards, complicated and fragmented scoring, and the format of recording and reporting. Any sources of evidence aside from superintendent observations and data (from scoring against criteria) were not mentioned.

The principals in that study reportedly spoke of the change in the evaluation of their work from attention to management of people, budgets and relating to the community concerns to being "more of a big deal", "a performance system", "more focused on student achievement" and "data driven" (Parylo, et al., 2012, p. 224). They felt the focus on student achievement "eclipsed other important factors in their daily work" (p. 230), such as their influence on school culture, school environment and staff morale. They also felt the definitions of student achievement were not broad enough to include dispositional attributes, and relationship and citizenship skills.

Principals in this study described the relationship between evaluator and principal as 'crucial'. Such a relationship was described as 'good' if it was collegial with mutual trust and respect, and if the appraiser was someone who had an understanding of the pressure, valued principal work, and had "been in their shoes" (Parylo, et al., 2012, p. 227). Constructive feedback within the evaluation process was "gladly received" and "regarded … as a form of support" by the principals in this study (p. 228). The principals volunteered the importance of peer networks and regular contact with fellow principals as also being of significant support. A

weakness was the lack of time to share experiences and concerns amongst meeting agendas. Much later in their report was the brief acknowledgment by these authors of power relations involved in principal appraisal between judge and judged[29].

The Parylo, Zapeda and Bengtson's (2012) study provides a number of pointers for my study.

- The ongoing nature of the process of appraisal,
- The shift in attention to performance and accountability for student achievement instead of aspects of their day-to-day work over which they have a more direct influence, and
- The influence of the relationship between appraiser and principal.

The link between appraisal and principal professional development is not to be assumed. Catano and Stronge (2007) focused on information available for principals for professional development as an outcome of an appraisal process and their findings left them questioning if principal 'effectiveness' was improved as a result of appraisal. Radinger (2014) concluded that more research is needed on formal appraisal practices, as well as the effects of appraisal on school leaders' practices and behaviours in order to make the most of appraisal as a 'tool' to strengthen school leaders' general capacity.

Appraisal as support

Cardno and her New Zealand colleagues (Eddy, Cardno, & Chai, 2008) referred to the appraisal or performance review/evaluation process as a form of *support* for school principals. By categorising each purpose as a form of support, they shifted the focus of appraisal away from summative accountability, and suggested that these purposes were towards individual *and* organisational needs, not outcomes in themselves. Essentially these authors found four aims for such support (Eddy, et al., 2008).

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[29] In the US context the district superintendent is a principal's 'boss' and an unsatisfactory principal evaluation may lead to termination after due process.

- Support through performance appraisal and accountability (a focus on monitoring performance for accountability. This support could also be seen as an evaluation of current competency)

- Support for solving current problems and issues in principal's school and context (although for these authors this was about a school's organisational needs, this could also be seen as a focus on a principal's immediate work circumstances and challenges)

- Support for leadership of teaching and learning (a focus on professional development needs for improved performance as the 'instructional' or 'pedagogical' leader to improve teaching and learning in the school).

- Support for wellbeing of individual in professional role (personal focus on individual)

They reported that there was confusion over the aims of this support, whether the support is for monitoring of principal performance for the *good of the organisation* or for the *wellbeing of the individual* principal.

Other research, however, has found that principal appraisal may not be supportive of *either* the individual or the organisation. Davis and Hensley (1999) interviewed 14 principals and six superintendents from Northern California school districts to examine the political nature of principal evaluations. Principals in that study reported that formal evaluations were not helpful in "shaping or directing their professional development or in promoting school effectiveness" (Davis & Hensley, 1999, p. 399). Radinger suggested that the purpose of appraisal influences the *relationship* between appraiser and principal: "different purposes influence the relationship and trust between evaluators and school leaders and school leader's *willingness to cooperate* in the appraisal process" [emphasis added](2014, p. 387). Is the relationship between evaluator and principal meant to be a supportive one or a critical one? Is it something of both?

Appraisal as motivation

The appraisal purpose of identifying professional development needs can get tangled with a purpose to motivate a principal to 'improve'. It can be hard to distinguish in the literature between claims of motivation for improvement and motivation for compliance.

110

Clifford and Ross's (2011) literature review prepared in collaboration with the National [US] Association of Elementary School Principals, for example, said that, "performance evaluation can be a powerful way to support the continuous growth and development of principals as instructional leaders" (p. 3). These authors combined the aim of evaluation of principal performance with the aim of supporting, or motivating, ongoing growth and development. To benefit the individual principal in these ways appraisal would need to provide feedback to identify her or his strengths and development needs. However, without such feedback, another interpretation is that Clifford and Ross mean appraisal *is a powerful way to compel principal professional development.* These authors also acknowledged that the redesign of principal evaluation systems, with new goals and priorities, in the various states of the United States was a means to *ensure* support for government education agendas. The setting of goals on which principals will be judged redirects principal work towards meeting these goals. Appraisal goals that focus on current agendas of governing authorities can be expected to 'motivate' principals to prioritise this agenda in their work.

More recently Radinger (2014) asserted, "evaluation of school leaders allows education authorities to *ensure* all schools are led by capable and *motivated* school leaders" [emphasis added](p. 387). He suggested here a combination of evaluation of capability with motivation. Radinger (2014) claimed, "appraisal, if well implemented, can then help school leaders to focus on the tasks that *matter most* [emphasis added] and reinforce core objectives of schools: teaching and learning" (p. 387). He did not elaborate on what "matters most". What matters most being dependent on *to whom it matters*.

Criteria and evidence for appraisal of principals

Appraisal requires reference points or criteria in order that evidence can be weighed and decisions made. Leadership frameworks and professional standards documents in education have been an organisation's (e.g. Australian Council of Educational Research) or government's (e.g. Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework) attempts to clarify qualities and/or capabilities and/or actions required of school leaders (Chapter 2). As previously noted the New Zealand *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* has four broad 'areas of practice'.

111

- Provide professional leadership that focuses the school *culture* on enhancing learning and teaching.
- *Pedagogy*: Create a learning environment in which there is an expectation that all students will experience success in learning.
- Develop and use management *systems* to support and enhance student learning.
- *Partnerships and networks*: Strengthen communication and relationships to enhance student learning.

The nature of evidence needed to 'prove' satisfactory performance is not outlined. Adopting the guidelines developed by Crooks (1993) discussed earlier in the chapter, we can posit that quality evidence used in assessment does no harm (is fair); aligns with what is seen as important and what is valued; and provides a sound basis for the importance of the decisions made, reporting, and consequential use of these judgements.

The nature and the extent of the criteria in frameworks and standards documents have been questioned, particularly the inclusion of personal characteristics as mentioned earlier. Bolden, Gosling, Maturano and Dennison (2003) presented a review of leadership theory and competency frameworks in the UK. They concluded that whilst this competency approach has its strengths, it leads to a particularly individualistic notion of leadership and a relatively prescribed approach to leadership development. These authors argued that most of these frameworks "*go beyond* [emphasis added] simple definitions of behaviours, to also consider some of the cognitive, affective and inter-personal qualities of leaders" (Bolden, et al., 2003, p. 37). Their phrasing suggests that it is going too far to include cognitive, affective and interpersonal qualities of leaders as required attributes in appraisal of the work of school principals. They pointed out that

> personal qualities of the leader are undoubtedly important but
> are unlikely to be sufficient in themselves for the emergence
> and exercise of leadership. Furthermore, the manner in which
> these qualities translate into behaviour and group interaction
> is likely to be culturally specific and thus depend on a whole
> host of factors, such as the nature of the leader, followers, task,

organisational structure, national and corporate cultures, etc.

(Bolden, et al., 2003, p. 37)

There is a great deal of room for interpretation of what specifically should be included in the criteria (expectations) for appraisal of principals. It is unclear, for example, whether appraisal of school principals should focus on traits, actions and behaviours, or on their influence through attention to consequences and outcomes (Catano & Stronge, 2007). Are principals valued for who they are, what they do, or credited with outcomes they have influenced?

Identifying the appropriate and significant criteria for appraisal of principals is problematic (see also Chapter 2). Catano and Stronge (2007) spell out their findings.

Three key issues related to principal evaluation that deserve attention: (1) principals' performance evaluation should be fair and equitable; (2) principals' performance should be based upon what they are expected to do; (3) performance evaluation instruments should match the expectations framed within state and professional standards. Since clear agreement on what encompasses the role of a school principal is lacking, the task of principal evaluation becomes a challenging enterprise. (p. 383)

These authors were concerned with developing greater consistency across state systems. Their research in the 132 Virginian school districts, using content analysis, found a high degree of alignment in over 90 percent of district evaluation systems between the instrument of evaluation and criteria in the state and professional standards.

Of concern in appraisal for Catano and Stronge (2007) was if appraiser judgements of principal work were actually based on the specified content of standards used as criteria or on other factors. Their concern is pertinent given the findings of Fletcher and McInerney's study of Indiana public school district superintendents. Fletcher and McInerney (1995) found that over 90 percent of the superintendents in their study rated 'leadership', 'instructional programmes', 'motivating others', and 'judgement' as the most important performance domains

in principal work. However, a content analysis of the principal evaluation instruments used showed the criteria did not match superintendents' ideas of priorities. As another example, principals in the Davis and Hensley (1999) US study reported that superintendent appraisers differed in their knowledge about appraisal and based judgements on their subjective perspectives more than the identified performance indicators. In addition, principals in this study seemed to be advocating for direct observation of their leadership behaviour and that feedback from teachers, parents and students be included in the appraisal process.

Within the US, appraisal of school principals in educational districts may not align with existing state or national professional standards (Derrington & Sharratt, 2008; Heck & Marcoulides, 1996). In California, Stine (2001) conducted a content analysis of principal evaluation policies and criteria from 17 Southern California school districts and found considerable variation. Some district policies focused on personal characteristics, whereas others focused on leadership style, management skills, or content expertise; some systems contained a mixture of criteria. Stine also found that most principal evaluation systems were not strongly aligned with professional growth and development plans. The poor match that research and reviews of research have found between the content of professional standards (assumed to be criteria used in evaluation) and what principals report as being valued in their experience of appraisal may suggest some people view the standards as 'criteria' while others use these 'lists' as more of a normative guide.

The phrases used in describing performance domains and criteria may be ambiguous for appraisal purposes (Bolden, et al., 2003). Catano and Stronge (2007) found instructional management, organisational management, and staff-parent communications were the broad aspects of principal work. In Wisconsin a study found that management of academic content, accountability for student achievement, and school change efforts were the core aspects of school leadership (Kimball & Pautsch, 2008). 'Managing instruction' is not exactly the same as 'managing academic content' or 'accountability for student achievement'. 'Organisational management' may not mean 'accountability for school change efforts' nor 'management of school change efforts'. There are two different aspects under evaluation here; one process and the other outcomes –a mixture of attention to *means* and *ends*. One is about what processes a school principal

ensures are in place to enhance teaching and learning in that school, and the other focuses on the results of such processes.

Catano and Stronge's (2007) study, in particular, raises several questions relevant to this study: Are the standards reflected in appraisal processes based on what it means to be a school leader? Are principals actually evaluated according to the reference points in evaluation such as professional standards for principals, or are other factors considered? Are all responsibilities weighed equally? Do stakeholders understand the complexity of the role of a school principal? (modified from p. 396). These authors also suggest "additional study would help to shed light on these important issues" (p. 396).

Evidence used in appraisal is not necessarily high quality in terms of manageability, a match to principals' work, or having a shared understanding of what is valued in an evaluation. Derrington and Sharratt (2008) found from their survey of Washington State district superintendents at the time that appraisal based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) was too time consuming and contained too many items. A large quantity of information was needed when an appraisal covered all the standards. The number of standards, according to superintendents in this study, reflected "the difficulty of a principal's job under today's educational expectations" (p. 25) and, therefore, the quantity of evidence was seen as necessary. Principals and superintendents in this study agreed that the strength of using the ISLLC standards for appraisal was the contents' "strong alignment with school reform demands and the leadership qualities necessary in today's educational environment" (p. 24). However, principals did not agree with superintendents that these standards describe comprehensively "the necessary skills and abilities required of principals today" (p. 24) or that these standards constituted specific enough criteria to provide targeted feedback. According to Derrington and Sharratt (2008), "many principals indicated that the process is far more important than the content of the standards. Principals' survey comments frequently mentioned that time for reflection, discussion, and problem solving with the superintendent is valued" (p. 25). What these principals valued in their appraisal is a reminder of an adaptation of Einstein's quotation that Eisner (2002)

used: "not everything that matters can be measured, and not everything that is measured matters" (p. 178).

The weighing of what is most pertinent and the interpretations in decision-making depend on an appraiser's capability and credibility to make such judgements, as well as the nature of the relationship with the principal. Piggot-Irvine's studies (2003) on New Zealand's Ministry of Education 'performance management systems' led her to conclude that an effective appraiser was able to establish "trusting, open, non-defensive, yet problem confronting relationships" with principals (p. 171). The effectiveness of appraisal occurs when interactions within appraisal are of this nature "underpinned by respect" (p. 172).

Judgements are made on the basis of evidence available to the person who makes the judgement. An appraiser who makes an overall judgement about a principal's work also makes many smaller judgements. These smaller judgements occur *in situ*, in the moment and often within interaction during an appraisal process. The person who makes the decisions and judgements needs to be (cap)able to make these decisions and judgements, on quality, and on the *fit* of evidence with relevant expectations reflected in the criteria used. Does the person undertaking the judgement recognise what is being valued? This question has implications for who is the appropriate person, or who is in the appropriate position, to judge school principals. In the UK, it can be two reviewers from the school's Board of Governors or an external appraiser, and in Australia it is a representative of the State Education Authority that appraise school principals (OECD, 2013, Table 7.A.1). In the US context the appraiser is the school district superintendent. Because superintendents in the US context are the appraiser and the line manager of school principals as employees of the education district, there is no reason for research attention on who should appraise principals there. From the above studies, however, there is evidence that superintendents differ in their confidence in process, use of criteria and overall fairness and value of appraisal for principal development. The resulting appraisal report is submitted and held at the district office in the principal's human resources report as part of a much more straightforward employment structure than in New Zealand. In New Zealand a principal's appraiser could be the Board of Trustees chairperson as his or her employer, a peer principal from a similar school, or an external consultant

116

contracted to do the work. At the same time it is the Ministry of Education that determines national education policy and regulations governing administration and education requirements in all schools (see also Chapter 2).

A desire for greater clarity of the expectations for principal work comes through in the literature, along with the acknowledgment that the criteria should be balanced with flexibility to take into consideration local context (Ingvarson, 2014; Radinger, 2014). Clifford and Ross (2011) sum up the findings of many studies when they acknowledged that their review had raised "questions about the consistency, fairness, effectiveness, accountability, and value of current principal evaluation practice" (p. 3). These studies from the USA, most of them district or state-based, sought evidence of consistency, rigour and quality in appraisal processes in order to identify and promote a model for adoption in other contexts. Ingvarson (2014) reviewed international literature on principal evaluation and promoted the need for "standards for successful practice and rigorous methods for identifying those that meet them" (p. 5). Radinger (2014) recommended the strengthening of central requirements and formal frameworks (more prescription, more control), effective implementation and building capacity in appraisers (more consistency and predictability), and understanding that effective leadership 'depends on specific contexts'. There is recognition in the literature of the situated nature of principalship in specific school settings but this is in tension with calls for clarity and consistency. The complexity of school specific settings along with the subjective influence of appraisers are likely seen as variables to be neutralised. These authors argue for more clarity, rigour and consistency in appraisal of school principals *and* they acknowledge the influence of contextual and school-specific factors on principal work.

Culture and context influence how personal characteristics (including values) play out in interactions and relationships, and how principalship is practiced. Begley and Johansson (2003) writing on ethical dimensions of leadership said, "attempting to catalogue the correct values which school administrators ought to adopt without reference to context is not possible" (p. xvii). Bolden et al. (2003) commented that the 'demonstration' of personal qualities depends on the nature of the context and UK researchers Bush and Glover (2003) highlighted that leadership is influenced by personal, school and education system factors of

117

context. How context would, could or should influence appraisal has not been explored in the literature reviewed here.

Some have claimed that there are three features needed in judging someone's work: a clear understanding of role, attention to individual needs and attention to local context (Radinger 2014; Stufflebeam & Nevo, 1991). It appears from the literature reviewed in this chapter that each of these features is problematic in policy and practice of appraisal of school principals. Implementation of any appraisal policy across principals and schools, the research reviewed identifies, presents a number of difficulties:

1. The number of criteria identified and used in professional standards for principals and related evaluation instruments.
2. The lack of alignment of criteria across different documents.
3. The inconsistency of implementation.
4. The inconsistency in interpretations and judgements, the weighting of criteria, and understanding of what are priorities by principals and those who appraise them.
5. The nature and influence of the relationship between appraiser and principal including the power relations, conflicting values, and levels of communication.
6. The contextual nature of principal work, including the complexity of schools as organisations and educational policy priorities.

Regarding effective appraisal, however, Radinger (2014) determined, "the evidence base is still limited" (p. 379) and called for further research to be undertaken.

If it is agreed that educational assessment in classroom practice could inform principal appraisal, Harlen (2005) gave three warnings relevant to this study [I have modified her wording].

- Appraisal processes and outcomes may influence principal self-assessment, and emphasise a concern for performance over professional learning.
- Poor feedback may influence principals' views of their capability and likelihood of succeeding.

- An appraisal system that puts great emphasis on evaluation and selectivity produces individuals with strong extrinsic orientation toward tangible rewards (adapted from p. 211).

Chapter close

This review has revealed several research gaps. These gaps provide the place for my study.

- Most research on principal appraisal uses content analysis and surveys as evidence. Examination of various levels of policy, professional standards and evaluation tools, and superintendents' views all lessen attention on principals' experience of appraisal.
- Educational leadership literature promotes the significance of self-knowledge but little is suggested about how principals develop self-knowledge.
- There remain questions of purpose and how appraisal supports principal professional development.
- The complexities of a principal's work and that context will be a factor in appraisal are recognised but what impact these aspects have on how principals are judged is unclear.

This study is on principal experience of appraisal and being judged. I investigated the purposes, implementation, and outcomes of mandated formal appraisal processes in New Zealand (rural) primary school contexts. I also sought insights into how six principals 'self-assess' and how they experience and negotiate the expectations of their local community in a self-managing schools system. In short, this study looks at the formal and local expectations and judgement of principals' work and how principals 'judge' themselves. The research questions were: 1) How do New Zealand rural primary school principals experience formal appraisal requirements and practice?; 2) How do these principals experience 'being judged' by local community members such as parents?; and 3) How do principals self-appraise their work?

The next three chapters present analysis and evidence from this study on formal, informal, and self-appraisal.

FORMAL APPRAISAL: PURPOSE, PROCESS AND PEOPLE

As we circle around the object of inquiry, we look at it again and again. Another word carries the flavor of repeated looking: respect. When we respect someone or something, we look again (respect), we pay special attention, we honor.

~ William Braud & Rosemarie Anderson (1998, p. 26)

The Experience of Formal Appraisal

This is the first of three chapters that present my interpretation of the evidence supported by a selection of that evidence, having looked 'again and again'. In each of these chapters, I use a different style of representation reflecting different aspects. Richardson (1994) was not being complimentary when she described the kind of research presentation I use in this chapter as "the practice of quoting snippets in prose" (p. 522). However, Wolcott (2009) advocated for doctoral theses to have a significant proportion of well-considered description. The snippets used in this chapter have been selected carefully. My representation in this chapter is deliberately descriptive of six New Zealand primary principals' experience of *formal appraisal* (performance review), at the time of this study. They talked about purpose and process, who undertakes this work and how it is reported. The principals also talked about the involvement of the school's board of trustees, the Ministry of Education and the Education Review Office (ERO) in principal appraisal. Administration appraisal factors such as criteria, evidence and reporting, along with people factors of appraiser, interaction, and formative feedback are plaited into the structure of this chapter.

The purpose of formal appraisal

In New Zealand, the Ministry of Education requires an annual appraisal process (with summative report) on behalf of the school's board of trustees. The principals in this study supported the need for some form of accountability. All the principals, however, explained that the usefulness of an appraisal was in the process. The point was made, across all three interviews with each of these people,

that appraisal for solely summative judgement and compliance purposes would not be worth it for them. They expected the time, effort and budget involved to result in practical and positive consequences for improvement. These principals looked for a report with actionable suggestions to enhance their professional growth and/or school development. For example Nate said,

> maybe the Ministry [of Education] do [look at it as compliance], and maybe many boards of trustees see it as a compliance issue but I'd like to think that it's going to be useful for my personal development and the development of our school. Otherwise it would be a waste of time, a waste of money. … As a leader, there's got to be something for me to work on. …Whether it's around my professional leadership or journey, or whether it's in the school systems and procedures. If it's not useful it becomes simple compliance. (Nate)

Nate acknowledged that the Ministry and the board of trustees may have a different agenda but, in his view, what was important was the usefulness of appraisal.

The usefulness of appraisal was linked to improvements and developments. For Sydney, his appraisal was part of an evolution towards the future, particularly for the school: "the further development of previous stuff, the needs of the school and the needs of the kids … evolves in the light of circumstances. I mean next year's going to be different 'cause again, the school's going to evolve further". Mickey was the one principal of the six who clearly saw the emphasis in her appraisal as being for the good of the school more than for herself. Nate explained that principal appraisal for him was about both school development *and* professional growth.

> I think it's both. I'm not sure that you can separate those two things. I see them as quite closely linked. I think I can see myself growing, and as I grow, I can see changes are happening within the school as well (Nate).

Most of these principals suggested their appraisal had multiple purposes – accountability to the Ministry, principals' professional growth *and* school development.

Appraisal also provided confirmation of their competence for the school's board of trustees as their employer. Dana and Nate used almost exactly the same words in their comments.

> It also comes back to the board that employed me, they want to know that I'm doing a good job, and if I didn't have an appraisal, how would they know that I'm doing a good job and what areas to develop or work on?'

The principals in this study saw how an appraisal process that a board finds credible will support board members' confidence and trust in principal's work.

Appraisal was also a useful opportunity to take stock of the impact of changes. Dana talked of the changes in schools that may go unnoticed without the kind of attention that occurs within an appraisal process.

> I think, especially as a teaching principal or even as a principal, you don't actually get that feedback any other way. It's business as usual and you just get on and do what you need to do. Because you're there every single day, you're not aware at times of things you've done or the changes that you've made and the impact that they – hopefully positive impact – that they have actually made (Dana).

She commented that an appraiser could recognise progress made since the previous report and provide feedback on the impact that these changes have made.

The principals hoped good work would be noted through appraisal. Again both Dana and Nate commented almost exactly word for word how they wanted their appraiser to note those things that "we do well".

> I want them to notice all the things we do well. I want them to notice a particular focus on teaching and learning. Because sometimes we have to remind ourselves that that is why we're here. It's for the kids. (Nate)

It was important for all six that school developments that have had a positive influence on teaching and learning would be recognised and acknowledged as part of their appraisal process.

The process of formal appraisal
At the time of this research there were no specific Ministry requirements regarding *how* the principals' appraisal process was to be undertaken. Still, for

these six principals the process was very similar. The principal searched for an appropriate person to be the appraiser for that year, making a written recommendation to the board at a regular board meeting. Once a meeting between principal, appraiser and board chairperson had been held to establish an appraisal process and possible goals, the specific goals and an action plan were further developed by principal and appraiser, and then signed off by the school board.

An appraisal year was usually the calendar year so that the principals could use the Christmas holiday period for review and planning. Principals in this study had tried, and two still used, a mid-year (June) to mid-year cycle with the aim of avoiding additional tasks at the busiest times of a school year, the start (February) and the end (December). Through the year the principal and appraiser undertook a series of actions for principal development and evidence gathering. These actions were typically meetings, school visits, and conducting a 'survey' of opinions on the principal's work. The principal might have specific professional learning tasks to complete as part of the appraisal process.

The degree of similarity in the process across the six principals in this study can be explained by the provision of guidelines for school boards of trustees available through the School Trustees Association (NZSTA)[30]. These guidelines are likely to influence the expectations of the members of a school board of trustees as to how appraisal will be undertaken, what the report will look like, and what board involvement would be. It is also likely that consultants working as principal appraisers in different schools influence and reinforce similar processes across schools. Education Review Officers evaluate a school's appraisal policy and content of reports when they conduct a school review (a cycle of 3-5 years, more regular if the need for closer monitoring is determined by a review's outcomes). The influence of this organisation will be considered later in this chapter.

The six principals viewed the processes used by their appraisers as "reasonably robust". For example, Sydney believed his appraisal was a robust process because

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[30] NZSTA resource documents 'Managing principal appraisal' and 'Managing principal appraisal-good practice' documents available from http://www.nzsta.org.nz/professional-development/template-resources

it was undertaken over the course of the year and had several clear stages. This was in contrast to another appraisal that he had heard of.

> It was more mutual backslapping. You know, it was a quick ten minutes and a cup of coffee, and then out the door. Whereas my assessors have interviewed kids, parents, conducted surveys, visited the school on numerous occasions, gone away, written a draft report, reflected on it, sent it to me for comment. So it's arguably quite a robust process (Sydney).

Others also commented that they had confidence in their process but had heard of principal appraisals that consisted of "a chat over a cup of coffee".

Variations in the process of principal appraisal depended, at least in part, on who was the appraiser. If the board chairperson was the principal appraiser then the process tended to be led by the principal and based on observations and conversations to review core tasks and current special projects in principal work. An appraisal process undertaken by a principal peer depended on this other principal's prior experience as principal appraiser, and if the process was a reciprocal one. A peer principal appraiser process typically had a number of exchange visits. Consultants were seen to have their own individual preferred process, focus areas, and report template. Consultants negotiated with the board chairperson and principal to put a version of these preferences in place.

Identifying an appraiser
One issue for these New Zealand principals was the identification of an appropriate person to undertake their appraisal in any given year. Who would be appropriate, what costs could be afforded this year, who was available, who did this work last year, what were expectations of the board for appraisal this year, and what kind of experience the principal was looking for, were all factors in this search. If the board chairperson would be doing the appraisal this decision was straightforward but if the school/principal was seeking a peer principal or consultant then the decision was more involved and time consuming. Finding a suitable appraiser depended on who became known to the principal as being interested, available, and capable of doing this work. The six principals in this study largely relied on recommendations from other principals and sometimes from university staff known through their own formal professional learning. All

these principals noted that this "through the grapevine" process seemed rather random. Principals used their professional judgement when making a recommendation to their school board about who should be their appraiser for the current year and why they sought to work with this person. Boards trusted these principals and their recommendations were approved.

These principals also commented that to develop principal-appraiser communication and an appraiser's understanding of the school, "not starting from scratch every time" was seen as an advantage. They considered that meaningful professional development and growth often required more than a one-year period. If an appraiser was contracted for subsequent years, they could follow the principal's growth and school's journey over a period of time and comment on progress. These principals held the view that three years would be the most appropriate duration of such an arrangement and that five years was "a long time".

Appraisal criteria

The principals spent little time talking about the criteria of appraisal. The Kiwi Leadership for Principals framework (MoE, 2008) was not referenced or used. In fact, principals only "remembered" reading it. The core criteria, the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals*, was regarded as "straight forward" or "a given". These principals commented more on their performance goals. Ruby explained:

> I have my Principal Professional Standards and criteria for those. I have a performance goal, which I have with the board chair and my appraiser. So let's just take this year - I have developed that goal and I set the 'performance indicators' if you like, in discussion - because it's all about being evidence based.

Performance goals could be very broad statements with further descriptors underneath (see Appendix E). For example, "to further develop and implement the school curriculum through the school's vision" and "lifting Maori student achievement by continuing to improve teacher capability to build Learner Focused Relationships".

The school's strategic plan and charter goals proved to be a major consideration in setting principal appraisal goals for any current year. Across the three-year

research period, the development goals for the schools led by the six principals were very similar. Appraisal goals, for these interview years, included raising student achievement against National Standards (for specific groups, mostly in writing, with maths having been a previous school focus), development of staff data literacy, or eLearning development (then called 'modern learning environments' and later Innovative Learning Environments). Schools were attending to one or two of these government policy implementations and often had either completed a focus on one of the others or had plans to focus on a particular school development 'next'.

Having wondered how idiosyncratic appraisal goals might be for different principals in different schools in different school settings, I was surprised how much alignment there was between a school's strategic plan and focus areas for professional growth in the principal's performance agreement on which appraisal was based. Doug explained that

> probably one of the biggest changes made a year or two ago was directly tying Charter goals into my Performance Agreement. It seemed the obvious thing really. That is why I'm here, the board set targets for learning, and that has to be a key part of my work over the year. So we formalised that. I was working towards those Charter goals, but the link wasn't always explicitly there in my performance or my appraisal documentation… So my goals are linked to the Charter.

Performance goals for appraisal were focused on school development more than individual professional learning needs and most principals in this study saw this alignment as wise and working efficiently.

Not only was it likely that principal appraisal goals were aligned to the school's strategic plan, there was evidence of alignment with teacher appraisal goals as well.

> Their [teacher] goals are linked to the Charter, by and large. So that's probably 70% of it and within that everyone's got their own little bit, 'We need to sharpen up in here,' or 'I've got a particular interest I'd like to follow in this area.' Because we're that sized school too we can all be on that same page. It [appraisal] has to be really, to be most effective. Like maths took up a lot of our thinking and how we were responding to the numeracy project. So we all did the numeracy project, the whole school, the principal was involved in that too.

> Charter goals were around that and all performance management goals were around that too (Doug).

Mickey, however, identified that there would be redundancy if a principal's appraisal goals were simply work tasks.

> While the goals align with the charter - and they have to have all that same underpinning stuff in them - my goals are still different to the charter goals, otherwise why would I have an appraisal process? Why wouldn't I just get the goal sheet down or strategic aims, or whatever we want to call them, an annual plan and just say that's it. (Mickey)

She suggested here that appraisal is more than monitoring how well a principal does her or his job. It was unclear if principals considered whether performance goals were to address an individual weakness or gap that they needed to "sharpen up" on or not.

The six principals felt they had flexibility to determine their own professional development goals, and also through negotiation–with board approval–modify the appraisal plan for the year. Consultant appraisers in particular also helped principals develop action plans and they supported principals in the project management and record keeping of developments through the appraisal process. Due to the size of the project, interruptions in the school year or changes in reporting requirements, staffing, or policy, some of their performance goals rolled over into following years because, they felt, it was understood that some developments take longer than a year.

Principals felt they exercised this choice in determining their appraisal goals even when, at the same time, they felt pressured by the Ministry on the content of school strategic planning, the school charter.

> There's a very clear agenda that the government are pushing and they're pushing through the Ministry - machine if you like, to get that message out to principals and schools. It became very pedantic, and very restrictive and down to basically the support you were getting [from a Ministry representative] was, 'I've read your charter, you need to change these words in here, to put this paragraph in". Or "change this sentence to say that." Some of the other paperwork requirements that we're doing for them as far as strengths and needs analysis and analysis of variance ... there's a whole lot of stuff that's

basically just been done to satisfy compliance. That stuff goes no further really than the Ministry and doesn't advance learning.

This principal commented that principals disengage with that approach. Another shared how the school's board had essentially disengaged as a result of a similar experience.

> Now up until two years ago, this was entirely left to me. This board took wholeheartedly to it. This year the board had quite a lot of talking around, and working on it. They started to reword it. They wanted a simpler document that was for the community. Then you go off to the Ministry who then say this is what your charter should look like. And you get a checklist of what's got to be in it, and they don't really marry up very well. So, what we then decided to do, because we'd run out of time, was that I would rejig last year's charter and get it in to the Ministry in the best way I could.

Through their attempts to work efficiently by managing time and effort, however, their principal, teacher and school goals included less variation over time. Aligning work around policy implementation with appraisal goal-setting was resulting in a convergence within and across schools. This has implications for efforts to address individual principal professional needs in school-specific settings.

Appraisal evidence

The most talked about appraisal evidence was a survey. Opinions of a principal's work were sought, and valued, as part of the appraisal process experienced by these six New Zealand primary school principals. Ruby, for example, commented:

> I think it's really important in our role to have community feedback, teacher feedback and student feedback because how else do I really, really get to hear. That process enables those people to perhaps really say what they really, really think. And they need to have that opportunity if I hold this role; I've got to know (Ruby).

Principals received feedback from the staff of the school, both teaching and support staff. This feedback could be solicited through their appraisal process or unsolicited. Principals described this feedback from staff as "straight" or "upfront". Principals expected school-based feedback and worked with it as a matter of course. They considered this work not only professional but also

collegial. Principals talked of how their role was to support teachers to do their job well. They talked of how teachers took on extra responsibilities and leadership roles, thus strengthening teachers' leadership development, while also supporting the principal in his or her work.

Peer and consultant appraisers sought the opinions of school community members. They interviewed different individuals and groups. Doug described how it worked.

> The way it normally works is the appraiser will come and I'll do the rounds. I'll sit on the front desk for the school receptionist and she'll come and have a talk to my appraiser. Perhaps next I'll go into the senior classroom and teach in there and then that teacher will come down here and have a session and that basically takes a day to go through that. (Doug)

A text-based parent survey (online or in hard copy) might also be sent out and then responses collated and interpreted by these appraisers. This gave parents an opportunity to comment on the principal in particular and their child's experience of school generally. Survey comments could be affirming.

> I had an email from a parent the other day who was responding to my survey who said, 'My kids are so happy at school. They love their teachers. You guys are doing a great job.' Yeah, you get that (Ruby).

A consultant, according to these principals, would almost always seek community feedback at some stage. No survey was conducted when the board chairperson was the appraiser, and principal appraisal surveys might not be the only surveys conducted in any school year.

For most, a survey to gather opinions from parents was used as evidence in appraisal judgements (Sydney, Nate, Dana, Mickey, Ruby). In Doug's case however, any survey was conducted at the beginning of his appraisal year and opinions were used formatively to help identify professional development needs.

> The first thing they do is to get to the stakeholders, the teachers, the students and the community, talk to the board - if it's not a board member. And paint a bit of a picture about how they think things are going and how my role could be improved to help, to help them. That's all done [collated] anonymously and feedback comes back. The appraiser then says, 'Here's a pattern that's emerging, where you're doing particularly well. Here's another area that we've got - a

few people, two or three people have mentioned that this could be an area that could be improved.' And from there the goals are finalised and we come up with a bit of an action plan as to who's going to be doing the work, what professional development is required, and what monitoring is going to go into it (Doug).

There was a direct connection between survey feedback and what Doug and his appraiser decided to work on. When survey feedback was used summatively in the report and then used for goal setting for the following year the connection was less direct.

Appraisal reports and reporting
The voice of the formal report is that of the appraiser. The content of the report was their interpretation of the evidence in relation to the questions and goals, which were collaboratively established with the principal and approved by the board early on in a formal appraisal year. To communicate the partial nature of the appraisal process in judging principal work to the school board one appraiser provided a disclaimer in the report. "Disclaimer: This report concerns the performance of the principal as defined in her job description and performance agreement. Although related to compliance and accountability, this report should not be regarded as a complete analysis of such matters".

All the reports I reviewed came from peer principals or consultants as appraisers and included an opening section, an introduction, a process description and relevant details (see Appendix F). Although the content coverage was similar, different templates were used in different years and for different principals. Different consultant appraisers used their own templates.

All appraisal reports included commentary on personal characteristics, some more than others. For example, "[Name] is seen as approachable and supportive having a genuine commitment …" Other adjectives used to describe these principals included reflective, dedicated, committed, focused, caring, nurturing, and knowledgeable. Any identified future steps were sometimes highlighted in the opening section. As expected, the Ministry of Education's Principal Professional Standards provided four key content headings in appraisal reports. Identified performance goals were also reported on and recommendations made. Teaching principals also had a separate report for appraisal of their teaching against

standards for registered teachers[31] and this, to meet Ministry of Education requirements, was a separate process signed off by a registered teacher.

There was an exception, however. One principal used the same format each year because he had designed his own report form and got whoever was his appraiser to use his template. In his view, this template design incorporated all the appraisal documentation ERO looks for.

> If you read through them they tell a story of what's happening. There's a summary there I think, which was all good. I guess this is where I become more compliance driven too, when I have ERO come through and they say, 'where's the attestation against professional standards?' 'Here it is.' How are you going with your career structure matrix?' There it is. 'How does the charter tie into your performance management?' That's explicitly laid out too. So for me, part of the reason I'm developing this document, is to make sure that all of those compliance parts are sorted too.

The career structure matrix referred to is the Principal Career Matrix[32] a structure of reimbursement by bonuses and pay increases for school principals in The Collective Agreement for Primary Principals.

Not all recommendations in an appraisal report are implemented. One recommendation that caught my eye was that the principal '*use targeted achievement data in reporting to the Board of Trustees*'. In other words, in line with Ministry of Education and Education Review office messages, student achievement data should be reported so that groups of low-achieving students, particularly priority learners, are highlighted. I questioned Nate about what would happen next regarding this recommendation. He explained that he did not object in principle, and if he was in another school he might very well report in that level of detail to the board of trustees. In this school, however, with its small class sizes, individual children could be identified by board members (parents), in this principal's judgement, the potential harm to particular students and their families (and teachers) should board procedures for confidentiality be broken was more

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[31] At the time of writing, referred to as the Practicing Teacher Criteria
https://educationcouncil.org.nz/content/practising-teacher-criteria

[32] To be found on the New Zealand primary teacher and principal union's (NZEI) website at *www.nzei.org.nz/AgreementDoc/PADC.pdf*

significant than the advantages of following this appraisal (and Ministry) recommendation. Nate's purpose was to maintain positive relationships between the school and parents, and the board and school staff. It was not principal ignorance (requiring he be better informed), defiance (needing to be brought into line) or laziness (needing to be motivated to comply) that was the basis for this principal's decision to omit particular data from his reports to the board. In fact, Nate was unlikely to change current practice unless circumstances changed (such as a significant increase in class numbers). Importantly, Nate confirmed that his board was happy with his student achievement reporting at that time.

Indications for how the school's board could support their principal's professional growth were included in appraisal reports written by consultant appraisers. There were recommendations for further improvement and some suggestions of how the school board could provide financial support for principal development. The board of trustees funds professional development opportunities, such as participation in educational leadership tours and conferences. Ruby explained that her school board once requested a written proposal outlining the nature, costs and expected benefits of a particular professional development opportunity she had been keen to take up. She said this indicated to her both the board's sense of responsibility for the school, and a valuing of her work. In this way an appraisal report can encourage, justify, and legitimise board resourcing of professional learning opportunities for principals.

Principals in this study revealed a potential vulnerability for school principals in what happens to the final appraisal report when presented and discussed at a board meeting. Parents, as members of the board of trustees, are privy to appraisal records but were not bound by the same expectations of professionalism, including confidentiality, expected of line managers in other work environments. Similarly, in other work contexts an employee (who was appraised by their manager) would not be privy to their manager's appraisal report. Ruby shared her concerns about board handling of supposedly confidential employment material.

> The dilemma, I think, often principals face is the full report going to
> the full board. I've sat in STA [School Trustees Association]
> workshops where it's been raised that you have a colleague, a teacher
> in your school, sitting in (and it hasn't been a good appraisal) and

being totally privy to stuff that they themselves, in their own appraisal, don't have a colleague privy to. So we did talk that through with my appraiser. It doesn't really faze me. Well, I guess I just feel confident I'll have a good appraisal and I am not worried about it' (Ruby).

This lack of employee privacy during a performance review as an employment issue raises potential legal difficulties for boards of trustees. Because the reports were good reports these principals said they did not see this as a personal concern but all were aware, from other principals, of how issues can arise when an appraisal report is not good. It can be said that there was sensitivity expressed by principals in this study about what happens to an appraisal report.

In the situation of another school the board were the first to identify goals for the following year. When the board discussed Dana's report she was excluded from the meeting raising an issue around the involvement of the school principal in setting her or his own performance goals.

> The report once it's written gets seen by myself, the chairperson and the appraiser. It's a three-way conference. Then the chairperson [pauses] ... basically the chairperson [in the board meeting at my previous school] said that they had received it, it was a great report, and pulled out some comments that he wanted to share and that was it. After the first year [here], the board went in-committee - they didn't share the whole report but they still shared the main bits. And then as a board - I think - they discussed what they would possibly want as far as some goals for the next year from the board's perspective. (Dana)

For Dana the school board, as her employer, identified future goals prior to her being involved in the discussion.

As an indication of a principal being seen as successful in his or her work, the appraisal report prompted little response at the school board level. One 'disappointment' for some principals was how matter-of-factly a good report might be received by the board, and how little interest members of the board, other than the chairperson, might show in the details of the report.

> I've been disappointed overall with the board's involvement in my appraisal. I feel that I don't get the acknowledgement and I feel let down by that. We've had my report available for board members to come and read. Two board members have actually come in and read

> it through and had a really good conversation with me. I felt valued by them. Look - board members are people who are, in my experience, really busy in their own lives and work. The school's running along well. The principal's had an appraisal. It's obviously gone well - great, what's the fuss? I haven't made a fuss. I just think if it wasn't going well, the board would be in there wouldn't they - so why can't I have the good feedback? (Ruby)

The principals reported getting little positive feedback from their school boards. Mickey's focus was on moving forward.

> To me I don't see those as pats on the back, this is a growth thing you know, this is where we are growing. I guess there is a certain feeling of satisfaction that this has worked well but you don't want to leave it there. It's the 'where to next' and the challenges for us, from we are doing well here to this is what we aspire to be. (Mickey)

All of the principals in this study expressed a sense of ongoing and collective improvement for their schools.

The people who judge in formal appraisal

Most principals in this study saw the use of appraisers from three different groups (consultants, other principals, and board chairpersons) as beneficial. The study principals generally had an irregular cycle of appraisers from three groups – an external consultant, a principal peer, and the school's board of trustees' chairperson. Board chairpersons were not typically engaged as the appraiser for more than one year. Often he or she fulfilled this role when the principal had been in the position for less than a year. A board chairperson might also be a principal's appraiser if the school was having an Education Review Office review in the same year. Peer principals were the group of people most commonly contracted as appraisers but the principals spoke of a consultant, who could be a retired principal, member of university staff, mentor from previous professional development being 'required' every three or four years. The decision about who to appoint to undertake the principal appraisal was made by balancing factors such as cost, point of view, nature of the relationship, and the nature of the feedback.

Cost as a factor

Budget considerations are a factor for principals and schools in the decision about who to contract as the principal appraiser in any given year. The cost to the school for principal appraisal ranges from nil when undertaken by the board chairperson

to $400-$4000 for a consultant. In small rural schools, up to $4000 for contracting a consultant can be a significant budget item. One principal admitted: "I shouldn't say this, but finances do come into it too. I'm sure it's money well spent, but there's a certain resource that we have available to us and that influences me a little bit." The cost for a peer appraiser depends on whether each principal appraises the other, cancelling out costs, or on the distance between the two schools, which incurs travel costs.

Point of view of appraiser
In all cases, the principals were looking for someone with a degree of familiarity and understanding of the work of a school principal. Ruby commented: "I think a good appraiser for a principal is someone who really knows the work of a principal. They don't necessarily have to have been a principal, but they probably will have been." Principals with a significant teaching component also considered it appropriate that their appraiser had an understanding of principal work when that principal also teaches. Dana explained what she was looking for in an appraiser.

> Ideally someone who has been in the job of principal so that they are actually really aware of the ins and the outs of what goes on. I guess in my current position I've been a teaching principal [so] then someone who was actually aware of the restrictions, pressures, and conflicting hats as far as time is concerned. (Dana)

For Dana, an appraiser needed an understanding of the pressures on someone who teaches fulltime and is also the school principal.

More than knowledge of principalship generally, these principals preferred that their appraiser had knowledge of the nature of similar schools and communities. A peer principal's understanding of any school-specific setting depends on their experience but they also would have knowledge of current education policy and regulations. Doug spoke explicitly about his preference for a principal of a school 'like his' to undertake peer appraisal.

> The most valuable one, I think, is the peer principal one. Especially with the people I've chosen. They're just really good because they are in exactly the same boat currently that I am. Facing the same issues,

the Novopay [33] stuff, the same performance issues, the same curriculum issues, the same National Standards stuff. So you can really drill down with someone who fully understands what the issues are… [A peer principal with a] similar sized school helps a bit. (Doug)

Several comments from all these principals incorporated the understanding that, on one hand, principalship would have similar concerns whatever the size of school and, on the other hand, that size does make a difference to the nature of the work day-to-day.

The principals were not looking for imposed solutions. Ruby thought that her appraiser's knowledge of principalship and her school situation were important but it was also important for that person not to present solutions based on what they would do. She said she would not tell another principal what to do in their context. Rather she would, if she was the appraiser, ask questions to help them work out where they might go next and accomplish what they were trying to achieve.

I want them to understand the context. What I don't appreciate is people making judgements about you in your leadership based on their own beliefs and values. It's knowing the context. There are things in that particular school I wouldn't do in this school - it doesn't matter. For them, and their context, it's where they are heading. It's great; they're doing a stunning job. It's nothing bad or wrong it's just different. (Ruby)

Even with common aims, policy issues, and current concerns, situations were seen as different for each primary school principal. Mickey said even "if they have a similar problem what works for that one is not necessarily going to work for the other". These principals repeatedly spoke of how varied solutions, schools and school communities could make the work of any individual principal complex and demanding. They expected support from an appraisal process.

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[33] Novopay is a web-based payroll system for teachers and support staff in state and state integrated schools in New Zealand. Purchased by the New Zealand Ministry of Education from an Australian company and implemented in August 2012, the system led to widespread problems with inaccurate or missing payments. Within a few months, 90% of schools were affected (see https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novopay).

A board chairperson as appraiser would have a good knowledge of the school and the community in which the school operates, even better sometimes than the current principal. Board chairs had been a principal's appraiser in years when ERO had recently visited, or was scheduled for a school review or when a principal had only been at the school for part of the year. Doug was one principal who strategically involved his board chairperson as his appraiser at appropriate and regular intervals.

> I enjoy working with the chair because the chair's got ultimate responsibility on behalf of the board for the appraisal to happen. So I think it's quite nice for them to have the opportunity and it gives them a mandate for an insight into my work. Especially with a new chair ... I think that informs their work as a board's chair … It gives them the security too, of knowing they've ticked that box themselves because they've seen it rather than relying on a third party through the appraiser's final report. (Doug)

Doug spoke of the board chairperson gaining insight and knowledge of principals' work and confidence in principal appraisal when he or she was the appraiser.

Another benefit of a board chairperson being the appraiser was enhancing the working relationship between school principal and the school board of trustees as a result of a better and shared understanding of principalship, school operations and Ministry policy. Doug continued, "it's really helped our relationship as well, and they have a much bigger understanding of this job". As the membership of a school's board and the board chairperson can change with each triennial election cycle, any shared understanding and expectations of roles and responsibilities needs to be re-established fairly regularly.

Not all six principals expressed confidence in the board chairperson as their appraiser. Sydney had doubts about having the board chairperson undertake appraisal for the same reason that Doug thought this beneficial. He questioned a chairperson's level of current knowledge of education policy and practice.

> I think board chairs used to in the olden days, probably it's still done a little bit now. It's not recommended. Then unless you really have a good handle on education, how would you really know that the principal's doing a good job? You might think he's a nice bloke, but how would you really know, do you really understand student

> achievement and targets?   Do you really understand that the intricacies of National Standards and attainment, and do you really understand how to have coherent inquiry learning programme across a school? (Sydney)

The 'olden days' were the 1990s, post-Tomorrows Schools, after school boards of trustees replaced regional education boards. When Sydney said, "it's not recommended" he was referring to messages from the Ministry, Education Review Officers, and the ERO appraisal report (2013). According to most principals in this study, better communication and mutual understanding, along with a more visible sense of the school board's responsibility for supporting principal work resulted from having a board chairperson undertake appraisal.

These six principals saw the contracting of a consultant appraiser as the most 'official' or 'professional' appraisal. They felt that this type of appraisal was the most credible and authoritative from the board's perspective. As Doug expressed it:

> the external one, to me, that's your more authoritative, outside person coming in for compliance. They do provide a lot of professional reading and professional input, but that one, to me, is more like an external audit type. I haven't got the relationship I have with the board chair, I haven't got the relationship I have with a fellow principal, I've got no relationship with this person really, they come in with a clean slate. (Doug)

Doug was not the only one who suggested that a consultant, who brought a broader knowledge of research and other schools and did not having a pre-existing relationship with the principal, had more 'authority'.

These six recognised that a consultant brought a fresh point of view to principal appraisal. Sydney commented:

> I think that's good because I can think I'm doing a fantastic job and pat myself on the back, but might not be. It takes fresh eyes. So, in that regard, a formal external appraisal, I think is useful. I think [the job] demands it professionally and I think that's a good thing - I'm not afraid of that. Whilst nobody likes to be told they're doing a rubbish job, and there's always room for improvement, I think external eyes, from outside the community, is a valuable thing. (Sydney)

His comment highlights the value Sydney sees in having a consultant's 'fresh eyes' as the principal's appraiser and also implies that the outcomes could be a surprise, although that is not something he would shy away from. This notion of a consultant's 'fresh eyes' contradicted somewhat the principals' approval of using the same appraiser for several years noted earlier.

None of the six principals put their faith completely in consultants just because they got paid for appraisal work. Some consultants were dismissed as potential appraisers because they were seen as self-promoters or because they completed a high number of appraisals in any one year. For example, Ruby said:

> I've heard about a consultant who was telling another consultant that they'd done 70 appraisals this year. This is what they do full time. How can you do that well? Oh my goodness. I don't want to end up with someone like that. (Ruby)

Some consultants were not considered on the basis of cost.

The nature of feedback in formal appraisal

The point of view of the appraiser and the areas in which they can offer advice and guidance impact on the nature of appraiser feedback in an appraisal. Knowledge of similar schools in size and nature was advocated by these principals as advantageous in order for an appraiser to provide useful feedback. Consultants are able to offer insights from their knowledge of multiple schools and can provide contacts and targeted professional reading. A board chairperson as appraiser would be able to share knowledge about the history and community of the school, and local expectations. Peers tend to work by mutually offering observations and suggestions. Principal peers were valued for their understanding of the "realities" of principal work, the nature of school communities and current challenges, and were relatively cheap to contract as an appraiser compared with external consultants. Doug spoke of the type of feedback that peer principals as appraisers give.

> There's been a lot of two-way, because to me appraisal - I know there's the compliance part of it but - it's mainly supposed to be about improving performance. It's the ideas that I've picked up from these guys, 'Oh that's how you've done it, I'd never have thought of doing it that way.' And same when they've come in to look at my

> school, 'Oh that's great, we might do that.' There's been a lot of sort
> of cross-pollination of ideas. (Doug)

This two-way "cross-pollination of ideas" with another principal was seen as particularly valuable for improvement.

Nature of the appraisal relationship
Interaction between the principal and the appraiser was an important aspect of formal appraisal for these principals. Understanding, trust, to be challenged, and professional confidence were valued characteristics of the principal-appraiser interaction.

These principals also looked for congruence between their own beliefs about learners, learning and schools and the understandings of their appraiser. Doug said of his appraisers: "I think they need to be - it's hard to describe - words like 'child centred' and 'learning focused.' People like that - I'm not too interested in 'movers and shakers' and 'marketers' and all of that side of it". He spoke of the need for an appraiser to have similar views of the purposes of education and schools as an organisation or community: "it's more about people who I know can make a community work. People who really want to make a difference for kids, and who are making a difference for kids".

Trust and professional confidentiality were vital to forming a relationship. As Ruby said:

> it is really neat to sit and talk to a colleague - and particularly another principal - who you can just talk about your work with … knowing you've got a lot in common. That's great. And someone that you can trust 'cause I don't think I could sit with any principal and share everything necessarily. I don't - I won't do that. It's not a wise thing to do. (Ruby)

Nate also talked about valuing someone he can trust.

> The role of principal can be quite an isolated role. Particularly in a small school, you don't have a management team that you can sit down and chew the fat with, you have to be very careful about who you talk to and what you say, sometimes even to people that you think you should be able to trust. I think to have an external person that you can have some of those learning conversations with, is really important. (Nate)

These principals were very aware that there were people they could trust to talk to and they generally counted an appraiser as such a person.

Along with understanding, if not experience, of principal work in a similar kind of school and the confidential conversation, the principals wanted to be challenged by an appraisal. Ruby spoke several times of the questions involved in appraiser conversations.

> Knowing that this is what we're striving for, how will we know we've achieved that? What will be the evidence? The questions I like and find the hardest to answer are the most challenging - so that's good, as part of the process. How do I have confidence, how can I sit here and say, 'Yes, that is happening in our school? (Ruby)

Ruby described these as challenging conversations and was stimulated by the challenge.

Dana also spoke of the importance of critical questioning.

> Are they challenging you and being critical and bringing in new ideas and getting you to think about things in a different way. So there's also that aspect if you've got a neighbouring principal or a fellow principal, how critical or challenging might their ideas be? (Dana)

She felt that having a peer principal as an appraiser had limitations.

Principals in this study also appreciated commitment in an appraiser to both the process and the nature of the relationship. Ruby said, "I think a good appraiser is when they're reliable, when they don't let up, and they're there for the whole year - they're committed, they're committed to you". Both peer principal appraisers and consultants could turn out to be unreliable. It surprised me to hear a few stories of principal peers who, having agreed to be a principal's appraiser, did not follow through on scheduled meetings, lost evidence, and/or submitted no report. Ruby again:

> there is quite an emotional relationship between you and your appraiser. So when you feel like you're let down, that has that emotional impact in a way, if you let it. So in saying that, you can't just work with anybody. I can't just ring an agency and say, 'Send me an appraiser.' That wouldn't work for me. (Ruby)

141

Appraisers from all three categories brought benefits. It was clear that the opportunity for conversation (interaction) was the most useful aspect of an appraisal process for these principals. For this reason, it was important that an appraiser had understanding of principals' work, and of specific school and community settings, provided a confidential ear, and also brought commitment to the process and to the relationship.

The Role of the Ministry of Education

Given that principal appraisal is a New Zealand Ministry of Education requirement, I asked each principal a version of this question: What do you think the Ministry wants for principal appraisal? The answers focused on features of compliance.

> That's a good question. I guess my instant reaction would be compliance that ticks the box - we're doing the job we're supposed to do. Meeting our obligations, running the school - you know, meeting the professional standards as principals - I guess. I'd like to say that the Ministry are interested in my personal growth as a leader, but I don't know if I've got any evidence to support that to be honest with you [laughter]... (Nate).

Nate was not the only one who could not see the Ministry advocating for individual principal's professional growth. Most did not see the Ministry as a primary source of support.

> I try not to ring the Ministry [laughter]... if I can avoid it. The Ministry's become very politicised, I think they're following a very rigid agenda. We have a Ministry Adviser, who's a nice guy, who popped in to see me last week. But he's more about compliance with the charter. So he'll come in and talk about our charter, our annual plans, our reporting against National Standards. And basically just gives me an affirmation, 'Yes. Well done. Thank you. You've met the requirements.' I could go to him and get other advice and support, I'm sure. But I feel more comfortable going through some of the other networks that I have. (Doug)

Participants in this study predicted that appraisal policy would move to include only one kind of appraiser –the consultant. Doug's suspicion was that it was likely that these consultants will be ex-secondary principals. This will mean a loss of variety of appraiser viewpoints and the professional and practical benefits for more formative evaluation within appraisal processes.

> I think it'd be a shame really. Because like I say, you get certain things from an external person who comes in, like an ERO [Education Review Office] review, they come in with a certain mandate to have a look. The other stuff is more relational really and more formative if you like, as opposed to summative ... I guess that's probably the best description. My appraisals with the board chair and the peer are formatively driven where it tends to be the external one that's the summative accountability one. (Doug)

These principals remained hopeful that any future arrangements regarding 'approved' consultants will include consideration of appraiser's understanding of primary principals' work in particular school contexts. There were no suggestions for solving the problem of the increased cost.

The principals also predicted that the Ministry will introduce financial incentives in the future.

> My feeling is that they are heading down a performance pay path and I don't think I am alone in that feeling and they would also like to see the principal separated off from the teachers and they could see principal appraisal as a mechanism to get there. (Mickey)

Currently New Zealand primary school principals, teachers and support staff are in the same union, New Zealand Educational Institute (NZEI) Te Riu Roa [34]. Principals are part of this same professional organisation and are, therefore, "in the same boat" as teachers. The principals who talked about the 'new' Experienced Principal Criteria believed that these would have a greater influence on principal appraisal in future. If so, this would mean that principal appraisal becomes more closely aligned with salary structure (related to years of experience).

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[34] NZEI see http://www.nzei.org.nz/NZEI/About-Us/Aboutus.aspx?About_Us=1

> Certainly we are noticing significant changes to our model of self-governance - that once schools were seen as, you know, independent, self-governing bodies you know, and boards of trustees, you know were there to, to [sic] run the schools and certainly the framework which we're given to do that is narrowing all the time. (Nate)

The principals all spoke of increased central control.

School development might be perceived as an aspect of continuity in principal work. Education policy changes, however, can cause tension between long-term development, according to the vision for the school held by the school principal and the school's community, with the shorter-term demands to implement new Ministry policy (quietly through changes in the National Administration Guidelines, and more publically through Ministerial media announcements). One principal was aware of such change happening.

> I think the way the Ministry can have more control over us and it is happening. We have just had a circular in on the NAGs and they have changed them and there is more compliance that comes into it and the more compliance the more control they have over us. That can be done through the NAGS. (Mickey)

If the Ministry of Education views quality principalship as compliance with current government policy then formal appraisal will come to more obviously encourage school principals political work as government agents, rather than educational leadership work more broadly conceived.

The Role of the Education Review Office

Principals in this study recognised an Education Review Office school review as an appraisal of principals' work. The smaller the school the more obvious this was seen to be. They all acknowledged that an ERO review was not 'officially' an appraisal of the principal, and that an ERO report also reflected on the school's board of trustees. However, this comment was typical: "I know it's not described as appraisal or performance management, but it certainly is".

These principals recognised ERO's general influence on appraisal practice and documentation but perhaps were overlooking the powerful force for conformity that ERO was having on performance goals. ERO's online posting of individual school reviews reveals the threat behind this organisation's influence. It is reasonable to suggest that principals will make deliberate decisions to avoid potential 'punishments' for their schools and themselves. Once a school's ERO review report is in the public domain, there are limited avenues for redress or defence. Therefore, there was tighter government control than just the mandated requirement by the Ministry of Education might suggest, even if we put aside whether the appraisal of the principal through ERO school reviews is officially intended or not.

The Ministry might also argue there is room for local implementation and particular needs in a principal's performance goals. Without any obvious support or encouragement for alternatives, however, ERO expectations and requirements operate as a constraint on such diversity, resulting in greater levels of conformity than these principals might 'feel'.

If principals look to the Ministry and/or ERO, for approval of what is valued in the performance of their work, this would signal a significant shift from the education purpose that these six spoke of frequently and empathically –that schools were for children, for children's learning and growth.

Chapter close
A fundamental purpose of principal appraisal is for principals and other interested parties 'to know'. That is, for the individual principal *to know* how they are doing, and what progress and improvements in their work or in the school 'can be seen'. For the Board *to know* that *their* principal is *successful,* and doing things 'well', 'properly', 'right', 'as expected'. Also for the Ministry of Education *to know* that this requirement has been complied with. There was no concern expressed by these principals about complying with the Ministry accountability requirement. If, however, the effort involved were to be only for compliance purposes, then these principals would see it as a waste of time. From this evidence, the appraisal processes for New Zealand primary principals at this time could serve both as

'proof of competence' (a compliance role) and to 'improve competence' (a formative-development role).

At a glance, appraisal of primary school principals in New Zealand, on the basis of evidence from this study, would seem straightforward. The appraisal process is very similar across schools and principals. School boards are involved in approving the appraiser for any current year, and the board chairperson may be this person under certain circumstances. The type of feedback and advice an appraiser would be able to give influenced the kind of person these principals saw as suitable for the work. Opinions on the principal's work were also formally sourced from parents during the appraisal process by consultants. These principals spoke of the importance of knowing others' opinions of their work.

Alignment between school goals, principal appraisal goals and teacher appraisal goals was seen to help with efficiencies of time and effort. Such alignment made sense to these principals for record keeping and reporting of evidence, particularly for ERO. Individual characteristics of principals did get attention within appraisal reporting, while there was less of a focus on developing individual leadership capabilities in performance goals.

These principals were not concerned about the criteria used in appraisal and they did not comment on the evidence (types or amount) other than to suggest a variety was used (survey, observations, conversation, and documented records). What preoccupied them were the level of understanding an appraiser brought to the process and the nature of the interaction between principal and appraiser. The professional support generated from trusted conversations in an appraisal process was significant for these people.

The Ministry of Education as an organisation was not viewed as interested in a principal's professional growth, although some members of their staff were seen as supportive of principals. The Education Review Office provided pressure for alignment in appraisal goals and conformity across schools. Both of these organisations are seen to advocate for an external consultant as principals' appraiser, a break with the use of a person's line manager that is typical for other employees.

In chapter six I look closely at principals' perceptions of the way parents in particular express their informal judgement of principal work in their school. When these six principals were interviewed about *informal* judgements of their work, they all told stories about information and challenges from parents. These principals see parent expectations reflected in their questions, suggestions and demands for change and they felt judged by such parent comments.

CHAPTER SIX

JUDGED BY LOCAL EXPECTATIONS

You think because you understand one you must understand two, because one and one makes two. But you must also understand <u>and</u>

- Ancient Sufi teaching cited by Margaret Wheatley (1999, p. 10)

The Nature of Local Informal Judgements

Formal and informal appraisal of principals' work is connected. In this chapter I look at local and informal expectations and judgements of principal work, which took place within that work and involved work in response. The principals' sense of responsibility to respond to informal feedback was reflected in their interactions and relationships, visibility through presence on site, and their professional judgement. Doug described local, everyday and largely unsolicited judgement of principals' work.

> It's a complex thing. There are a whole lot of different judgements that are made, that people are making. Some are informal, some formal, some regular, and some irregular. Each contributes, really to the decisions that you make. The children themselves hold you accountable, they have expectations and you know when they're a bit ratty with each other and you need to step it up…Then there are the parents – the parents here are quite connected with their school, quite involved and have different expectations to meet. So that's a whole other method of judging. And that's important. Your relationships with your staff, and again, you get a feeling for that …Schools are constantly changing places – there are new families coming in, new students, and new staff. The education landscape is changing too. You need to be quite sophisticated in reading the direction to be taking your school.

In this quote Doug suggests that:

- the judgement of principal work comes from different individuals and groups;
- principals 'read' signs (tone and mood) and messages (alerts) in their situation;

- principals negotiate various expectations (and demands) in the decisions they make and the actions they take; and
- the specific school community and context of principals' work is constantly changing and this affects community views and judgements of the principal and the school.

The principals in this study spoke, in a matter of fact way, of how teachers and children would give feedback ("tell you straight" and "you get that") as part of the job. It was the comments from parents and other members of the community that these six principals focused on when asked how they were judged informally. Principals received a range of parent comments that they identified as informal feedback. Feedback, in this situation, is a response that provides information to be used for modifications and improvement. Feedback to principals includes, or implies, an expectation with or without judgement, and contains some level of intention to influence subsequent decisions and actions.

Feedback from parents was expressed in the form of information (an alert) about incidents, questions, or suggestions. The principals felt these comments as a questioning of them, as individual principals, and 'the school'. Everything that happens at 'the school' they understood as their responsibility. It is not surprising, then, that it felt like a challenge when parents provided information that principals were previously unaware of. They felt vulnerability over 'out of the blue' incidents or issues ("didn't see that coming").

These principals also felt challenged by parental inquiries regarding anything still unresolved. These inquiries held expectations and judgements of how, and how promptly, they were dealing with the situation. They commented on the high demands of decision-making and work activity associated with responding to inquiries and their awareness of the 'risks', that could potentially undermine trust in the principal and loyalty to the school, influenced their work. In addition, principals felt particularly challenged when a parent inquiry ran counter to their individual professional belief about what was expected of a principal and/or a school. With new students and parents coming into the school community some questions and suggestions, previously dealt with, were raised again.

149

In this chapter my aim is to use principal stories to convey more: more detail, more complexity, and to allow more to be 'seen'. The presentation of a story is a way I can convey 'a whole', to illustrate and identify significance without fragmenting meaning. As the reader will also bring a point of view to his or her reading, my use of stories is a way to suggest more than can be 'known' from this one study. These stories are intended to provide a sense of particularity, inviting attention to the complexity of this kind of appraisal of principals' work, and to engender empathy with the individual (Eisner, 2005). As Eisner (2005) said, "the selection of a form of representation … is a selection of not only what can be conveyed but of what is likely to be noticed" (p. 179). The evidence I have selected to include in this chapter is my interpretation of what is worth noticing. Each story is edited from a particular principal's words often blended from different pieces of one story told to me across three interviews. No names are associated with these stories because each could have come from any one of the six principals in this study and is about incidents that happen in any, and every, school. Each story illustrates principals' feeling judged by local expectations.

Responding to an alert

The principals in this study felt they were expected to know 'what was happening'. Principals can be alerted to something that they had previously not been aware of through serendipitous events and the willingness of a parent or other community member to share the information. The story, *Backseats and informant*s illustrates the indirect "out of the blue" nature of alerts a principal might receive and the importance for principals of being informed. In this case because a parent "thought I would want to know." The expectation in the parent's alert was that the incident was serious enough to warrant principal action after the fact but, in this principal's version, there is no judgement reported in the parent's communication. The judgement was in parent conversations questioning, "what was happening at the school". Principals do not know everything that occurs and it is helpful when they have parents and community members who will pass on information.

Backseats and informants
> Earlier this year we had an eight-year-old boy who brought some marijuana to school and who thought it would be a nice idea to share it with his friends. We found out because one kid who wasn't particularly involved in it was talking to his brother about it in the back of

the car and mum's ears pricked up and she alerted us to it. You could see the naiveté in it but you could also see that they knew that they shouldn't be doing it. So at that time the question going around the parents was: *so what is going on at that school that 8 year olds are bringing marijuana into the school?*

I got out our school police liaison officer and we had this parent meeting. The parents [at that meeting] wanted to go straight into punitive punishment. Our police liaison officer was saying to the parents this is about kids being able to come to you and talk about these things, and about having these conversations outside of an incident. You get into the moralising when you are in the thick of it and kids just get confused, angry, turned off and all those things. But if they are part of regular conversations, 'yes these things are out there, no we don't use them', you know.

As a school staff, we kept trying to say 'it is not that it won't happen, it is what we do about it that matters'. There has been support for this approach from our board chair as a result of board of trustees' training on 'safe proceeding'. The board chair has said that parents have to take some responsibility and you can't just lay the blame on the school's doorstep all the time. That was one of those big things, or potentially big things, that worked out reasonably well over a relatively short period of time.

Once s/he knew of this incident the principal recognised the potential flashpoints and opportunities in the situation and promptly called a parent meeting. S/he identified the 'right' person, in this case the police liaison officer who was a third party and had relevant expertise to speak at this meeting. The school board chair also played a part in calming parents' concerns, and the three encouraged a sense of collective responsibility among school staff, parents, and the school's community for child safety. In this case a parent suggestion that the principal might want to do something was resolved but rather than the principal taking on the 'expert' position, s/he transferred this to the police. The particular situation of the child who brought marijuana to school was addressed but the issue was a wider one in the principal's view and this was a 'teachable' moment for parents as well as students. What this principal wanted was for parents to react with a sense of shared responsibility, rather than pointing to 'the school', should there be a next time.

Behind the interaction that a principal has with parents are the interactions that parents have with each other. At the parents' meeting in the *Backseats and informants* story there were those parents who wanted punishments to be dealt out and others who wanted help to talk with their children about illegal drugs. During

the meeting, at least, these different groups got the opportunity to talk to each other. Mickey's comment about 'that' parent talking to others in the car park suggested she sensed the parent was gathering information and/or support regarding a concern she did not yet know anything about.

> Feedback comes back to you in various ways. It quite often comes back after a few coffee morning chats and someone gets to hear about something who wasn't aware of it before or the group that takes it upon themselves to speak up for others. It is keeping our eyes and ears open. In this case because there are a number of kids that get picked up at school who don't qualify for bus transport, if there is *that* parent talking in the car park then I know something is of concern. I keep an eye out. (Mickey)

Information that could be acted on, then, came from a variety of sources and was not always direct. One principal heard things through a friend's husband, who picked up talk when out socialising: "he hears things said at the pub". Individual principals also spoke of signs they noticed—through keeping 'eyes and ears open'—that signalled a potential issue.

These principals developed knowledge of individuals and groups in their school community and 'read' situations – that is, they noticed, recognised and responded to what was currently going on. One principal explained that, although she doesn't like second-hand complaints and doesn't encourage them, being told is important.

> Parents give feedback and some parents will come in here and be straight up. And I know there are parents out there who will pass it through someone else to bring in here. I don't like stuff second hand. I just think, 'You've got to know I will sit here and listen to you.' I might be seething inside sometimes; I guess my face will possibly show that sometimes. Hopefully not, but I am human. (Ruby)

Ruby's frustrated response came from knowing that relayed news tended to be older news, expressed in broader general terms and, therefore, more difficult to deal with. Parents still expected the principal to act. They also expected principals to 'be professional' and not be offended or 'take it personally'. The principals spoke of the challenge and the importance of remaining patient and calm as listeners and openly responsive, even when faced with angry parents, which happened at times.

The molehill to mountain phenomena

Social media has the potential to both allow principals to be alerted to concerns and for news to spread more widely and more quickly than might otherwise occur. Preventing molehills becoming mountains was a key task. The principals had 'a cautious' approach to being connected with their school community through social media. One principal described how a parent can influence people's perception of the school through use of social media whether the principal is aware of it or not.

The Facebook story
> We've had one parent who's just gone to town on Facebook to her friends, without saying anything to staff or the teachers. We've heard about it from a staff member's hairdresser, who said, 'Oh my God, have you seen what she's written on Facebook?' 'No, didn't know there was a problem.' Then when it was brought to my attention, I dealt with it. And she's written back, 'I was really pleased with the way [Principal's name] dealt with that.' But it was tiny – the tiniest thing. 99.99% everything's positive, but that one little thing, well it was never going to blow us off course, but it was something that took a bit of defusing. So, if we don't constantly monitor the vibe in the community, through the board, to some extent, but through the parents that we see on a daily basis, then we can get the mood wrong. And if they're not happy, we pick up on it pretty quick. But by and large, they're very happy.

The venue for parent interaction, on Facebook, influenced the level of risk perceived, and responded to, by the principal.

Principals had a concern about being misjudged by public perception through news about the school presented in mainstream as well as social media. One principal was very frank in his awareness of potential mainstream media involvement and how that increased the importance of his decision-making and actions in response to any incident.

> We've had a couple of occasions last year where things apparently happened at school that looked really, actually quite serious. If you just read the sort of headline, you'd go, 'Oh my God! …You can't legislate for that. It just happens, you know. It's just happens, and boom, you have to deal with it. The big fear is of the media becoming involved and that's one that sort of hangs over you a bit too. Be prepared for that. (Sydney)

For some in this study having seen other principals, schools and teachers negatively portrayed in headlines had made a significant impression. They

expressed sensitivity to the risks (threat) to a school and staff reputations that could be caused by partial, skewed or exaggerated media commentary.

The principals in this study did not wait to receive feedback. All six principals mentioned principal's need to monitor the "vibe" or "mood" of parents and the school as a community. For most the important aspect to their response to any issue was to act promptly and "nip in the bud", contain (disarm), and resolve any situation as quickly as possible. For this reason they were sensitive to the amount of time they spent away from school for their work and how this influenced their ability to "keep things on track". This was, at least in part, a strategy to lessen the chances of any extra work caused by issues that arose or escalated in their absence. Dana said of the escalation of an incident she told me about, "I am not saying if I'd been here it would have been any different. I may have approached a child differently than perhaps how the teachers involved had done". Mickey also told a story of an incident that happened when she was in the city for a meeting. On returning to school she found staff had responded to a particular incident 'by the book' and the parents of the child were upset at the official line taken without any initial consultation. How she might have handled the situation she did not mention but Mickey did say that staff did not have enough information, or the confidence, to act any differently than by following the school policy guidelines as they had done. Still it was the principals who were judged by how s/he handled or dealt with 'it', whatever it was.

There are times when these principals felt unfairly judged by one group or another. These principals knew people who were associated with their school in ways others did not and this knowledge influenced their judgement and judgement calls in response to parents. They responded to parental concerns in ways designed to address the needs of those involved, while balancing perceived risks and advantages. Situations often involved information about the private lives of parents that only the principal had access to. They described this information as 'privileged' because of its confidential nature. Confidentiality and privacy concerns may mean the principal does not tell a board member some detail in order to lessen the potential negative consequences for particular children and families. They weighed a person's different roles in their decisions about communication of information, i.e. a board of trustees' member who is also a

154

parent. Doug pointed out that

> in small schools parents do tend to be very close to the staff and to all of the children. So if something happens, they feel the need really to be involved and informed. And sometimes you just can't, due to privacy and confidentiality issues you can't inform people how you'd like to. And that's been a pressure in such cases, really. There's the tension that you're going to lose on one side really.

In any situation one "side" might be critical and feel the principal did not handle the situation correctly but the principal cannot always answer critics with full disclosure. The principals know things about the private circumstances of others and, in keeping these confidences, they cannot always fully explain their decisions or defend themselves publically in the same way as they might have if they could use this information.

Principal experience in their current school setting also gave them an understanding of the nature of relationships between community members, which in turn influenced the options they saw open to them for the resolution of a situation. Principals' school and community-specific knowledge (including confidential or sensitive knowledge), and their professional judgement enabled these principals to negotiate expectations and move forward. Even with this knowledge, however, situations were not always resolved: "you can't get a successful outcome for everything in the time – in the ideal time scale so you just – you get done what you can get done".

The work of responsibility
Playgrounds, buses and the police is a story chosen to illustrate the work of these principals when investigating events reported by parents. The principal felt the parent's accusation that the school was an unsafe environment and that person's expectation to identify the culprit, and take steps to ensure it would not happen again. The story shows the process this principal went through to establish the sequence of events, while for the parent time went by with no obvious progress made. Responsibility for finding out what had happened, and to 'fix' it, was seen to rest with the principal. In the end there was no satisfying resolution to this situation illustrating that not everything brought to a principal's attention could be, or was, resolved.

Playgrounds, buses and the police

> The parents are largely one hundred per cent behind the school. There are just one or two incidents that occur from time to time, and they happen in every school, that we just have to manage. One issue that happened a few years ago; we had an email overnight from a parent. Out of the blue, a student had gone home with some pretty serious marks on their body that the student alleged had occurred at school, basically assaulted by other students. It took a lot of investigation to find out what happened. Because of the experience of the duty staff we had on that day at the playground, where he alleged it had happened – we had taken the student's first [playground] story out of it. That took a little bit of time – interviewing all the students, going through that and crosschecking people's stories. The Public Health Nurse became involved too and had checked out the injuries for us. As we investigated, the student's story kept changing. So, the first step was *no, it didn't happen at school, it happened on the bus*. Then there was a whole caseload of investigation, to talk to the bus driver, to talk to the bus wardens, to talk to other students on the bus, and then it became apparent that it wasn't on the bus either. Once we'd eliminated the school story, the bus story took a bit of elimination. The third story was that two outsiders had come onto the school grounds during the day and assaulted this student. Which again, we had serious doubts about given the description of these guys - covered in tattoos, spiky hair and missing fingers and all sorts of things.

> The parent then took the complaint to the police, which elevated it to a whole new level. And the police began an investigation and Child, Youth and Family became involved. It was one [incident] that just kept spiralling. We're frantically trying to get to the bottom of what happened. And in the end we really didn't. The police investigated. In the end we got a phone call from Child, Youth and Family, from the office of the Commissioner of Children and from the local police. They found no case to answer and couldn't give an answer as to how the child got these marks. It took a long time to get to that point and the parent was very concerned. Even though the boy's story changed three times, the parent backed the child and was convinced that something had happened at school. We just had no evidence at all of it happening. Given the nature of our school, someone would have known, and they would have spoken up or reported something or seen someone. It took a long time to work through that. We had to make sure that everything was done procedurally correctly. And again, the board have the ultimate responsibility for the health and welfare of children, so where does the board come into it?

Parental concerns did not always spread to other parents or to more general concerns but principals were sensitive to how easily that could happen should they not be seen to handle a situation appropriately and in a timely manner. In this case, the parent and child were relatively new to the area and unknown in the community. The relationships one might expect in a rural community had not yet been established for them, which may have been a factor in why the parent's concern did not spread amongst other parents. The escalation, in this case, was to

the involvement of the police, Child Youth and Family[35], and the Commissioner of Children.

Even if the school's board of trustees is legally responsible for the welfare and learning achievement of children at school, the principals felt the weight of that responsibility. It was the school principal who felt judged (and criticised) and undertook most of the work involved in responding to parent concerns. Reaching a resolution can take a lot of work. Getting cover for their teaching was often required. Getting good information and guidance in a timely manner from dependable sources, keeping key interested parties – and those legally concerned – informed, and keeping good records for accountability were all mentioned as part of their response to parent concerns.

> You stop answering the phone, you stop doing your work, you get somebody else in to look after your class and you roll with that. And you write it all down, and you record it, you record the conversations you have, you summarise it in a letter to the chairman of the board of trustees and all that kind of thing, just so the people that need to know are in the picture and you can be seen to have done a thorough job. (Sydney)

> Something I've learnt too, is that that's when you'll fall over, if you don't keep the communication going at each step. So your board chair isn't aware what they need to know, when they need to know it – that can backfire. Particularly the families of the people involved, [they] need to be kept aware – and staff too. What the staff are aware of if we have an issue and if we have to change some procedures. The rest of the job doesn't stop and wait while that's done. There are other things that you do have to keep track of. (Doug)

Principals often used the pronoun 'we' when describing responses to alerts but they did most of the work. It was important they were seen to do the right thing. However, what was not visible to others was also significant in terms of principal work. The principal in the *Playgrounds, buses and police* story said,

> doing the work has been important; there's been a lot of communication with various families and outside agencies and police.

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[35] CYF was a New Zealand government agency at the time with legal powers to intervene to protect children from abuse or neglect, and help children who had problem behaviour. It was replaced by the Ministry for Vulnerable Children in April 2017

But there's also been quite a bit of time for myself getting advice to make sure that I'm proceeding down the correct path. A lot of time reading, to check on our policies, but also looking at what good practice is and what the legal requirements are.

The nature of their response was referred to as "putting out fires", "keeping things on track", and "finding solutions", "next steps", and "ways forward". There was no sense of a master plan with a sequence of actions having been developed early on.

We're pretty careful about how these things are dealt with. Otherwise they take on a life of their own. If something is alleged to have happened at school, and we don't do quite a thorough job of it, people will say that you must be covering something up. … On the few occasions where this has happened – and there have been few – I think the way that we've dealt with it has kept things in proportion, but kept the parents happy to know that you've taken it seriously. (Sydney)

Typically principal actions were taken in a step-by-step manner, relying on their professional judgement to negotiate each step. A satisfactory resolution was the goal.

Parents expect principals to have the resources to fix and resolve issues. There were times when principals sought help from the Ministry of Education and other agencies that, when not readily forthcoming, added to the workload required.

It is extremely time consuming, endless meetings, endless amounts of paperwork to read. We found someone to work with this child and we are paying for specialist help. It's very, very frustrating in schools where you just don't have the time or energy to keep pursuing these people. The Ministry provided us with some interim funding. So now we're battling them saying, "We're going forward. What are we going to do to support this child?" And they're saying, "Well actually it's down to you." If something really serious had happened people would be saying, 'Why haven't you done anything? Why did you let it get to this stage?' We're doing everything we can but when you're actually going out, trying to get solutions to problems there's very little ... Very few people who can actually do anything to help.

One principal suggested there would always be people who approved and people who did not approve whatever you did.

> And most parents will tell you when they're pretty pleased with how things are going. Some will be quite vocal in telling you when they're not very pleased with the way things are going. And they're usually coming at it from some angle about something. What can you do? We'll never please everyone so we just sort of manage that as best we can. We get feedback from anybody and everybody. [Laughter]... Really. Plenty of it. (Sydney)

Feedback to principals included varying levels of expectation to influence the principal's subsequent decisions and actions. Sometimes the parents' expectation of influence was perceived as a demand. One principal referred to these as 'complaints' in terms of the "drop everything" and "do something about this" response s/he perceived was being required: questions directed towards the individual principal such as, "what are *you* doing about this?" Or "what are you *doing* about that?" Examples of 'this' or 'that' were wide ranging and reflected parent expectations of a principal's responsibility for their child(ren) beyond teaching and learning concerns. Such challenges were also considered to have the potential to undermine trust, and increase doubt and suspicion from parents and other members of the community with the potential, ultimately, to lead to more open criticism of principal and other school staff. That email or that phone call reminds principals of the vulnerability of their own and their school's reputation.

Different parent, different view, again

The *Here we go again* story is about the kind of suggestion that comes in 'regularly'. These suggestions were based on parent expectations of the school (the school principal to do 'more' or do 'differently') to provide and/or preserve opportunities for their children within broader school life. All six principals told me variations of such stories. Parent suggestions mentioned concerned the introduction, resumption or cessation of a variety of school-based activities and opportunities often unrelated to curriculum teaching and learning. Examples of suggestions were religion in schools, milk in schools, and student-led conferences. Parents questioned ways of funding school camps, use of entertainment videos,

and they advocated for agricultural days, the use of traditional school cups for prize giving, more physical education, and more Kapa haka[36]. Some suggestions resulted in changes in school policy and practice, and some did not.

Here we go again

> I had a parent email me recently about school breakfasts and the email went something like, "I do not understand why this school does not do this?" So I replied to the email and said I had put it to the community 18 months ago and only 5 interested people got back to me and that wasn't enough, but I said I'm prepared to investigate again. I got the information together, putting together requirements, benefits and challenges and asked for those interested to contact me - with all my contact details. I need those who feel strongly enough to respond to make a change from what we do now. I am thinking why do I even have to think about this? We are trying to develop modern learning environments and I'm having to spend time on this! [But] It's my responsibility to respond to community requests.

There was repetition in this kind of parent suggestion. There was also a repetition in principal's responses and the communication of any decisions including the rationale behind the decision (and then in dealing with parents' responses to the announced change or lack of change). With a changing student and parent population in any school certain suggestions can arise again and again. Sometimes a suggestion might come up again because the parent continued to advocate for a particular concern and, at intervals, considered they had enough support to revisit their suggestion. Nate spoke of considering every case.

> More often than not it is about how far a parent might want to push that barrow. I think at primary school we are good at giving children experiences across a range of activities. I think there are very few parents that would have a problem with that. It is just not always feasible to do an hour's art every day or whatever it might be … Sometimes parents might have a really good point … At other times you might decide no, we have put enough resource and time into whatever it is … I think it is a little bit different for every case. It is about being open and willing to reflect on what you are doing and making a decision on the merit of the suggestion.

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[36] *Kapa haka* "is the term for Māori performing arts and literally means to form a line (kapa) and dance" (haka)(*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kapa_haka*)

Suggestions that provided an extra challenge for a principal were those that they strongly believed were unreasonable, inappropriate or that the school did not have the resources for. These led to frustration.

> First and foremost, personally I have quite a strong belief that it is not a school's business so there's a personal barrier. I put my personal view aside because I want to be able to respond to the community's needs and wants–within reason. I know it will be parents coming in, not with the whole school view, and it'll be about their child. Therefore, how do I as principal, how am I going to manage the situation where I'm seeing the big picture. But I'm open to it really. And then having to put up with the next email that comes in. 'Cause it will come in and I'm just going to go through the whole process again. I won't just give in and go, 'Oh damn it I'll just do it.'

It was common that parental feedback was understood by these principals to reflect the partial advocacy of a mother or father rather than an impartial or general concern. It was also clear that principals and parents could differ significantly on what counted as 'a big deal'.

> I think the big things are easy to deal with it. It is the little things that rock the boat, or it can be a seemingly little thing. Every parent is very concerned for the welfare of his or her child. It can be something as simple as "someone has stolen my kid's shoes" - not a lot to do directly with the learning and teaching. (Mickey)

In that case the child's shoes had been in lost property for most of the term so the accusation was readily countered and the child had their good shoes for their family event. While the parent making such an inquiry may or may not intend to convey an accusation or criticism, a judgement, of principal work, nevertheless the principal can feel 'judged'.

Compliments or positive feedback

When asked, the principals said they did not get much positive feedback. Compliments might get passed on seemingly by chance: "oh, look, you know you don't really get a lot of positive feedback, really. Yeah, no. It's just by chance really". Examples given were when a relative or friend of the principal heard "good things" through conversation in non-education settings, such as at work meetings, medical appointments, the hairdressers or in line for coffee, and then chose to pass the comment on to the principal.

161

> My sister was at a meeting somewhere recently, in this region, and I heard through my mother, 'cause my sister had told my mother, that my name had come up, 'Yeah, she's doing such a good job,' or something to that effect, so that's that informal stuff.

Sometimes these comments are about the principal, although positive comments, the principals suggested, were about 'the school'. Positive comments in the school setting can come from conversations with parents enrolling their child or from parents of ex-students.

> Parents coming in to the school to enrol – they will quite frequently say, 'This school has such a good reputation.' That is something I hear quite a lot. From ex-pupils – a parent said to me the other day, when I was inquiring 'How's he getting on?' And she said, 'Oh he was just so well prepared for high school – this school was great for him.' So, you know, that's the kind of informal feedback we get. I make sure that it's passed on too because the teacher of that child needed to know that. (Ruby)

The principals appeared to be proud of the school and the staff. They accepted the compliment on behalf of teachers and yet they said that they expected, and received, little positive feedback. Ruby suggested that she might hear some positive remarks "quite a lot" although all six dismissed positive feedback as rare. It may be that compliments reflected expectations they had of themselves thus positive remarks confirmed what was 'normal' for these principals. It might also be that the work (time and effort) involved in responding to parental communications was what coloured these principals' perception of information, questions or suggestions from parents as generally negative (challenges and demands). Compliments or expressions of approval were short-lived in the sense that these required no follow-up and no consequential decision-making.

Communities in which schools are located are not static. Not only can communities, and groups within communities, have idiosyncratic views, but as the school's community changes so do community views and expectations.

> At the end of the day, what is a community? Other than a group of humans, a group of people. No two are the same and a community can change. Man, I've seen some huge changes in our community just in the last three years. (Nate)

Parent comments remind a principal they need to keep revising their knowledge of their school's community.

It is also possible to detect in these stories hints about errors principals have made in the past, either their own or those known through the stories of others. Some of these errors involved acting in haste or procrastination, missing the point, ignoring warning signs or information not agreed with, going it alone, not getting enough advice or the 'right' advice. Not keeping the board chair informed, forgetting other peoples' points of view when pursuing their own idea for a solution, having thought such an occurrence would not happen under their watch, and trying to assure parents that these things will not happen again could all be past errors.

Principals in this study described how dealing with such 'feedback' helped to develop their knowledge and skills over time. One principal, who could have been speaking for all, said, "we have unusual situations – they're rare – but just a phone call or an email away from happening. I think the more times you go through it you get more confident in dealing with that." These principals developed their confidence, if not expertise, through dealing with issues, which grew their ability to handle whatever might come up next.

The individual *and* the situation

Whatever happens in school was accepted, readily and generally, as the principal's responsibility. These principals identified closely with the school they worked in and had a highly developed sense of responsibility regarding what happened at school and the school's reputation. Ruby said,

> I've had some really difficult situations, but I can't say I've ever, ever come through those and said, 'That's not my responsibility.' I've always known I needed to be involved. I think there has been a lot of unfairness sometimes, but when people get angry – and parents are allowed to get angry to you, but you're not allowed to get angry with them. Rightly so – you're a professional, but some of it you have to take on the chin and it's hard but I… I just get myself through it and say, 'Yeah, but do you care about the child? Yes I do, so we'll do this.' I don't always agree. I don't necessarily put in place everything that's demanded. But I will always have the reason why.

From these stories of local expectations, the school principals were both a servant and an authority in the school setting.

Through examination of policy and research we may come to know more about principal work and appraisal of that work. We may come to understand the nature of a school as an organisation, and the nature of the community in which that school operates. Both of these aspects provide some continuity to a person's experience as school principal. As the Sufi teaching proposes there is also the 'and' to understand. Principals interpret, evaluate and negotiate the complexity of expectations, both formal *and* informal, of education policy *and* local settings. They respond to the different levels of authority (and distances) of judgement on their work. Principals see judgement of their work in the feedback they get about what they do *and* in feedback regarding how things are at the school—their actions *and* the situation (which may or may not be a direct result of the principal's work). Dana commented that the principal is a particular person *and* so is the setting of any principal's work.

> Every school certainly is different and I think it really comes down to the community you are in, or the community of that particular time and the teachers within it. But certainly I imagine it is also the impact and the influence on the principal and how they deal with things and how they see things. Each school is individual because each community is different, even if you are neighbouring schools, your community is the kids that come to this school and their families form the community. (Dana)

Parents had expectations that principals should know what happens in the school, and of anything concerning the school. Revealed in these stories is also the parental expectation that principals make decisions and take action to fix and resolve a situation, or implement, sometimes idiosyncratic, suggestions. Included in the *Backseats and informants* and the *Playground, buses and the police* stories was the expectation that principals should ensure 'it' did not happen again. Principals did not know everything that occurred without others passing information on to them. They did not always have the resources to readily remedy situations or resolve all concerns. The principals did make decisions and take action. They were responsive and responsible. They revealed an understanding of human beings and communities, and of the risks of a breakdown of trust and confidence in the principal and 'the school'.

164

Questions that remain include:

- How can parent and community 'feedback' be characterised?
- What do we mean by 'local community'? What is the extent and nature of local community expectations of the school principal?
- Are there limits to expectations of school principals' responsibilities? Should there be?

In summary, when asked about being judged informally the six principals in this study told stories of parents providing information, raising questions, or offering suggestions. It was through these interactions, and the implied expectations, that these principals felt judged as school principals and as individuals. Principals interviewed in this study felt they were the 'go to' person for parental concerns, and that they needed to be responsive, communicative, informed and professional. Local expectations of principals included responsibility for children's safety and wellbeing, the provision of opportunities beyond curriculum learning, supporting the board of trustees and "sorting things out" generally. Principals in this study talked of responding to expectations from parents that are based on particular and partial interests, while they had to keep in mind a bigger picture: that they, as individuals, were required to behave in a professional manner but that those they interact with do not, or at least did not at times.

Principals believed that it was their responsibility to take some action. Their decision-making involved reading an issue in sophisticated ways and giving consideration to risks and consequences. The principals were acutely aware how easily trust could be undermined and rumours spread. Any response involved multiples of (small) decisions made and these decisions were influenced by the individual's experience of being principal, and being a principal in a particular school. The principals recognised a need to respond carefully (seriously, noticeably, and in a timely manner). Whether timely or not, the principal was seen as responsible for taking action and the principals' response (how they 'handled it') was a significant aspect in how they were judged by the school's community.

In the final evidence chapter, Chapter 7, my focus is on the individual principals and self-appraisal.

I AM THIS PRINCIPAL, I AM A PRINCIPAL

Every utterance is deficient—it says less than it wishes. Every utterance is exuberant—it conveys more than it plans.

~ Alton Becker (1991, p. 230)

Evidence from the experience of the school principals presented in this study so far has shown that appraisal is part and parcel of formal expectations and a principal's professional responsibility and of informal expectations from parents and other community members. Principals also have expectations of themselves. In this chapter I give special attention to the six individual New Zealand rural school principals who participated in this study. The poems in this chapter give what these principals said, and what they might have held back, more space as well as conveying more than what they might have been aware of. Principal self-appraisal, as described here, includes developing self-knowledge and expertise.

I Am This Principal: Poetic Representations

Having undertaken analysis using poetic writing, poetic (re)presentation in this chapter allowed me to signal a shift in my research interpretative-lens to draw closer attention to the six *individuals* who participated in this study. As such I present my interpretation *of* evidence *with* evidence in a different way, and with a more overt researcher craft. There is a risk involved in this deliberate disruption, in disturbing what has become familiar in the way the thesis text has 'worked' so far. Nicol (2008) discussed how research authors might both gain and lose something in readership through the use of poetic compositions. She commented, "readers have expectations of texts, particularly research texts, and if the expectation is disrupted, readers may no longer be willing to read and engage with the text" (p. 328). Through the following six poems I interrupt the reader to put at the centre of this study the person—the human being—whose work is being judged, including by themselves.

Using the words of each of the principals recorded in interview transcripts, I crafted the following six individual poems as 'portraits'. These portraits are, of course, incomplete and are just snapshots. These six poems are designed to illustrate something of each individual in order to share aspects of their self-knowledge, explicit or hinted-at strengths and weaknesses, and individual views of principal work. As in Chinese art, I identify a *host* and *guest* element for each person's poem, not necessarily stated but able to be 'seen' (Table 3.1, p. 72). The reader "comes to them by their own way" (Graglia, cited in Lahman et al., 2011, p. 893). By using the idea of host and guest elements I signal that these poems are both a representation and an symbolic expression of the individual. The host is the major point of interest, a term the individual can be characterised by. The guest has a secondary role and is a theme of our conversation.

The poems begin and end with a line or two of each principal's words in italics. These lines direct the reader to certain salient points and act as a frame for each person's 'portrait' as represented in their poem. The opening and closing lines also provide the six poems with an element of consistency to signal a set of poems. The order of the poems is important: Nate, Doug, Dana, Sydney, Mickey, and Ruby. The italicised lines were the basis of my decisions regarding this order. I begin with Nate's perception of the relationship between school development and his professional growth, and a reminder that human beings are involved. Then I move through aspects of each person's individual approach to principal work (Doug, Dana and Sydney), looking forward and looking back (Mickey) until I return specifically to the significance of other people (Ruby).

Writing the poems

Writing Nate's poem
In the research evidence gathered with Nate, I saw his acknowledgement of other people's experience and strengths, and his willingness to encourage the use and development of these strengths. This did not lessen his 'backbone' – evident in his sense of responsibility as the school's principal. He felt trusted by others in the school community and saw himself as fully involved, but he also had clear boundaries 'around' his private life. The host feature for Nate was 'respect' and the guest feature was 'growth'.

The first version of the content of Nate's poem came readily from my immersion in and review of the interview evidence, using poetic writing in the form of pairs of lines. However, through further cycles of analysis, I made a decision to use sets of three interrupted lines and dropline. The droplines, where the left side stanza has a fourth line but the right-hand side does not, reflect stronger points. The idea is that these points are followed by a pause for the reader in space left blank and reading each stanza would highlight Nate's openness, composure, and also his reflexivity. I realised that a reader could read across the page or down the two sides. This warranted more editing to ensure the sense and flow of each stanza as a block or unit so that Nate's poem could be read either way.

Writing Doug's poem
Doug's poem was the most difficult to craft. In the interview sessions (reflected in the recordings) he spoke fluently and I was struck by his presentation and his confidence. It had been hard for me to take notes during our interviews as Doug had spoken with such pace and assurance. Using the transcripts, I could read what he had said more slowly. Doug came across as someone always looking for improvement. For Doug, the host feature became 'capability' and the guest feature 'opportunities'. I was tempted to structure Doug's poem as a running paragraph with no breaks but decided against this in order to be clear that this poem is an assemblage from transcripts of three interviews. His poem does have longer lines with short phrases to get a faster-paced read intended to convey a sense of Doug's confidence.

Writing Dana's poem
Dana's poem remains in a format determined relatively early on and with much the same content as my first draft. In organising this poem's content, I grouped her comments into topics: community and school, work and responsibility, isolation contrasted with support, and families and children. The structure is one of alternating seven-five numbers of lines per stanza (7-5-7-5-7-5) positioned between the italicised opening and closing lines. Dana's host and guest elements, 'positioning', as a symbol of her approach, and 'children's futures', as a central theme to our conversation, come through strongly in this poem.

Writing Sydney's poem

By dividing Sydney's poem into two columns and framed boxes I intended to provide the reader a 'hopscotch' alternating between, on the one hand (or foot), comments that express his confidence and on the other comments that express his doubts and wonderings. I also intend to signal that the boxes of text can be read in any order as pieces of a whole. The host element in this poem is 'self-confidence' and the guest is 'action' to highlight Sydney's sense of momentum for change.

Writing Mickey's poem

Mickey talked, and talked, almost consistently using plural pronouns. Interviews with Mickey covered a wide range of events and a number of years of her experience as principal. In crafting her poem, the italics lines came relatively promptly but the body of her 'poem' was a rush of words, almost breathless at first. I had the impression that the emotional and physical costs of principalship were 'catching up' with Mickey. I wanted to convey some of this in Mickey's poem. I also needed to separate topics for the reader. Using Roman numerals to title each verse in Mickey's poem was the answer with shorter lines (in I) to a slower reading of the longer lines of III. On first read, these three verses may seem to move from casual conversation to deeper considerations of the complexity of principalship but this is deceptive. In the complex relational work of school principal, Mickey's self-care and wellbeing, as an individual who is part of a team, is intimately connected to her work and to the work of that team. The host in Mickey's poem is 'team work' and the guest is 'change'.

Writing Ruby's poem

Ruby had a 'no-nonsense' approach and yet in her comments there was also a circling of identity (or identities) from teacher to leader to teacher. Although she readily shoulders the responsibilities of the principal Ruby was reluctant to be seen as 'a principal'. On the one hand, she was a strong decision-maker, but, on the other hand, in unfamiliar social settings she told people she was a teacher, to avoid any potential connotations of being a member of 'school principals' as a group. It seemed she had a highly developed sense of responsibility as the principal for what went on in her school, and also separated herself from (some) other school principals who she viewed as claiming status and perks without taking principalship seriously. Ruby held high expectations for herself and others.

Self-respect was a necessity in her view. The host in Ruby's poem became 'integrity' and the guest 'learning'. The words of Ruby's poem changed as I used some of her comments in other chapters. The final structure became two stanzas of nine lines, followed by two of six between lines in italics. This structure was to reflect Ruby's sense of order.

In addition, all six principals felt that as 'it'–being the only principal–they were separated from other groups in the school and in the school's community. I wanted to signal the significance of this comment and so included each person's version into his or her poem.

The poems

Nate's poem
As I grow I can see changes are happening within the school
It's the two growing together.

Go with ebbs and flows

Draw lines in the sand

Sleep is very important

Thinking about stuff

If we neglect ourselves

What's the point to it all?

We are not running a sprint

Be a real person

Board of Trustees, busy people,

They respect my responsibility

They don't have the expertise

Constantly looking forward

Pressure to conform—

Person as principal—

With status, with answers

Sacrificing themselves for the job

My role is to grow my teachers

I don't try and micro manage

I don't want to be overbearing

I like to let them take the reins

Keep them on board

Keen to be part of a team

It's also about being protected—

'Not going down that road'

Be aware of work-life balance

Know yourself, manage yourself

It's no fun lying awake at 4am

Neglect our families

I'd be failing as a person, as a parent

It's a marathon

As leader of the school

Pull things together

Overall the buck stops with me

Phone calls I don't take

Just so many interruptions

A lot of things I don't do

If you have staff with the expertise

People who have the skills

I make suggestions

Passionate about what they are doing

Feel valued—have opportunities

It's my job to say 'not now'

Variety

That is what I really enjoy about it

Can be a lonely job

If you are not careful

It's diverse work

What I am doing today

Impact on teaching and learning?

Communities change

Changes the community

Long-term residents

Principals have a unique view

A change of people

Those who are key or influential,

It's not just parents

Conversations others not privy to

With the community

Can become big

Can't be everything to everybody

What it means to be in touch

In small schools little issues

Mountains really quickly

When relationships are going well

Community relationships,

Board of trustees

Very much like a family

That is the strength in a small school

Staff relationships,

And children

Seeing children achieve,

Seeing children develop

Teaching makes children

It's why we are here

Seeing children grow,

Motivates me

Our first priority

We are all humans at the end of the day

Doug's poem
What I do works for me and I enjoy it. It's a complex thing.

People get a read off you about how things are going. The board want a confident principal. Staff want a confident principal. Children want a confident principal. They want to know they made the right decision to come here.

Be informed, organised, close to learning, have a good sense of humour, be connected as an important part of the community. It's an expectation.
Get a feel for what's happening.

I encourage talents and strengths, give people opportunities to engage and show their skills. Develop strengths in others then acknowledge and appreciate it, publically. The job is way too big for one.

You can't afford to be out of your school for two days a week. Tight teaching team, real team effort. Staff support staff, go above and beyond. Rural schools run on good feelings. Good times. Good laughs.

This can be a lonely job. You're different from other people. The group on the board. The group of staff. I need to maintain strong networks. The concept of critical friend. 'Hey what would you do about this?'

There's not many careers really where you can give it a bit of a twist. That sort of thing is a lot of fun—a creative outlet. I do enjoy the job and I think it's quite a good fit for my skill set and personality.

We are doing an awful lot of interesting and different things. We are working a lot harder than we used to and the expectations have risen a lot. There's just so much flexibility around it.

Principal styles differ, what suits one wouldn't suit another. How do you pick up the journey? In this particular place, what the particular aspirations are, the teaching strengths and culture. Can we all drum to the same beat?

Keeping the wheels of the machinery running well oiled and working

Dana's poem
Parents certainly know I know their kids. I am aware of all the quirks and traits
and anything else that makes up the kids

You need to have an understanding of the community
Engage families more in children's learning,
Increase participation in school events
Finances are a struggle
You know it's everybody's school -
Not the teachers',
Not who has been here longer

Technically the board should be doing
It, often, falls back onto the principal—
I'm not redoing data five times for different purposes
If the board is operating well—I don't
Volunteer to do board things

A small school, you get everything, absolutely anything
All at once. Dumped on your desk
I can't put that pressure on other teachers
We turn around and put it on ourselves—
Is it a principal thing, a female thing, or just a thing?
You worry about someone else coping with that stress
You just deal with it yourself

Principals are
Supportive of other principals
Generally, on the whole
The position of the role itself
Isolates you within the community

To a certain extent in the school even,
Regardless of school size you are 'it'
If you've got relationships with the kids,
And with the families sorted

Then the job is reasonably settled
Without too many surprises.
I'm available for kids

If it's kids I tend to deal with
It there and then
Because you never know whether it's something
To simmer and fester, blow into something larger
They think you're the fixer of everything

We deal with kids and we deal with learning—there should always be change

Sydney's poem
I am pretty sure we are on the right track.

I'd like somewhere bigger To be honest I am not as good a teacher as I used to be As a teaching principal I am Doing neither to the best I could do You know	I've a passion for Running a team Raising achievement for all kids I like the responsibility The team get the credit when things go well You get the blame all the time! To be driving the ship— It's a different thing
I have been in education less than 10 years I have a different perspective Different background Wife and family I am self-constrained about location I can accept that	Different Staff, pupils, challenges Different leaders for different circumstances You've got to find the match Different schools Different times
After a good think I do a lot of running around Making sure School moving forward My role as leader	We'll take advice We'll do our research We come up with ideas We make things happen By and large it works
I've got a pretty good opinion of myself But I don't see it being about me Running a school If you are on the wrong side of parents, antagonise teachers And kids don't like it	If you are meek and mild You're just going to get shredded You've got to be pretty resilient Fairly reflective Stay in touch, talk regularly I confer with a variety of people
Parents on the phone They'll text, come in to see me "Not happy about this"	I make time for them Usually that is for the better Take it seriously, take time

You are in the firing line. Pick your battles, fight them Win them, and move on	Usually complicated Sort it all out
You can be down in the weeds No clue about what is happening next year The daily grind You have to have thinking time It's interesting to hear other people's views	You are always visible Out there at the front You are at every outing In every class It's still you
I'd like to hear about that Being informed is important You don't have to charge ahead You take your staff, the community, The kids with you Do we need it?	I don't work weekends Well a bit of computer/internet on Sunday night doesn't count Regular things Strategic things Things that pop up
Would it improve our outcomes? Would parents understand it? It will happen in our time In our way, a way That suits us	You can't get a successful outcome for everything in the ideal time scale You get done what you can get done Generally more positive than otherwise So there you go
When you are the principal It's not a one-man band But the buck stops with the principal.	Staff changes, property management Disruption— Just another thing to manage— Quite exciting!

Obviously there is more improvement to be made. What's next?

Mickey's poem
We are our stories. Everything we do there's a story. There's a story somewhere
in this you know.

It has been so hectic.
I had a chest infection.
When you get to work
Put that on the back burner
Get through the day
Go home and collapse
When it catches up
It is not exceptional
In the teaching profession
We do it. I do it

Comedy is a great release.
I like ridiculous things
Watching some recorded TV
I like to meet people
I actually don't mind
Waiting in waiting rooms
Catching up on the trash magazines

II

If you arrive at school and you have a grand plan
You're a fool. It is not going to work
You can get to a meeting if everything's humming along
But a lot of it is social work actually, families in strife
That's the nature of the job and I have to adapt.
Teachers having leadership and the board stepping up
Has made a huge difference

No matter how well you get on with your parents
You do guard what you say
You need to have sounding boards

The sort of person you can nut out a problem with
There are always inherent dangers
In living in your community
Constantly under scrutiny

Because paper work is focused work
Done basically holiday times, weekends
Before and after school
It never gets done during the working week
I guess you could do it, if you really wanted to
Shut the door and not be disturbed:
It's my job. This is how I'm going to do it

III

We do things in small steps. Looking back we see the growth
They are long-term things. You know we're moving our thinking
Feedback from teachers, experienced teachers and teacher aides
How everyone supports everyone. These are our kids
Not 'those kids in your class' and 'these are my kids in my class'
We are a school small enough for everyone to know everyone

We will have new teachers then.
The things we did before as a school we have to carry through
Everybody knows a little bit. We put all those little bits together
We get collective wisdom
Even if you're an old tree, you still grow every year
The only person you can change is yourself
You have to change, change your response
I've got to keep on growing
And have the wisdom to call on what is relevant from the past

We can't see into the future but every day we can be the best we can
And use what are the best tools available to us.

Ruby's poem
We care about kids and I care about teachers.

I've been in leadership roles –

Principalship is another ball game.

You're 'it' in the school.

You're part of a team but you are still 'IT'.

I am pretty driven and motivated.

I rub shoulders with people, who are motivated,

Positive and like to learn.

If the principal is not hungry for learning

I don't think anyone else in the school could feel that way.

First and foremost it has to be about the students:

Creating the right conditions for them

About creating the right conditions for teachers

Getting rid of obstacles, the barriers.

Teachers have expectations of the leader

To make their work easier in terms of

Getting the outcomes they are striving for

 I like to be involved:

It is that interaction with people.

I keep in touch with the caretaker.

I think his role is like mine; it could be quite lonely.

I bring to my role high expectations.

Nothing I wouldn't do myself –

I don't want to be doing this twice.

Let's have this all coherent and manageable, a good system.

Your reputation is what you are doing:

Not the size of the school that you walk or drive to everyday.

There are principals there for the status,

For conferences, being out of school.

When people ask what I do I say *I am a teacher*

If we just crunch numbers then I am off overseas on holiday.

It is all about integrity and it's also about respect and acknowledgement, and honouring people as individuals with valuable contributions to make.

I Am A Principal: Self-appraisal

During the period of this study these principals all portrayed a well-developed sense of responsibility and were active decision-makers as school leaders. They were self-directed and self-aware. Each one had developed a depth of knowledge (and familiarity) with the 'need to knows' and the 'good to knows' about their schools as communities and of the wider community. Such capabilities involved concepts of *self* (as a professional and as a member of a family), an ability to manage emotions, and an understanding of work expectations (formal and informal).

When talking about *self-appraisal*, these principals also used three related terms. They used assessment language from the classroom (i.e. self-assessment). They used language from reflective practice literature (e.g. self-reflection), or they used Education Review Office language, referring to links with self-review explicitly. What is called self-appraisal in this thesis was, therefore, in the interviews, called self-assessment, self-reflection, or (informal) self-review. Self-review as discussed in this chapter is not be to be confused with the 'self review' promoted by Education Review Office as a school-based review process similar to an ERO review but conducted internally. For the purpose of this thesis I decided to use the term self-appraisal after the interviews were completed.

Self-questioning as self-appraisal

Principal self-appraisal for the six in this study was based on the asking and answering of questions through individual reflection, at times with trusted others. They spoke of this as an everyday aspect of their work. Such 'appraisal' typically took place prior to the development of planned action, as well as during/'in' the process, and later, even much later/'on' their actions. They all had a practice of questioning their approach, their decision-making, and their actions in the face of the consequences, predictable, speculative or actual. Ruby said,

> I review myself all the time, if I don't have an appraiser as the person who's going to help me work through difficult situations that I face, it's me sitting down and going—and I was taught this by a mentor, a previous principal who I worked for—"What could I have done better? What was my role in this? How helpful or unhelpful was I? What needs to happen next time? I take that responsibility and I find

we have made changes in the school as a result of that sort of reflection, which can be hard at the time. You're dealing with a difficult situation. … Make sure you've learnt from it and use it (Ruby).

Nate asked himself similar questions and included a question about the questions, "Did it work? How can I make it better? What would I do next time? What else do we need to do? What type of questions am I asking?" Self-appraisal questions came from appraisers, mentors, learning conversations in formal and informal settings, reading, and observations of another's experience.

These principals revisited decisions and actions many times. This review of their action(s) in what occurred, and the consequences, might happen through a conversation with a trusted colleague, friend, or a mentor who 'understood'. From her appraiser, Ruby liked the "How do you know?' questions: "How do you know that has been achieved?"; "How do you know that is happening in your school?"; "How can you have confidence and say, yes that is happening in our school?" Questions these principals asked in self-questioning were based on a consideration of whether different decisions and/or actions would have/could have resulted in a better outcome. That is, these questions were versions of, 'Could I have handled that better?' Or 'Did I make the right decision?' Doug told me he asked himself questions as a result of a study tour he went on, "late at night when you are thinking about issues, waking up and thinking about issues: how do we compare to that? What is happening at our school? What would they see if they came to my school?"

Some situations kept these principals awake at night. Nate had had the same experience as Doug of disturbed nights and also commented that what he determined to do did not always work out.

> I try really hard not to spend time worrying if I can. I might make notes of some things that I am going to do. Try and set my mind at rest. It's horrible. I've had my share of challenging situations and it's not fun lying awake at 4am in the morning thinking about stuff. It doesn't always work, the hard stuff, with those really difficult situations is that there is no easy answer. (Nate)

Other questions these six used included:

- What did I learn from that?
- Was that the right thing to do?
- Is there anything I would do differently?
- What does that look like in classrooms?
- What does it look like for learners?
- What could I see in our school as a visitor?
- What would another principal see coming through my school?
- What are the things we hold dear?
- Is it time to throw that out?

Individual principals were reassured about their past actions and affirmed in 'what was for the best' through self-questioning (and answering) particularly with a trusted other. Being questioned, even by themselves, also stimulated a principal's consideration of options, current actions and re-evaluation of direction for upcoming change. Principal self-appraisal was closely tied to what was happening for students and staff, and to sustaining positive perceptions of the school in the local and broader community.

Self-appraisal is unrecorded

The principals in this study did not keep journals or blogs. They valued face-to-face contact over digitally based interaction if possible. They tended not to record their thinking unless as an aspect of communication with relevant parties or in records or reports. Despite development of online communities for principals, these principals did not contribute. The principals in this study tended to go to web sources for just-in-time guidance, targeted information for their current focus.

The practice of these principals in 'not writing things down' for personal reflection also had other influences. One consideration was confidentiality. There is less of a perceived risk (likelihood of written notes being spread and misunderstood by those not involved) if your observations and thoughts are not recorded. Another consideration was that they did not want to share troubles beyond their trusted few: Ruby commented that 'troubles' can be fed by sharing them and grow in their significance for her, thereby taking up more of her time

and energy. Sydney commented: "I'm not going to gush to the world on my problems – we've all got enough of our own".

Self-appraisal is ongoing

The kind of decision-making and self-review that these principals were involved in can be illustrated by the following story. These are the edited words of one principal as he talked through his decisions in relation to finally standing down a student for violent behaviour. What becomes noticeable in the way he told the story is a switching between the 'I' of the principal's actions and decisions and the 'we' of the officially shared responsibility with the board of trustees. You can also hear the lingering question, 'was it for the best?' and that this principal was becoming more sure of the decision to 'stand up' and 'make the call' as the story is repeated, a form of reflection with others through the telling of stories, as well as a strengthening of confidence through review.

Standing up and standing down

> I seek advice; I don't pretend to know everything. We've had this minor crisis in the last couple of weeks, that's actually gone away. We had a violent kid that we'd been tolerating for six months – putting up with, managing. We had a very difficult family to deal with and then suddenly last week, we said, 'No more.' And we stood him down. I took advice from more experienced principals, because I thought, 'This is a big step.' It's a big step for the kid, a huge step for the family, because he's now got that black mark. We didn't do that lightly. So again I go, well this is uncharted territory for me, and what do we do? So we make a couple of calls, we go and visit a couple of people. I spoke to my senior advisor at the Ministry, and said, 'Look, am I over-reacting? Are we over-stepping it? Is it reasonable to do this in these circumstances?' Because a flow diagram doesn't necessarily give you the answers you're looking for. They all said, 'No, we're surprised that you've taken that long'. We took that action and it's actually worked like a charm, because the family came in for the Return to School meeting, everything was fine. They were putting in their own interventions because they finally twigged. There was an element of crisis, but then actually, the overall action that we'd taken, has set us on the road to solving that problem. So that was good to be able to talk through that with other people – not just staff here, we've got our own view — outside in the cluster. That's as good a self-review to me as anything. I know morally we've taken the right action, I mean legally who would know these days. For this boy, we've made the right decision. You're talking about quite an important element for the school, we've thought about how we acted as a school, and I've thought about what I did. So there's a bit of self-assessment going on there – but I'm pretty sure on this occasion, we've done the right thing. This was a big one. We make the wrong decision sometimes and we just deal with that and try and fix things up. But this was one occasion

where we had to make a big decision – and it was the right one. But we didn't do it lightly. We did it carefully.

Principals in this study were, as I had expected, very articulate about their decisions. They were able to rationalise and justify their decisions, plans and actions regarding how they dealt with or were dealing with issues. They could also articulate personal as well as professional considerations particularly around *work-life balance*.

Self-appraisal for self-knowledge

The balancing of work life and home life was an aspect of self-care. An ongoing practice of self-appraisal/self-review meant each of the principals in this study seemed aware of how the work of school principal "could take over". Ruby acknowledged the time investment in principal work when she said, "I see that the principal's role is not defined as set hours. It is defined by responsibilities. I went into the job knowing that." They saw the work could be 'all consuming' if you let it. However, each of the principals in this study had drawn some boundaries around their work time.

Each of these principals had defined to what extent they used weekends and holidays for work-related activities, and each articulated how "some principals" might but "I don't", "I can't" or "I won't". Their availability on weekends might be confined to school fundraising, sports events, or festivals (although Sydney perhaps spoke for all when he commented that doing school work on a computer on Sunday evenings "didn't count"). Each one tried to limit time spent on school work in holiday periods out of concern for being a good parent, having a life, or being refreshed. For these principals, taking care to control the extent of their working week was a conscious attempt to sustain their ability to do the work expected of them over a longer term. Nate, for example, set aside time with his family –all going according to plan –during any two-week holiday break away from schoolwork. He described principalship as 'a marathon, not a sprint'. Mickey used school holidays to pursue self-funded professional learning opportunities and referred to these occasions as 'her time'. Mickey spoke of being refreshed through her attendance at such events and said that she found inspiration in listening to speakers. Attending these types of events during term breaks also

meant she was away from the school and local community setting for a time. Ruby, on the other hand, was reluctant to go away over holiday periods during the school year, preferring to keep house and home in order so that she felt more organised during term time.

Each of these principals talked about the potential personal costs of principalship on other aspects of life (relationships with family members in particular), health and wellbeing. They had a strong sense of what worked for them when extra self-care was needed, although in each case this varied significantly. Ruby and Doug looked to taking care of their physical health and fitness. Ruby had taken charge of her health through a gym programme and spoke of how important going to the gym was for her sense of wellbeing. Doug also enjoyed outdoor and active pursuits as part of looking after himself and balancing the demands of being a school principal, husband and father. Nate and Sydney spoke explicitly of protecting "family time" to be good parents, and making time for "away from school" activities as a family and with extended family. Nate also commented on the benefits of extra sleep when he recognised he was "at that point". Mickey had been a principal the longest and lived closest to the school. She was another person aware of personal need for rest or recuperation ("catch up on TV" or "read a mag"). Dana had clear personal boundaries to "have a life" and both Dana and Ruby valued their privacy. Considerations of life outside of their school commitments also influenced these principals' expectations of teachers and how each supported others involved in the school.

Professional learning and self-appraisal
During the interviews the concept of principal-as-learner came through strongly. Ruby's reading, Mickey and her professional development courses and conferences, Sydney's and Doug's attendance at network events, Nate's talk about visits to other schools and time for reflection, and Dana's academic study all signalled their common interest in further professional learning. The variation in how they accessed this learning also signified their self-knowledge –of what they knew suited them as individuals –in terms of satisfying their desire for further professional learning/development and their current development needs.

Talking with others, listening to stories, workshops, presentations, seminars, conferences, reading books and online sources (e.g. Principal Sabbatical reports, TED talks, etc.), formal study and combinations of these were pursued in ways that suited them at different stages and circumstances in their careers. Out of the six people interviewed, two women were clearly 'readers', two men clearly 'networkers', and two, a man and a woman, emphasised the importance of having 'some time to think' away from the school site.

Professional learning could also include less formal situations such as a conference or study tour, locally organised seminars, network cluster meetings, and personal connections they had made. They all knew who they could/would talk to. Ruby had thought a lot about specific mentors in her professional life to date. She spoke of long-term professional relationships that provided 'a listening ear' or confidential advice. She also looked to the authors of professional texts (Jan Robertson) and 'popular' texts in educational leadership or business (such as Jim Collins) to prompt reflection on her identity and practice as an educational leader and school principal. Having a mentor and/or confidante who supported each principal's decision-making during any working day helped them gain perspective, and distance. It was interesting that, over time, incidents were often retold with each version shifting more towards its comedic elements. Most often the comedy encapsulated the humanity of the situation. In particular, Mickey and Sydney used humour as a release. Being able to laugh at past situations helped to position even serious episodes in relation to their relative importance –to put them in larger perspective –and to deflect, mitigate, or release the emotional load that these may have held at the time. The stories these six principals heard of other principals' situations also tended to put their current circumstances into perspective: "it could be worse". Ongoing learning through a variety of methods was a feature for each of the principals in this study. Mickey said about learning, "it is vital to me. It is my life blood*".*

Self-appraisal and gaining expertise
These principals were learning *in-situ* through seeking information and advice, professional reading and conversations along with their ongoing questioning of their own actions and with trusted others.

The 'successful' handling of past situations developed confidence in themselves, their skills and the procedures they used. These principals talked of how they learned from past incidents, including how to respond in the moment.

> I'm becoming less reactive, and a lot more reflective I suppose. I mean if we got a complaint from a parent now I would take more time to sit, think and contemplate than perhaps a few years ago when I was running around trying to please everybody. So you get older and wiser. I always make time for parents; I'm better at it than I was. I used to be a little bit reactive, 'cause I knew we were all working hard and trying our hardest. Now I'm saying, 'Well I'll go and have a think about that'. I'll do some investigation and invite them in the next day. (Sydney).

These principals also reported that past success increased the confidence and trust they felt from members of their school community. A high degree of trust allowed a principal more time to get advice and to react in a well-considered and confident way. They all took extra care when they perceived they had the time, often engaging in extensive research (gathering information) and deliberation (seeking and considering advice) to determine any 'next step'.

Experience in the job developed principal professional judgement. They learned where to seek advice and whom to trust. Principal experience in their current school-specific setting supported their understanding of the nature of the relationships between community members and how this understanding might influence options open to them for resolution of any issues.

The principals in this study were all different. Three were men and three women, at different ages and stages in both life and career. They lived and worked in somewhat different situations and settings at home and at school. These six had different ways of relaxing and accessing professional learning yet they all had ways of relaxing and of continuing their professional development. In trying to show this individual difference through research poems, common threads were revealed: a sense of isolation (not by distance but as the only principal), the importance of "humming along" or "well oiled" school operations and mood, tone, or vibe, an emphasis on students ("it's about students"), valuing teachers and an awareness of the significance of the community in which the school operates.

There were also similarities in these principals' levels of self-knowledge and self-confidence. Their self-questioning as self-appraisal was similar. None wrote a journal or kept any other form of personal written record. They all acknowledged their need for conversations with trusted others. Depending on the individual, these people may be an appraiser, mentors, ex-colleagues (now friends), principal colleagues in other schools, family and/or family friends. Each was developing their expertise through professional learning in, of, and through their school-specific setting. Knowing the individuals and groups in their school's community and having an understanding of the nature of that community assisted these principals in their management of the school. They conveyed their understanding of the importance of relationships, a strong sense of purpose, and the autonomy (and burden) of their responsibility as principal. The next chapter discusses what insights can be drawn from this study.

CHAPTER EIGHT

NOTICING AND RECOGNISING

A real voyage of discovery consists not of seeking new landscapes but of seeing through new eyes

~ Marcel Proust (1923)[37]

Introduction

Not all nations evaluate the work of school principals through appraisal of individuals. In the New Zealand context, where this study was conducted, individual principal appraisal has been undertaken in some form or another since education came under national government control through the Education Act 1877. This study was an inquiry into the extent principals' appraisal, as experienced by six New Zealand primary school principals in rural settings, reflects the purposes and practices of quality assessment, recognises the complexity of formal and informal expectations in school settings, and gives consideration to the human being undertaking this work. The research questions arising from this concern were:

- How do New Zealand primary school principals experience formal appraisal requirements and practice?
- How do New Zealand primary school principals experience being judged by local community members, specifically parents?
- How do principals judge their own work?

Within the education landscape expectations of principals, and judgements about whether they meet these expectations, were grouped in this study as coming from

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[37] In "Proust's seven-volume work, *Remembrance of Things Past* (or *In Search of Lost Time*). The quotation above is a paraphrase of text in volume 5—*The Prisoner*—originally published in French, in 1923, and first translated into English by C. K. Moncrief" Craig Thompson (December 17, 2013) available at https://clearingcustoms.net/2013/12/17/what-marcel-proust-really-said-about-seeing-with-new-eyes/

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three different directions. Formally, there are the broad and varied expectations in external regulatory requirements from the Ministry of Education. More informally there are the idiosyncratic expectations of boards of trustees, parents, and the wider community (along with public judgement through mainstream and social media). There are also principals' own professional and personal expectations of themselves.

My analysis and insights of interview evidence from six primary school principals was presented in the three previous chapters. In this chapter I discuss these insights under *aspects of formal appraisal*, *aspects of informal appraisal* and *self-appraisal*, and explore what this research contributes to reinforce, modify and extend what was previously known. Appraisal as a form of assessment and evaluation involves judgement, as such appraisal of school principals is a human activity. On the basis of evidence in this study, it is the people factors that matter more than the administrative and assessment aspects.

Aspects of Formal Appraisal

Criteria, evidence, the appraiser, purposes and appraisal design are discussed under aspects of formal appraisal.

Appraisal criteria

At the time of this study, appraisal of principals was conducted using the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals,* which has 26 criteria in four 'areas of practice'. The use of these professional standards was treated as routine by these principals. They had no concerns about these criteria being used in their formal appraisal as a sample or as indicators and they had no expectations of being appraised on all aspects of their work. The principals did emphasise how principals, schools, teaching teams, student cohorts, and school communities are all different and how the education environment is constantly changing, with the implication that different principals do things differently, and what is valued in principal work is difficult to measure.

Criteria for principal appraisal are a major focus in research and reports on research. In other contexts, research has found that there is little clarity across different sets of standards and frameworks (Bolden et al., 2003, the UK). In the United States, although similar aspects are covered in appraisal documents, there is variation according to if it is ability, actions or the outcomes of principals' work that is to be evaluated (Catano & Strange, 2007). For example, in 1995 Fletcher and McInerney suggested there were inconsistencies in the degree of alignment between official criteria and the sections in the assessment tool used for gathering evidence and reporting. There are also questions in the literature about what the judgements of the appraisers are based on, how different criteria are used and weighted in individual evaluations (Davis & Hensley, 1999). There has been neither greater consistency nor any greater fairness for principals regarding their appraisal from this research attention. The prescription of standards, development of standardised online assessment tools as a repository for evidence, and systems with one group of appraisers, such as superintendents that can be 'trained', has, however, made appraisal more work.

Efforts to develop leadership frameworks that capture all aspects of principalship have revealed how extensive and complex a principal's work is. Assessing every aspect would be unmanageable. There is also the danger that appraisal will be too narrowly focused on criteria that can be measured, which leads to distortions in our understanding of quality in principals' work. Control and accountability is aided by measurement, and measurement is a 'primary agent' of fragmented thinking (Senge et al., 2005, p. 192). Senge et al. go on to say how 'things' become reduced to smaller and smaller things as we think about how to measure them. Attempts to determine consistent and manageable criteria run the risk of evaluating principal work in a fragmented way which would undermine principal growth and potentially, professional conduct. Fragmentation (Bohm, 1996; Senge et al., 2005) is based on 'false divisions': "making a division where there is tight connection" (2005, p. 190), thus arbitrarily breaking what is whole into bits as if they were independent. Bohm (1996) emphasised that fragmentation occurs as the result of how we think about things as separate from other things, in the first instance for convenience (or manageability). But then "later we give this separation great importance" (p. 10). Bohm illustrates this concept of

fragmentation using a watch—if you separate the components of a watch, these are parts of a whole, but if you smash a watch the fragments are unrecognisable bits that do not now contribute to the whole.

Disparate and narrow aspects (e.g. student attendance data, records of emergency drills having been carried out or teacher appraisal undertaken, as is the case for principals in Washington State) can come to be added up with implied significance. Eisner (1976, p. 137) said, "quality becomes converted to quantity and then summed and averaged as a way for standing for a particular quality from which the quantities were initially derived." His warning is that quantified data may no longer represent the quality being evaluated. Biesta (2008) calls this 'normative validity': "whether we are indeed measuring what we value, or whether we are just measuring what we can easily measure and thus end up valuing what we (can) measure"… "so that targets and indicators of quality become mistaken for quality itself" (a 'performative culture', p. 35). If the criteria for principals' appraisal is only a sample, as is appropriate for a form of assessment, then the chosen criteria can become weighted disproportionately to their significance in the overall work. I have adapted Crooks on this point to apply specifically to appraisal of school principals.

> In our accountability systems, a broader sampling issue becomes prominent. Usually, these systems select certain indicators as the important ones to be focused on … but now we have important judgements and decisions being made with the weight entirely placed on these areas, taking no account of performance in other areas. The results can be highly misleading. (2003, p. 5)

Performance can be measured by adding up fragmented measurable units with no account of larger systems or how organisational and structural networks contribute to success (Ball, 2001). Individual performance comes to serve as a measure or display of quality for a whole of which, for example, the principal is only a part. An appraisal of one principal could be taken as a measure of quality of the whole—the school or an education system. The concept of fragmentation is then relevant to principal appraisal for two reasons: one, for the warning against highly detailed appraisal criteria that actually fragment and misrepresent

principals' work; and the other, the potentially negative consequences of the weight of responsibility placed on one person, an individual principal.

The tension is between what is of value in principals' work and what is measureable. What is measurable in terms of criteria influences what is measured and what is measured influences principals' work priorities: to perform what is to be measured or to perform their work (made to measure 'designer leaders' who perform policy 'implementation' (Gronn, 2003)). Crooks (2003, citing Onora O'Neill, 2002) asserted:

> [i]n theory again the new culture of accountability and audit makes professionals and institutions more accountable for good performance. This is manifest in the rhetoric of improvement and rising standards, of efficiency gains and best practice … But beneath this admirable rhetoric the real focus is on performance indicators chosen for ease of measurement and control rather than because they measure accurately what the quality of performance is … In the end, the new culture of accountability provides incentives for arbitrary and unprofessional choices. (p. 4)

His comments warn of the nature of appraisal criteria when these are based on ease of measurement and greater control. Dewey (2011[1916]) had made a similar observation.

> The control afforded by the customs and regulations of others may be short-sighted. It may accomplish its immediate effect, but at the expense of throwing the subsequent action of the person off balance. A threat may, for example, prevent a person from doing something to which he is naturally inclined by arousing a fear of disagreeable consequences if he persists. (2011, p. 18)

These principals did express concern about some aspects of conformity and control through measurement but this was not in regards to their own appraisal. Reporting student achievement according to the National Standards policy was an example. Ruby said if it becomes *all about numbers* then it is time for her to resign and move on to something else. But Doug's comment suggested he expects

there is 'a way', not yet determined, to measure principal work: "my role is a very complex one, with lots of different aspects to it, so I think to measure your performance, you need a complex set of data … we haven't cracked it yet".

Appraisal evidence

Evidence for formal appraisal of the principals came from document analysis, conversations, observations and survey of opinion of interested parties, typically teachers and parents. The principals' own self-reporting, in appraisal conversations, was part of this. It was the appraiser in this study who collected (independently or from the principal) and analysed any evidence. Reference to any evidence used was made in the appraiser's final report. Appraisers' comments were broadly summative and descriptive under the four areas of practice in the Professional Standards. The nature of the evidence and the amount of work involved was not seen as an issue for the principals in this study.

In contrast, in other contexts the gathering of evidence for appraisal judgements is the work of the principal. In Washington State (WS), according to superintendents I visited, four to six items of evidence for each of the eight standards were required. That is, approximately 40 pieces of recorded events (such as meeting agendas and minutes, emergency drills, state testing and teacher appraisals having been carried out) or other items (records of student attendance) are curated into the online evidence template over the course of their school year. However, WS principals commented that evidence that counted was just a record of tasks they needed to do anyway. They also commented that they hardly see busy 'supers' so gathering evidence was essentially a functional task to tick the boxes. There is a view in principal appraisal that 'more evidence' provides 'better evidence'.

The importance of school leadership for student achievement, a focus on standards in policy, and the perceived measurability of student achievement, has given rise to student achievement data being used in other contexts e.g. in some states in the US. Rowan and Denk (1984) concluded some time ago, "the increasing accountability of principals for instructional outcomes is overdrawn and unrealistic" (p. 354). Although similar conditions apply as in the US— student achievement is privileged in New Zealand, and targets for student

achievement are used in school strategic plans—student achievement data was not used directly as evidence of principal quality in this study.

The appraiser(s)

How successful or effective a principal is perceived to be depends on the judgement of the appraiser. In other countries, district or regional education authorities are the employer of school principals and, therefore, the district superintendent, for example, can undertake a principal's appraisal as his or her line manager. In the New Zealand structure of self-managing schools, principals have two 'bosses'—the school's board of trustees and the Ministry of Education. A school's board of trustees employ their school principal but the Ministry sets salary rates and pays principals in the public/state education sector. The Ministry also determines principal work responsibilities through the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs), the National Education Guidelines (NEGs), Professional Standards for Principals, and the Principal Career Matrix[38].

Ayers (2012) said, about principal appraisal while drawing on corporate sector management practice, "the boss alone has a) accountability for this person's contribution to the organisation's success and b) a comprehensive overall understanding of the person's role within the organization" (p. 12). In Ayers' view, a person's 'boss' has responsibility to undertake their performance appraisal. It is arguable, in New Zealand's case, whether representatives of either the school board or the Ministry of Education would be able to meet the second of Ayers' criteria. It is unlikely that a Ministry of Education representative would have enough local knowledge to be able to make the judgements required.

It was unclear in this study if these principals saw two lines of authority as an issue. The question of who is a school principal's boss in the New Zealand primary school setting is pertinent when it comes to identifying appraisal responsibilities and lines of authority for summative/accountability purposes.

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[38] There are likely further guidelines and monitoring on the way with the new (2016) Education Council New Zealand with its Ministry of Education mandate "to build an agreed leadership strategy. The leadership strategy will guide the future investment to support and grow leaders and leadership across the profession." (https://educationcouncil.org.nz/content/leadership-strategy).

Ball (2001), however, claimed that the organisation of power is less important under audit or performative culture: "it is the database, the appraisal meeting, the annual review, report writing and promotion applications, inspections, peer reviews that are to the fore" (p. 211). Thus he questioned if the organisation of lines of authority (power) matters so long as the administrative record keeping for accountability is completed.

There is a difference between evaluating someone's work and providing advice and guidance. Different groups of appraiser, and different individuals, can contribute different things in terms of advice and guidance. Five of the six principals saw using a variety of appraisers as having benefits. Peers were valued for their understanding of the realities of principal work and current challenges, the mutuality of arrangements and/or support and their value for money. Contracted appraisers were seen as having value in their 'outsider' perspective and because they were seen as more 'objective and trustworthy' by boards of trustees'. Having the board chairperson undertake the principal's appraisal gave her/him a better idea of the regulations, requirements and realities of principals' work, and improved communication and understanding between principal and the board (p. 137). ERO (2014) reported that using the board chair as the principal appraiser also gave a more visible sense of the school board's responsibility for supporting principal work and school staff. The board chair could also provide knowledge of the school's community. However, evidence of ERO advocacy along with the principals' prediction of Ministry intentions signals that the contracted appraiser will be the only choice in the future. Perhaps contracted appraisers will be Ministry representatives and therefore, principals' line managers. If the board is deemed capable enough, as employers, to recruit an appropriate person as their school principal, board chairs might be encouraged to undertake appraisal.

Appraisal purposes
Researchers (Cardno, 1999; Eddy, et al., 2008; Harlen, 2005) have claimed that without an understanding of the differing purposes of formative judgements of development needs—*looking forward*—and summative judgements of performance—*looking back*—appraisal systems are unlikely to serve either purpose well.

In contrast, in these principals' experience of the purposes for mandated annual formal appraisal, there was less tension than the literature suggests. Principals in this study understood the requirement for appraisal and seemed happy to comply. In their view, under the level of guidelines at the time, principal appraisal was meeting the Ministry requirement for accountability *and* principal development, perhaps because the process was meeting their need for confidential conversation and feedback. Two of the six commented that other principals they could name could benefit from the process and resulting professional development. Appraisal of primary school principals in this study was then serving both formative (informing professional learning) and summative (accountability) purposes.

Under closer examination, however, the experience of these principals suggests, as Harlen (2005) warned, when trying to serve both purposes the summative-accountability purpose of principal appraisal proves to be the most compelling. The school board's influence on performance agreements and professional goals, despite technically being an employer, was overshadowed by the Education Review Office (ERO). All six principals in this study understood that ERO school reviews do *not* officially appraise the principal as an individual, and yet all said that the resulting reports were operating as appraisal of principal work. The smaller the school the more this was understood to be so. The information and judgements contained in publically available reports of ERO school reviews significantly influence the environment of principal work, and the work of other school staff, the tenor of public opinion, nature of media reporting, and regulatory sanction. Consequences of a poor review can include an increase in Ministry surveillance and interference regarding administration, curriculum and general school operations. An ERO school report impacts on levels of trust between the school and the school community and influences school and principal reputations with impact on student enrolment, and the ability of the school to attract teachers and private resources. Such consequences impact on the agency and authority of school leaders. As Sydney said, "the school gets the credit when things are great and the principal gets the blame when things go wrong". Thus when ERO declares things are not going well, the significance for an individual principal's career is very high. ERO reports are taken very seriously.

While ERO is not part of the appraisal of principals in any regulatory sense, their views and reviews influence principal appraisal. Through attempts to work efficiently, the principals in this study were electing for less variation in goals related to individual professional learning needs and the needs of their schools and students. Ruby spoke of the amount of time she spent on school development goals versus her own development goal, wondering if she should have just conflated these two after all. Doug had designed his appraisal report format to include the evidence that ERO looked for. The voluntary alignment of principal professional goals with performance and school improvement goals, as the result of ERO's influence, suggests there is evidence of 'McDonaldisation' (Ritzer, 2008). Ritzer suggested that efficiency and predictability, in guidelines and systems, provides a sense of security for workers, managers and the 'consumer'. Predictability is also reflected in 'same-ness' over time and locations. Control, Ritzer said, is desired by managers and 'experienced' by workers and customers and supported by monitoring and inspections. His concern was that these influences were contradictory to sustaining "thoughtful, skilful, creative and well rounded" people (p. 17). In other words, the processes of McDonaldisation undermines these attributes.

It is significant that these principals recognised an ERO review as principal appraisal. In effect, there was more expectation and tighter control of appraisal of principal work than the mandated annual requirement by the Ministry of Education suggests. The Ministry might argue there is room for local implementation, concerns and needs but without any obvious support or encouragement for variation in school and principal development, the main driver for performance goals tends to be ERO expectations and their monitoring processes, resulting in greater conformity than these principals might feel. Busy principals seeking to 'work smarter' and more efficiently might leave the way open for subtle shifts over time towards a degree of conformity that is considered both reasonable and voluntary. In this study the simultaneous reduction in the number and diversity of individual professional goals is likely to restrict formative purposes and influence professional growth.

Feedback

If the goal of appraisal is to help individuals improve in their practice of school leadership then a formative dimension to principal appraisal is essential. This has been understood for some time (see Ginsberg & Thompson, 1990; Radinger, 2014). The kind of feedback needed to support ongoing learning is not yet a significant feature of adult (principals and teachers) experience in education. Clifford and Ross (2011) signalled the importance of principals receiving timely and trustworthy feedback given that Friedman had found "principals report that they have few sources of trusted feedback on their practice and commonly feel isolated from colleagues due to the rigor of their position" (Friedman, 2002, p. 2). Ayers (2012) commented,

> professionals in education know the essential role of feedback for learners … why do we find ourselves in the paradoxical situation where the school environment is feedback-rich for the kids and feedback-poor for the adults. (p. 6)

Formal appraisal processes in this study often included surveys of parent opinions on the principal's performance. For one of the six principals parent feedback through the appraisal survey contributed to the identification of performance goals for the year. For the other five this feedback was used as evaluative evidence (as proof of performance). All the principals spoke positively about this community input. They wanted to know how their work was viewed and what these groups saw as weaknesses or concerns. Such a survey process could be called 'a 360°' although only two used that phrase for this kind of feedback. Taken from human resources or industrial psychology, 360-degree feedback, also known as multi-rater feedback or multi source assessment, is feedback gathered from an employee's manager and peers. The 360° feedback model is generally promoted on the desirability of multiple sources of assessment evidence.

The use of this business practice for performance review is not suitable for principal appraisal because of the way opinions of interested parties are used and because New Zealand school principals have two bosses. Ayers (2012), who was speaking specifically about principal appraisal, objected to parents' opinions being used as evidence in summative judgements but was in favour of opinions

being sought to help identify professional development needs. He objected to 360° feedback being used for an overall summative judgement of a principal's 'satisfactory competency' because, he said, "feedback for development and feedback on performance have relatively little in common" (p. 3) with each other. Ayers (2012) indicated that those who provide feedback need to understand "well enough" the work responsibilities of a principal. Another concern is the vulnerability of such a process to the negative opinions (disgruntled or opinionated) of a few individuals (Davis & Hensley, 1999). Ayers was also concerned that a 360° assessment for judgement of principals' work may convey mixed messages about who is the principal's 'boss', which may influence a principal's status at the local level.

The six principals suggested that they received limited positive feedback. However, parent feedback on surveys, ex-parent feedback, and compliments heard in social contexts that connections chose to pass on did provide principals with positive comments. These six principals shared a reluctance to take pleasure in compliments. They may be downplaying the positive comments that they receive as a way of showing confidence. It could be argued that this is a trait that is normalised in New Zealand. They also all spoke of how their level of confidence inspired others' trust and confidence in them and the school. By projecting such confidence they may convey that compliments are not needed. These principals commented that they did not *need* such feedback and they were not looking for 'all positives' or 'a gloss over lightly' in their appraisal. Still it was evident that principals appreciated positive feedback. Although the appraisal report would put in writing some affirmative statements, it would also identify professional development needs (areas for improvement). Overall there was reported little positive recognition for principals as a result of a satisfactory appraisal.

Support for principal quality

Researchers have identified four ways that formal appraisal can be a form of support (Eddy et al., 2008): recognition of competency, signalling needs, in solving problems and as support for a principal's wellbeing. Consistent with Starr and White's study that found principals in rural Victoria identified a lack of support at state and district level, principals in this study did not express confidence in Ministry of Education support. They did recognise their school

boards' support in the financial backing of their professional development activities.

School boards have multiple roles in ensuring the quality of their school principal. They recruit this person from candidates who apply for the position. They have an official role in developing an annual performance agreement with the school principal. They have responsibility for the school's appraisal policy and procedures. The board chair may undertake the role of appraiser. Members of the board are also parents who are likely to be surveyed for feedback during an appraisal process. The board reviews and signs off the annual appraisal report. It is the board that approves any resourcing including time away from school or funding required for the principal's professional development. School boards also seem to be in favour of developing principal quality. ERO (2014, p. 29) reported that one-quarter of boards wanted more focus on principal learning and development goals and on identifying appropriate professional learning and support.

Within appraisal it was principal-appraiser interaction that principals' most valued. The appraisal process included opportunities to talk that supported problem solving and wellbeing (see Chapter 5). Conversation was the core aspect of appraisal for the principals: to talk and be listened to (someone "you can talk about your work with" (Ruby, p. 142); "have some learning conversations with" (Nate), p. 140). This is consistent with the findings of other studies such as Parylo et al. (2011).

> Principals reported that when their evaluation was formative in nature and involved opportunities to collaborate, have open dialogue, and engage in reflective practice throughout the evaluation process, they were able to address and improve areas of concern. Moreover, our participants shared that the developmental nature of their evaluation supported their growth as professionals. (p. 234)

These insights suggest that the interaction between principals and their appraiser is an aspect in principal professional growth including their levels of self-knowledge and resilience. In these interactions principals were not being looked

to for something—an answer, a decision, an action, or advice and guidance, to carry responsbility or be accountable (to take the blame) in that moment. As Max van Manen (2002, p. 29) said of young people, "being seen is more than being acknowledged … It means being confirmed as existing, as being a unique person" (p. 31). Instead of recognition as "the fixer of everything" (in Dana's poem) the principal would be recognised as a person in these conversations with appraisers.

When 'support' is discussed in educational leadership literature the reference is usually to leadership preparation and formal professional development programmes. The relational support encouraged in these programmes is typically mentoring. An appraiser may not be a mentor. The support the principals in this study appreciated was not only from mentors. They also appreciated the more informal and collegial support of a trusted critical friend in their personal and/or professional networks. Having this kind of relationship with someone was very important. Consequently, there is a need to ensure that principals, particularly those in rural areas and/or small schools (or due to personal circumstances), are not without this kind of support. Through appraisal policy and design, awareness of the value of this kind of support could be increased, and principal-appraiser interaction be ensured as a feature of principal appraisal.

There might also be the need to consider other ways to support those in the complex and demanding relational role of school leader. One principal suggested:

> I think it probably comes under individual principals as to how much they need and what they need. Probably if the Ministry really cared about principal welfare, if they forked out for say regular appointments with a counsellor, a psychologist. Some schools will pay for a principal. They make sure that the mental health side of the principal is taken care of, I guess. It's not a requirement by the ministry that principals do it. I think regardless of the decile that the school you work within and the community, there are always going to be those sticky issues.

This principal says regardless of the school every principal will have issues, while also suggesting that s/he does not need this kind of organised support.

The opportunity for face-to-face meetings with a trusted, informed, understanding and confidential someone to help individuals make sense of their work

experiences for learning, self-knowledge, resilience and ongoing professional growth might be an investment with recruitment and retention benefits. The Ministry of Education has recognised the significance of a school principal's influence on teachers and on student achievement (e.g. Robinson et al., 2009), so investing in such a form of support would demonstrate their respect for this work and the importance of individual principal's wellbeing for sustaining this influence.

Valuing appraisal design

Appraisal design matters because the process influences principals' ability (time and effort) to do their job. Appraisal processes can be time consuming and outcomes can undermine or enhance principals' commitment. In the experience of principals in other contexts, in educational assessment research and in research on appraisal of principals (in the US in particular), there are warnings about the impact of greater control through prescription of criteria, measurable (and fragmented) evidence, and limited interaction between appraiser and principal.

There is also the question of the suitability of annual development goals, for example. Crooks (2003, p. 3) put it succinctly, "[d]eep learning takes time and focus, and is undermined by overemphasis on short-term goals". These six New Zealand principals told me that due to the size of the project, interruptions in the school year and changes, such as in reporting requirements, staffing, or policy, it was natural that some of their performance goals roll over into following years. They felt it was understood that some developments take longer than a year. Change can also relieve pressure to address particular needs. In Doug's case one particular family shifted away and that lessened, if not dissolved, any urgency to his need to address staff knowledge about that family's culture, which had been one of his goals.

Cranston (2013), in the Australian context, asked principals to stop talking of accountability requirements (which he seems to accept as normal no matter what they might be) and instead demonstrate their values, beliefs and principles. He suggested principals 'go beyond' compliance with accountability demands to the learning, risk taking, and creativity needed to accommodate "the realities of the expectations *and* demands on school leaders" [emphasis added](p. 139). Cranston

wrote about the use of student achievement data as an aspect of principal and school accountability and presented this as a *professional responsibility*. He was trying to contrast a 'functional' regulatory compliance with principals exercising their discretion to "make a difference to students". For Cranston it was about how principals think ("to change the mindsets of school leaders") and about their effort and commitment to put students first, despite the nature and/or extent of accountability requirements. He did suggest this would be a balancing act for school leaders; in itself this is an admission that central policy is not necessarily in the best interest of students.

Other research commentary (Elmore, 2007; and earlier work of Gunter et al., 1999) has also suggested that principals accept the *reality* of a demanding accountability environment. There are alternatives. Thrupp and Wilmott (2003) called instead for market reforms of education to be challenged by educators. They questioned those that ask for principals to focus on individuals who are succeeding in meeting high demands of current policy frameworks, and on what makes these 'exemplary' school leaders successful in their efforts. Opportunities to challenge reforms include a review of what is asked of principals, questioning the responsibilities of other groups in education such as the Ministry or ERO, and evaluation of accountability design including appraisal.

Control and trust act against each other in relationships. Kouzes and Posner (2007) suggested that highly controlling behaviours ("inspecting, correcting, checking up" (p. 291) have low credibility because control signals a lack of trust and this impacts on the confidence of the person being controlled which in turn lowers the controllers' trustworthiness and credibility. If the person feels that their supervisor suspects she or he will fail unless monitored very closely Kouzes and Posner suggested it works the same way as high expectations do—the person 'lives up, or down, to expectations'. High levels of control result in the individual's withdrawal and the cessation of independent decisions and initiative. Yukl and Lepsinger (2005), with their business focus, identified "efforts to improve efficiency can degrade human resources and relations" (p. 366). People can come to feel undervalued, with significant negative consequences including the undermining of the intended aims of efficiency efforts. External control and monitoring can undermine the very actions that are sought, raising questions

about the impact, 'harmful' or 'good', of assessment or appraisal design (Crooks, 1993).

Crooks (2003) proposed six criteria for what he called 'intelligent accountability':

1. Intelligent accountability preserves and enhances trust among the key participants in the accountability processes.

2. Intelligent accountability involves participants in the process, offering them a strong sense of professional responsibility and initiative.

3. Intelligent accountability encourages deep, worthwhile responses rather than surface window dressing.

4. Intelligent accountability should recognise and attempt to compensate for the severe limitations of our ability to capture educational quality in performance indicators.

5. Intelligent accountability provides well-founded and effective feedback that promotes insight into performance and supports good decision-making about what should be celebrated and what should be changed. Judgement without help is a poor accountability model.

6. Intelligent accountability would find the majority of participants are more enthusiastic and motivated in their work (or at least not less enthusiastic and motivated).

These six criteria can be summarised and applied to appraisal as involving principals in meaningful ways in appraisal of their work to preserve trust and support commitment, and to consider the influence and limitations of appraisal processes and outcomes. The extent of New Zealand Ministry of Education requirements for principal appraisal at the time of this study could be judged as meeting these criteria. Weak areas would be in the provision of support and celebration. Although suspicious of where Ministry policy trends were taking them, these principals believed in the process for their own professional growth and in building trust and confidence between school boards and principals. Principals were concerned about predictions that in future the Ministry would

only 'approve' of a contracted external consultant as their appraiser but were not concerned at the slow disappearance of individual professional goals that do not align directly with school developments and/or policy implementation.

Increased central control would also be contradictory to the promotion of self-managing schools in government rhetoric and reduce the status of what might be local board priorities. Smyth (1993) claimed that self managing schools policies are not about giving away power of central control but about dismantling support for school staff and diffusing criticism of government authorities. Robertson and Dale (2002) write of self-management as 'localising' problems thus with public perception of local rather than central control comes local, and individual, responsibility for school 'failures'. Differences between schools then become opportunities for rating and ranking school 'quality' and disrupt government efforts for the perceived efficiency of consistency.

Schools and their communities represent a great deal of variation. Variation creates difficulty for monitors. Greater consistency across principals and schools, it could be assumed, will make it easier for government agencies in charge of monitoring, such as ERO in the New Zealand context, to judge school compliance with policy implementation. Policies however, are not implemented. Wheatley (2006), Ball, Maguire and Braun (2012), and Thrupp (2000), make a distinction between implementation and enactment. Policies, are not simply 'put into practice' by people following instructions but are interpreted and 'enacted' in interaction with personal, school specific, and broader context factors.

Aspects of Informal Appraisal

It was in discussion of informal appraisal that things got really interesting. The principals felt judged by parents and other members of the school community relaying information, asking questions and making suggestions. They felt judged through what they did not know, had not noticed or had not recognised. They felt judged on their responses (how they 'handled it') including decision-making, actions (or inaction), and communication. Principal success at the local level then depends on being informed, having the local knowledge to recognise and respond

to events and having professional connections for timely, dependable and useful advice and guidance.

Principals in this study were able to keep things on track, helped by members of the school and the school's local community who passed on information that alerted them to take action. They spoke with some irritation and defensiveness of situations when they were informed 'out of the blue' or 'second-hand', but they always recognised that it was very important for them to be informed as soon as possible. An explanation for this 'disappointment' at being told something they did not know could be in their recognition of the significance of *knowing* for their success as school principals, and the high expectations (or pride) that they have of themselves in knowing their community. Aspects of informal appraisal 'criteria' discussed are interactions and relationships, decision-making and management including communication, and developing professional judgement.

Interactions and relationships
Significant reference has been made in theoretical and professional literature to the importance of relationships in principal work. An emphasis on 'relationships' has supported Educational Leadership's continued attention on personal characteristics of principals, arguing that characteristics such as 'approachability' influence a principal's ability to form and sustain positive relationships.

In this study, relationships were shown to be significant in both the number of contacts that principals had and the influence of relationships on a principal's work.

> You can't have relationships without communication but you can have communication without relationships. And we have so many relationships in this school. If you start putting down who you have relationships with, it's one very big tree, a lot of leaves on it. (Mickey)

These principals talked about interacting with a large number of individuals and groups: teachers, students, parents, board of trustees members, caretakers, bus drivers, teacher aides, and the school administrator. The list continues with colleagues from other schools, NZEI Te Riu Roa and School Trustees Association advisors and members, Professional Learning Support personnel, Ministry of Education personnel both locally and centrally based, Education Review Office

personnel, other government officials, and sources of support such as police, social workers, youth aid, Child Youth and Family personnel, District Health Board personnel including psychologists. Other people that were sources of expertise and targeted advice and guidance, both face to face and through the use of information and communication technologies, included researchers, business owners, salespeople, and community leaders. The sheer number of people involved provides school principals with challenges 'in relationship' as well as presenting potentially multiple sources of concerns to be addressed or information to be acted on. The evidence in this study supports relationships as of core consideration in management, that is, how principals are able to negotiate expectations and get things done.

This study also highlights that relationships in principalship are not limited to a principal's relationships with others. It is important for these principals to have knowledge of the relationship *between* members of groups in a school and in a school's community, and how different groups relate with each other. Mickey and Nate, for example, spoke of two distinct groups in their local community and Sydney spoke of how some strain was showing in 'established' parent attitudes due to a growing school roll and new parents joining the school's community. Parent views matter especially if the parent is a member of the school's board of trustees because "views count pretty much on the basis of how an individual judges the 'backing' of the views and the implications of the backing" (Blumer, 1969, pp. 201-202). This is the case whether individuals and groups know and support each other or do not know each other and/or do not agree with each other.

Relationships that impact on principals' work then *also* include relationships between staff, between board of trustee members, between parents and between members of groups in the school's community. Differences or friction between parents, between a mother and a father of the same child, between parent groups or between community groups not only influence how a principal might go about his or her work but also add to a principal's workload. Different groups within a school's community can have different views on what constitutes appropriate consequences for student misbehaviour, the significance of traditional school or community events, school uniforms, and appropriate fundraising for school activities.

210

These principals saw themselves as behaving in a professional manner and holding themselves to professional standards, particularly when it came to confidentiality. They talked more about conducting themselves professionally than they talked about *being* a professional and they were acutely aware that as individuals they were required to behave in a professional manner but those they interacted with were not. This is particularly relevant in relation to board of trustees' members who are essentially parents first. Principals in this study commented on the increased partiality of parents towards what they see as best for their child(ren), while school staff are required to be impartial.

A principal's success at relationships, even while a significant focus of principal appraisal, depends on the principal being alerted to/informed about events, issues, concerns, rumours, even Facebook conversations, that directly and indirectly affect the school. Using the concept of relationships present in leadership frameworks and professional standards as an aspect/criteria of quality principalship glosses over the complexity of principals' relationships with the community, however the extent of community is conceived, and how the school's community influences the nature of a principal's work. It would also be difficult to reduce multiple interactions and multiple relationships to a single measure. The significant impact of community views on the principal and the strengths and nuances of such local influences on principal experience of their work as school leaders *and* on the judgement of this work has to date been under estimated, or at least under researched.

Principals' decision-making
Stories of principal responsiveness to alerts reflected the decision-making that these principals do on the ground in their school. Some of this decision-making is rapid and on the spot and some requires research, which may include conversation with a mentor or colleague and/or consultation with community, depending on the issue. It takes time for information and different points of view to be gathered, questions to be asked and answered, and reflection on the options and predictable consequences and implications to be weighed. Still principals often cannot wait for advice before taking initial steps. It matters if these people are seen as rushed, defensive, hesitant, or alternatively thoughtful, decisive, informed, and resourceful. If a principal's response is not seen as timely or she or he is seen as

not doing enough, matters can escalate with the Ministry of Education, Education Council, or the police becoming involved in a formal, professional, or legal complaint (see the *Playgrounds, buses and the police* story, p. 156). Matters can also escalate locally while a principal seeks formal help to deal with a situation and struggles to get practical support (such as in the *Standing up and standing down* story, p. 185). The perceived pace of principals' decision-making and actions towards a resolution is important.

The principals in this study processed information and made decisions largely in their heads and within daily work. Their professional judgement was responsive in-situ rather than documented or relying on pre-determined procedures, making it difficult to share those duties or use technology to ease their workload. They spent little time on 'autopilot' and did not rely on set procedures (a checklist, see *Standing up and standing down*, or a ring-binder, see Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008). They talked of how situations sometimes escalate when they attend functions away from school. Also if these principals did not have local knowledge they would find it hard to weigh influences, and to consider how any decision might impact on other decisions and on 'the school's' sense of direction and momentum.

Davis and Harré's (2007) pertinent comments suggested how involved such complex decisions can be.

> In making choices between contradictory demands there is a complex weaving together of the positions (and the cultural/social/political meanings that are attached to those positions) that are available within any number of discourses; the emotional meanings attached to each of those positions which have developed as a result of personal experiences of being located in each position, or of relating to someone in that position; the stories through which those categories and emotions are being made sense of; and the moral system that links and legitimates the choices being made. (p. 22)

The principal has to weigh individual or divergent group influences and assess what counts at the time and regarding that particular situation. Blumer emphasised

the influence of the 'powerful' in questions involved in this judgement (assessment, diagnosis, recognition).

- How much influence do those who have this opinion hold?
- Who are they? Are they going to get "vociferous, militant and troublesome"? (Blumer's words).
- What groups do they belong to? Who do they know?
- Who do they represent?
- How organised are they?
- Is this opinion likely to be remembered or forgotten? (adapted from Blumer, 1969, p. 201)

Principals' decision-making is complicated by being privy to other people's private information: "a privileged insight", as they identified it, into other people's lives. Keeping the confidentiality of individuals who shared such information leaves a principal unable to defend their decisions publically, even in the face of being judged harshly by others who have more incomplete information.

Principals in this study were sensitive to the likelihood of escalation of any concern beyond the school. They were acutely aware of the need to maintain 'good relations' with those around them and how easily trust can be undermined and rumours spread. They were particularly conscious of the power of bad publicity in undermining a principal's reputation, the reputation of other staff and the school generally. The principals acknowledged that an increase in the level of risk, through media interest and social media and the likelihood of legal challenges, made them more cautious in their decision-making. On the other hand, experience of positive outcomes from past decisions gave them confidence. Thus in-work experience can both enable and constrain a principal's ability to decide, and to act.

Management in principalship

Management turned out to be a significant and essential part of these principals daily work, with consequences for how these principals felt judged by parents, and how they judged themselves. Management is different to administration, involves noticing or 'reading' situations and professional judgement.

Principals in this study had a highly developed sense of responsibility. In Cranston's call for principals to focus on their professional responsibility there was also the implication that if a principal does not do more than required and negotiate potentially conflicting demands, then s/he is a 'reactive manager' rather than a 'proactive reflexive leadership professional' (2013). Thus in Cranston's work there is a slight against the management activities of principalship. Education leadership literature typically privileges leadership aspects of principals' work over management aspects. As Thrupp and Wilmott (2003) put it "[l]eadership is regarded as something more than and different from management by many writers" (p. 142). Mintzberg (1990[1975]), however, stated, "[t]he literature of management has always recognised the leader role" (p. 168), suggesting the relationship between leadership and management was as leadership within management.

Management is not equivalent to administration. Principals in this study spoke of 'administrivia' as being of no immediate use for improving the teaching and learning situation for students (consistent with principals in Starr & White's study, 2008), while at the same time they recognised the importance of 'a paper trail' in handling critical incidents. The principals indicated that there were ongoing changes in the forms and templates required by the Ministry, and the use of digital technologies, online repositories, and a variety of software applications for requirements (consistent with Riley, 2017). Perhaps principal resistance to prioritising administrative-accountability illustrates a values-led approach, as advocated by Branson (2005) and Duignan (2012). It certainly represents a tension in priorities between providing *proof* of performance, and performance. However, it might also indicate that these principals' administration routines reflect their understanding of the importance of being present, onsite and managing.

Managing is about noticing, recognising and responding. Boud and Walker (1990) and Bell and Cowie (2001) identify the importance of noticing. For Boud and Walker (1990) it was the learner doing the noticing in order to enhance learning from the experience. In Bell and Cowie's (2001) work it was the classroom teacher doing the noticing within formative assessment practices to more finely tailor teaching and learning experiences to enhance student learning. Boud and

Walker (1990) proposed *noticing* was a selective and active process, meaning to become aware whether planned, casually, or even through the unexpected. An individual notices his or her own thoughts, and emotional and physical responses. Noticing how they act or feel in a situation can "alert them to what is influencing them within an experience" (p. 69). Schön (1983) pointed out emotions such as surprise, disappointment, frustration, in moments are the types of noticing that can lead to reflection on action.

Mickey's mention that a certain parent talking in the car park was a sign for her, and Nate's comment on the importance of knowing who had an influence on others in the community are examples of local knowledge of what is important for these principals to notice in their particular school specific settings. In Starr and White (2008), principals were aware of the need "to keep an ear to the ground to know what's happening in the community that might spill over into the school" (p. 6). Similarly, noticing the sign of a particular parent in the car park and recognising what it meant gave Mickey information she could do something about.

Boud and Walker (1990) suggested that it is not possible or even desirable to be noticing everything as this inhibits interactions and intervention in one's experience and that "learners often ignore much of what is happening" (p. 69). Bell and Cowie (2001), perhaps influenced by Boud and Walker's cycle for learners, emphasised that teachers notice more than they recognise or respond to. Bell and Cowie suggested that teachers do not always recognise what they notice or recognise the significance of what they noticed. Dewey (1934) also distinguished between seeing and 'recognising'. Dewey (1938a) asked that educators use information from observation, from past experience and from others' experience to understand the significance of what they noticed, what drew attention or what was seen when their attention was drawn. Any early classification of what is noticed may prematurely 'fix' that categorisation making it less likely to be returned to or re-evaluated. Boud and Walker pointed out that being named makes what is noticed familiar and that what is expected is more easily recognised. We read or interpret interactions and events according to our presuppositions. As such, our expectations can be self-fulfilling and lead to confirmation and reinforcement. In other words, what we notice and recognise influences how we respond. These authors give us insight into potential errors of

215

judgement for school principals in undervaluing the sign or information, or jumping too readily to an early conclusion.

Duignan (2012) wrote of principals 'reading' and 'evaluating' situations in order to modify their actions (he uses the term 'behaviour'). All four diagnostic leadership tasks identified by Heifetz and Linksy (2002) involve noticing and recognising in order to respond.

- Distinguish between technical and adaptive challenges;
- Determine where people stand in relation to relevant deeply felt issues;
- Understand underlying meaning of the comments of others (interpretation); and
- Pay attention to the behaviour (clues) of those in authority.

These diagnostic leadership tasks align well with what assessment authors understand about the formative processes in learning, Eisner's connoisseurship (1998), Dewey's understanding of learning from experience, and Mintzberg's understanding of management. Mintzberg (1990[1975]) would include 'noticing and 'reading' of situation under his management activity of *handling a disturbance* and the KLP (MoE, 2008) would place these aspects under *problem-solving*. Managerial interactions that require professional judgement could also be called *experiential knowledge activities* after Mumford, Peterson, Robledo and Hester (2012). Mulford et al. described such activities as allowing leaders to make sense of complex unfolding situations, to understand the expectations of others, and to formulate new purposes, directions, projects and new practices.

Leadership, management and administration are aspects of principalship and therefore, it is probably not always helpful to separate these. It is not new to suggest that leading and managing are both important (Yukl & Lepsinger, 2005). It is the narrowness of any definition, Yukl and Lepsinger (2005) argued, and the enactment of these roles that makes the difference. These authors proposed it was time to find a better way to conceptualise the roles of leadership and management or, they suggested, include leadership as an aspect of management as Mintzberg proposed. The consistency of Mintzberg's (1990[1975]) observations of the manager's job with principal work in this study suggests it is time to

reconceptualise the role of management in principalship. Although Mintzberg has been criticised for separating the 'doing' work from the 'whys' and 'hows' of managerial work (Gronn, 2003), his description of managerial work resonates strongly with the descriptions of principals' experience in this study.

- Managers work at speed, busy with multiple activities that are brief and discreet/fragmented.

- Managers spend most of their time in verbal interaction arranged on an ad hoc basis and favour verbal contacts such as telephone and face to face over documentation. Managers do not write down much of what they hear and may not know everything but likely know more than others in the organisation. Mintzberg describes this as being the nerve centre of the organisation: "communication *is* their work" (1990[1975], p.169).

- Managers want to encourage the "flow of current information" (p. 164) and are privy to a lot of information that is only available to them because of their position. The "prime uses for this information are to identify problems and opportunities and to build mental models" of how things work, how people are responding, what is changing, and how changes affect the organisation (p. 166). In large organisations and more diversified organisations, managerial roles that depend on insight become more difficult to sustain.

- Managers seem to plan "implicitly in the context of daily actions" rather than in set-aside periods.

- Managers are vested with formal authority over an organisational unit. Principals have responsibility for "day to day management of everything that happens in their schools" (MoE, KLP, 2008, p. 7) though they also need to have proposals approved by school's board of trustees, the Ministry and in the immediate term, ERO as monitors.

- Managers must perform ceremonial duties and act as figurehead and spokesperson.

- Managers are in contact with an incredibility wide range of people and take a key role in liaison, spending time with peers and people outside the organisation much more than with "superiors" (Mintzberg's word).

Mintzberg (1990[1975]) said of managers: "they are important to the smooth functioning of an organization and cannot be ignored" (p. 168). Managers are "perpetually *scanning* [noticing, emphasis added] the environment" (p. 169) for information, solicited and unsolicited, from a network of personal contacts. Not only are these people frequently interrupted, they are generally happy to be. He describes the intensity of managerial activities by their "brevity, variety and fragmentation" (1973, p. 51). Gewirtz (1998), though, specifically challenged the idea that an emphasis on "good management" was not enough to address underachievement and social and educational inequalities: "it is not a question of *either* school management and teaching *or* society that contribute to school success or otherwise of schools" (p. 440), it is both. (In fact, she suggests, it might be the other way around with perceptions of success attracting 'successful' school staff. It could be that perceptions of school success influence people's perceptions of principal and teacher success). Both principals and appraisers are in the *milieu* (Boud & Walker, 1990). They both are included in "creating interaction which is the experience for his or herself and for others" (1990, p. 66). Thus the appraiser is also a part of the whole—part of the interaction, the situation, the community at that time, and part of the context.

Context of principals' work

Principals in this study indicated their awareness of Ministry policy and moderated policy drivers with specific contextual, circumstantial, and relational knowledge, and relevant perceived intermediate and longer term needs. An example of this was Nate's response to an appraiser's recommendation to provide more detailed student achievement data in his reports to the board of trustees in accordance with Ministry guidance (see Chapter 5, p. 131). In that situation Nate weighed a concern for positive relationships between school families over the (more distant) policy advice.

Context matters. This has been acknowledged in previous research on the school-specific site (as an organisation, e.g. Bush & Glover, 2003), about schools in rural

settings (Starr & White, 2008), or on a national or even global education level (government policy and structures, e.g. Bottery, 2006). At the local 'community' level it is not uncommon for schools in rural settings to have clear groups divided by socio-economic status, if not values and aspirations. Different groups, such as landowners and farm workers, local business owners and unemployed, church attendees and the non-religious, can have different views. Doug, Nate and Dana spoke of how members of their school's community with historical connections, such as landowners, have expectations of the traditional activities of school life and the role the school plays as part of the community. Meeting, or not, these expectations will influence how a principal is judged by people including parents. This study draws attention to on how the judgement of principals' work is 'responsive' (see Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins, 2008) to context at the local community level in which the school operates.

Aspects of Self appraisal

Self-appraisal is an appropriate term in reference to principal assessment and evaluation by self and for self. I settled on the term 'self-appraisal' for this study for the softer humanistic connotations and because it causes less confusion than other options such as self-assessment, self-review, self-monitoring and self-direction. For the principals in this study, self-appraisal did not occur in isolated sessions or at scheduled times. They did not use a named routine of reflective practice. Self-appraisal for them was not a separate event from everyday duties. No one mentioned Schön, or any other name associated with reflective practice, as an influence. These principals were, however, reflective in their practice of principalship. Whether in the moment, with others, or in the middle of the night they asked themselves key questions and worked with their experiences for knowledge (including self-knowledge) and professional growth.

Self-appraisal as questioning

The principals used questioning for their self-appraisal, either by themselves or with a trusted other. Self-help books on leadership recommend the answers to key questions help achieve success as a leader: "know where you want to go, know where you are now, know what you have to do to get from here to there, and do it!"

(Taylor, 2002, p. 23). These are similar to central questions in classroom assessment. Hattie and Timperley (2007) developed a feedback model that used the three questions: "Where am I going?" (What are the goals?), "How am I going?" (What progress is being made toward the goal?), and "Where to next?" (What activities need to be undertaken to make better progress?)"(p. 86). The six principals considered these questions for 'the school' ("How are we going?") as well as for themselves. The questions the principals in this study used to work with particular experiences can be summarised as: "What happened?" "What was my part in it?" "What influenced my decisions?" "What was I trying to achieve?" "What could/would I have done differently?" Principals needed a confidential/trusted listening ear, a sounding board (a critical friend, Costa & Kallick, 1993), and those participating in this study had each developed their own *friend*ships over time. When questioning their decisions and actions with others these six principals looked for reassurance that the call they made was reasonable and plausible while also remaining open to revision in their thinking, and to making alternative decisions in future situations (see Chapter 7).

Principals in this study avoided writing as a form of self-appraisal or reflective activity (a form of talking-to-self). They did not journal online or offline. They suggested that because situations changed so rapidly such entries would promptly be out of date, were time-consuming to write, and did not help them. In fact, there was a sense that written records could reveal self-doubt and detail information used in decision-making that might make them vulnerable to any breaches of confidentiality and security. What might be evident in such records? Answers suggested by evidence in this study could include that principals have good days and bad days (like everybody else), principal decision-making is complex, and that individuals are not always as confident as they project themselves to be.

'Self-appraisal through questioning' was how these principals worked with their experiences to build knowledge and understanding that they can then be drawn on in the future. Self-questioning with a trusted and informed other was particularly valued for professional growth. These conversations gave principals opportunities to review past situations and decisions, to reframe and reshape episodes and dilemmas, and to decide on strategies and next steps with a trusted other. They looked for, and valued, talking things over, getting advice on options available to

them, and receiving guidance on regulatory and legal aspects involved in their decision-making. In order to make the most of experience, as Boud and Walker (1990) emphasised, the person's associated feelings need to be dealt with. This was an essential feature of the way principals in this study learnt from, and left behind, experiences and affirmed their own agency. In sharing with others stories of critical moments and their decision making, which they may still be responding to or dealing with, these principals were able to gain perspective and some distance, particularly through humour. The process of self-appraisal with others develops our confidence in our own judgements and impacts on our sense of self-worth. It has been noted in a variety of literature, (Csikszentmihalyi, 2003; de Botton, 2004, Glasser, 1998), that when we feel others accord us worth and respect, this positively influences our own sense of self-worth. Such interactions occurred within the formal appraisal process, through their own professional and person contacts, and even through opportunities such as participation in this research. All principals I talked to appreciated confidential opportunities to talk.

Self appraisal for learning

Requiring a record of a person's self-appraisal in an appraisal process might indicate that she or he is a learner, but it is being a learner that is most important for ongoing professional growth. Self-development and ongoing learning are seen as key to educational leadership success (Cranston, et al. 2007; Kouzes & Posner, 1995; MoE, 2008). Each principal in the study had their own combination of sources of professional development that suited them as individuals in their situation. Whether as readers (Mickey and Ruby in particular), Internet browsers (to differing extents, all of these principals), networkers (Doug and Sydney), through being a mentee or student (Nate, Mickey and Dana) or combination of these, each principal had individual approaches that provided them with desired learning opportunities according to their own assessment of their needs. Each one had access to new ideas and guidance through their own avenues and valued this learning.

Biesta (2009) prompts the question, what are these principals, as learners, learning? On the basis of this study I suggest what these principals were learning could be called 'School Principal Professional Judgement' (SPPJ). This phrase reinforces rather than blurs the link between school leadership and school setting.

It includes the *principal* who has the responsibility of this work and captures the formal knowledge of regulation, policy, systems and processes that can be learned through formal study (pre or post appointment). The word *professional* highlights principals' duty of care and the ethical aspects of decision-making. Principals make judgement calls, and effective principals are described as having good judgement. To exercise 'good' or 'sound' judgement, school principals read, are sensitive, notice and recognise, diagnose and appraise situations, circumstances and the needs of individuals and groups day to day. Principals respond in ways intended to sustain and enhance a positive sense of direction for the school.

Leadership within the work activities of school principals used to be referred to as 'educational school leadership' (Gunter and Fitzgerald, 2008). Gunter and Fitzgerald described how dropping of the word *school* has unlinked a leadership 'position' and 'expertise' from its school setting. This small shift could be viewed as inconsequential, a convenience, but this omission makes it easier to talk about educational leadership in generalised ways and to transfer notions of 'leadership' 'executive' and 'entrepreneurial' skills from other sectors (see Gunter & Rayner, 2007). To leave out specifying 'school' as the field of leadership then disconnects the 'leader' from the setting in which leadership is enacted (leader of who? Biesta, 2009), and weakens the importance of expertise in educational practice for leaders in educational settings.

Principals draw on personal resources, knowledge and skills, "to handle tough situations" (Gunter and Fitzgerald, 2008, p. 273) and these resources used to be called 'professional judgement'. Using the term school principal professional judgement (SPPJ) to describe this 'in-time' and 'in situ' decision making not only works to describe the activities ('experiential knowledge [building] activities') of school principals as managers but also to describe setting specific decisions on 'how' to reach the goals/outcomes set by others (including government authorities). Gunter and Fitzgerald (2008) said, "no matter how much training and close inspection takes place there are still spaces for interpretation, and because real life is not rational and linear it is highly unlikely that one-size-fits-all approach actually fits the local context" (p. 273). School Principal Professional Judgement is an expertise developed *in* experience and *by* experience in specific local contexts.

Valuing self care

Although Notman (2010) claimed that New Zealand principals had little understanding of self-development, the principals in this study have the qualities he identified as important: self-knowledge, reflexivity, and resilience. Reflexivity through self-questioning and conversations with a trusted other, along with other sources of learning, helped each one develop their professional judgement, self-knowledge, and sustain individual well being. These principals demonstrated their resilience through their ability to see things from another's perspective, through humour in stories they told, and in their aspirations (for the future of students and for the school). However, these qualities are not something a person secures permanently: self-knowledge is an ongoing project and, to a certain extent, situation dependent. Resilience can be undermined, and work pace and stress can impact on reflexivity.

Previous research has found that principalship comes at a high personal cost for individuals in this role. Gronn (2003) argued that principalship under self-management educational reforms demanded much of school leaders. He described this work as 'greedy work' meaning, "a role occupying an ever-expanding space requiring intensified and sustained 24/7 performativity-driven levels of individual engagement" (Gronn & Lacey, 2004, p. 406). Other studies and reports have also identified principalship as highly stressful (Patuawa, Robinson, Bendikson, Pope & Meyer, 2013; Riley, 2017; Wylie, 2012). Riley (2017), who conducted a survey of New Zealand primary school principals' health and wellbeing reported "approximately 72% of school leaders work more than 51 hours per week during term, with 25% working more than 61 hours a week. Even during the term break, half worked more than 25 hours a week". She noted that "the greatest reported cause of stress is the sheer quantity of work, closely followed by a lack of time to focus on teaching and learning" (p. 12). Interestingly 'government initiatives' were reported as the third-highest cause of stress. Riley also concluded that for school principals, "work-family conflict is far too high, at 2.2 times the rate of the general population" and "burnout of school leaders is 1.7 times the rate in the general population" and "significantly higher in rural and isolated areas where there is less professional support" (pp. 12-13).

In contrast, the principals in this study had determined professional boundaries around their work life and work hours. Though they acknowledged that being a school principal could be "all consuming" (see Chapter 7), they had established what they would do and what they would not do for work. They were aware of their individual warning signs that signalled a lack of sleep, a weakening in their ability to cope, or health issues. Three participated in regular physical activity as an explicit response to this awareness (Doug, Ruby and Mickey). Nate talked of principalship as a marathon not a sprint (see Nate's poem) and how he would not be a good principal or a good parent if he was too tired. All six had the level of self-knowledge they needed for self-care in order to reduce stress and maintain health. In a similar way to advice given on airlines—"put your own oxygen mask on first and then seek to help others"—these principals saw that sustaining resilience was necessary to do the work. This fits with the contention of Skovholt and Trotter-Mathison (2011) that self-care is an ethical imperative for those in the 'helping professions'. These authors cited Barnett, Johnston and Hillard (2006).

> Self-care is not an indulgence. It is an essential component of prevention of distress, burnout, and impairment. It should not be considered as something 'extra' or 'nice to do if you have time' but as an essential part of our professional identities. (2011, p. 166)

A confidential critical friend, humour and/or exercise, and home and family time were key aspects of self-care for all of these principals.

Chapter epilogue
The principals in this study were generally satisfied with the process and outcomes of their experience of formal appraisal. It turned out that aspects of formal appraisal such as criteria, evidence, and reporting mattered less than the interaction between principal and appraiser. Confidential conversations were at the heart of appraisal processes for these principals. An appraiser's knowledge of the nature of schools and communities, like the one she or he worked in, helped create mutual understanding, establish confidentiality, trust, and professional confidence. Overall this knowledge provided a level of support for individual principals. External monitoring by ERO's school review and public reporting, however, was a powerful influence for the alignment of principals' development

goals with government policy initiatives, resulting in increased signs of McDonaldisation (Ritzer, 2008) across particular (and different) principals and schools.

Out of the four aspects of formative assessment that Clarke (2005) emphasised, it was feedback that received the most attention in these principals' experience of being judged. Principals wanted to know the feedback on development needs within a formal appraisal report and feedback from parents. They felt there was limited positive feedback passed on overall and certainly no significant recognition or celebration in response to 'successful' formal appraisals. A shared understanding of formal appraisal criteria was not seen as an issue at the time of this study. Peer appraisal was valued and self appraisal was ongoing. These principals judged themselves using questions either on their own or with a trusted other, as the core of their self-appraisal. Interaction with a trusted other, who listened and acted as a sounding board, whether through appraisal, or personal or professional networks, was valued for developing self-knowledge, for learning and for sustaining resilience. It was the people aspects of interaction, presence, trust and acknowledgement that mattered in the principals' experience of being judged. Three factors of quality assessment in compulsory education settings for students—a good match with what is important in the work, manageability, and consistency—are problematic in appraisal of principals. The principals felt that (any) professional standards criteria would not represent all they do, or necessarily what was most important in their work. Manageability of accountability requirements, literature suggests, leads to a focus on measureability, that can turn into fragmentation and misrepresentation of quality. Consistency across principals, schools, communities, policy contexts and appraisers is likely to prove impossible. According to much of the literature reviewed in this study it would be undesirable.

Appraisal of principals' work involves judgement. The principal and the appraiser are connected, in relation to each other, and within a school setting and broader policy and social context. To come to 'know', such as making a judgement through appraising the quality of principals' work, entails weighing and selection, and, by consequence, discarding of other interpretive possibilities. Davis, et al., (2008) stated, "At issue here is the realisation every act of knowing is *partial*- in the two-fold sense of 'incomplete' and 'biased'. Such selections are not innocent

225

nor benign" (p. 7). Intelligent judgement of a principal's work would recognise the human need for involvement and connection, for self worth through agency and recognition, the connectedness and dependence on setting and context, and the limitations and potential harm of monitoring and control.

These principals understood that any judgement on the basis of appraisal of their work was relational, situational, and temporal. Because each appraiser is different, the interactions and the relationship between appraiser and principal are different. How the qualities of a situation are described, interpreted and evaluated will also vary (Eisner, 1976). Appraisal judgements 'depend' on the school-specific situation of the school, and the community in which the school operates. Because they experience ongoing change—in the student cohort, in the community, and education policy for example—any summative judgement will reflect the circumstances of a particular time and place.

If formal appraisal of principals is mandated then design matters because:

- What is assessed has a powerful influence on what is valued and prioritised in practice.
- Any process requires resources, not least the principal's time and effort.
- Outcomes impact on principal (the school and by extension, the education system) in a number of ways including agency in decision-making (trust, and support), capacity to undertake the work (ongoing learning and professional development opportunities), and reputation.

Informal appraisal is revealed *in* principals' interactions with parents, and other members of the school community. Informal appraisal judgements are also *of* principal interactions and relationships, decision-making and management including communication. Noticing and recognising the vibe, tone or mood of individuals and groups, as well as responding to questions and concerns is part of principals' daily work (management). Spoken and unspoken 'feedback' is also a sign of how well s/he is doing, and how well the school is doing. Consistent with expectations in the KLP (MoE, 2008), principals understood that 'everything' that happens to do with 'the school' was seen as their responsibility. They also hold this expectation of themselves. The principals felt judged by 'out of the blue'

226

information and ideas from parents and other community members, which suggests how important it is for principals to know what is going on. This study, therefore, sheds some light on the ways that community expectations, opinion and feedback influence principals' work, with evidence of the connection between management activities and principals' developing professional judgement and expertise.

In Chapter 9 I focus on the contribution this study can make in consideration of the future of principals' experience, professional development and appraisal policy.

CHAPTER NINE

AT THIS POINT LOOKING FORWARD

Seeing requires sustained attention to the qualities of an object or situation; it is exploratory in character. Recognition is the act of assigning a label to an object. Once assigned and classification has occurred, exploration ceases

-Elliot Eisner (1988, p. 17).

Through a sense of care for the human being who has the expectations and responsibilities of principalship and my understandings from educational assessment, I explored judgement or appraisal of principals' work from three directions –formal, informal, and self. My project was to explore the extent 'appraisal', as experienced by New Zealand primary school principals in rural settings, recognises the complexity of expectations in school settings, and gives consideration to the human being undertaking this work. The overarching understanding arising from this research is that, *it is people that matter*.

In this chapter I review the study and its contribution, discuss some caveats to the use of the evidence and implications of study outcomes, and make some recommendations arising from the learning and for further research.

Review of Study

John Dewey (1859-1952) talked of individual experience as social and active *interaction* between people in situations (1938). He advocated examining the present with foresight and consideration for the future as key to refining our activity in the present for 'better' human experiences (2006[1916]). Reading Dewey from a contemporary standpoint, my research question(s) sought to re-consider 'normal' practices of judgement of principals' work.

Any practice becomes normalised until it is again the subject of attention. De Bono (2008) stated, "attention is a key element of perception. Without the ability to direct attention, we see only the familiar patterns" (p. viii). The most important fact about attention is "the way in which it fashions what *we take to be* the world

before us" [emphasis added](Gergen 2009, p. 83). Our view is partial and particular to our time and place. This study in itself is partial, of a particular moment in a particular context. Evidence came from the experience of six principals of rural primary schools in New Zealand and one doctoral researcher's time and effort over a relatively short period (2013-2017).

Educational accountability for school staff has not been short of attention in New Zealand. The introduction of Professional Standards for Principals, an annual performance agreement (2008), more sophisticated requirements for appraisal of teachers (1996), and processes of School Self Review (2014) have been moves that increased accountability for school staff. When commencing this study, I anticipated increased government attention on principal quality and since then the Ministry of Education's Four Year Plan (July, 2016) has identified 'quality pedagogical leadership and management' as one of the 'enabling conditions' for achievement of New Zealand's education goals. And the Education Council of Aotearoa New Zealand has been charged with fostering leadership in the sector.

It was important for me from a contemporary pragmatist standpoint to consider historical aspects of, in this case, New Zealand's self-managing schools policy. An outcome of neoliberal assumptions of market economies, this educational reform of the late 1980s-1990s saw the intensification of the complexity and regulatory expectations for primary school principals (Brown-Ferringo & Allen, 2006; Duncan & Stock, 2010; Gronn, 2003; Keown, et al., 1992; Pont, et al., 2008; Robertson, 1995; Wylie, 2011; 2012). As a summary for the breadth and complexity of the forces of neoliberal economies, neoconservative societies, and audit culture I used Ritzer's (2008) McDonaldisation model. Ritzer's four features, efficiency, calculability, predictability and control, were flags that helped my identification of trends indicating a potential future for principal appraisal. In this case, I sought understanding that could inform the decision-making of principals, their professional development, and appraisal policy.

Another important thread for this study was the consideration of language. Slobin (2000) contended "one cannot verbalise experience without taking a *perspective*, and further, that the language being used often favors particular perspectives" (p.

107). In the case of appraisal of school principals, the concept of judgement is relevant both for the appraiser and for principals.

Using a contemporary-pragmatist approach also includes humanist views, and personal and researcher positioning or reflexivity. In part this is a reflection of my own biography and values, but also in large part because the school-specific situation (including the implications of fewer staff, flat management structures, principals' level of involvement in school and community) of smaller rural school principals meant these people were the ones I chose to invite to participate in this study. Three interviews as method, abductive processes of analysis, and three text forms in representation were chosen as an appropriate enactment of this approach to research.

Recognition of contribution

For this exploratory study, expectations and judgements of principals' work were seen as coming from three main directions: formal requirements, local community expectations, and expectations these principals had of themselves. A number of smaller contributions are made under each of these three areas of research attention.

These New Zealand primary principals' experience of formal expectations and appraisal indicates that the appraiser matters more than the criteria principals are appraised against. What knowledge and understanding an appraiser brought, or developed in the case of a board of trustees' chairperson, was significant, while the criteria within the *Professional Standards for Primary Principals* were recognised as only ever representing a part of their work. While the principals in the study had few concerns with the use or content of the standards as the core criteria at the time of this study, they all expressed both a sensitivity to and concern about possible changes. They were against the use of a single group of appraisers, the external consultants, because, in addition to a concern over cost, they were concerned about a narrowing of point of view, of understanding, and of opportunity for support. Opinions that count in appraisal and whose judgements are used are complicated by questions arising about lines of authority for appraisal and professional development when New Zealand principals have two 'bosses', their school's board of trustees and the Ministry of Education. It was evident at

that time that *who* judges principals is more significant for these six than by *what* criteria they were judged.

Appraiser-principal interaction matters more to these principals than the evidence. This interaction included feedback and advice but it was mainly the opportunity to 'talk things over' that was valued. Such interaction with a trusted appraiser provided them with valued help and support. Help came in the form of advice and suggestions. I have used the term support often to cover a variety of aspects. Through this interaction, support is a source of recognition of the principal's contribution and an affirmation of his or her sense of purpose (cf. Tomlinson, 2002). This support helps principals recognise their choices in decisions made and their own strengths and weaknesses. An appraiser can support a reconsideration of the match between an individual principal and the expectations of the school's community, and also provide challenge through posing options and stimulating ongoing professional growth. An appraisal process without interaction is more 'task and tick', and more work for principals.

Formal appraisal processes, at the time, were working for both formative and summative purposes for these six principals. Through the criteria of school review and the power of their opinion in their publically available school and national reports, ERO exert both a form of principals' appraisal and pressure to increase conformity across schools. The Education Review Office (ERO) needs to be considered when examining principals' appraisal in this context.

Judgement of principals is not confined to formal appraisal but is ongoing and integral to principal work. Consideration of such judgement at the local informal level in this study highlighted the significance in their effectiveness and success of the community in which the principal works and their management activities. Interactions with parents, for example, provide principals with feedback and information and a greater understanding of local expectations. Leadership frameworks and educational research agree that the context (educational system or school as a community) that the school principal finds her/himself in is significant. This study provides some evidence that the expectations, values and relationships of the community in which the school operates are a powerful element in any individual principal's success. These principals felt judged by 'out of the blue'

231

information and events, which indicated how important it is for principals to know what is going on. Thus this study also sheds some light on the way community expectations influence principals' work, with insight into the connection between management activities and principals' ongoing professional growth (including professional judgement, expertise and self-confidence).

Evidence in this study supports relationships as a core consideration in principal work. There is also some evidence here that their work depends on the relationships between other individuals and groups in the school's community. Using the concept of relationships as one criterion of quality principalship oversimplifies how the school's community influences the nature of a principal's work and influences principal appraisal.

The six principals in this study were all different. They had different characteristics and yet all practiced versions of self-care. In educational leadership and policy literature, there is a blurring of the personal and professional self in what is asked of the one principal in a school, and what is looked for in appraisal – judgement –of their work. Drawing attention to personal characteristics in various leadership styles and of individuals judged 'successful and effective' could serve to increase demands on 'the person' in principalship. The principals in this study saw sustaining resilience as necessary in order for them to be a principal. They had the self-awareness and self-knowledge to sustain a level of self-care through self-imposed boundaries to their work lives, which, along with other ways, fitted their circumstances and interests. Through their levels of self-knowledge these six principals were exhibiting one characteristic: courage (a word used by Day, 2005). Not stoic courage or conditional courage based on hopefulness (although both were there) but the courage to be present one day at a time while keeping an eye on the future, accepting the unexpected, and making allowances for the humanity of other human beings, while sustaining their own sense of purpose.

This study also contributes two reminders. Although leadership models and appraisal policy in the literature put the focus on the individual in principalship, it is difficult to separate that one person from the workings of the whole. This whole includes the school as an organisation, as part of the local community in a region,

as part of a national education system and society. The second reminder is that judgement is exercised in any form of evaluation. Therefore, government control is unlikely to result in the levels of calculability and predictability (consistency) that would make any purposeful accounting system for principal quality straightforward.

Reservations (some caveats)

Like all research, this study has particular characteristics, which are the result of intentional choices that I, as researcher, made to fit the research design to my purpose. Any research limitations are a consequence of my decisions and are related to my own level of capability as researcher towards achieving what I set out to accomplish. In traditional qualitative theses, a limitations section would serve as an apology for the study not being quantitative, or more positivist. In this contemporary traditional doctoral thesis in education, this section *tells* (rather than shows) reflexivity in acknowledging my influence as the researcher, and also serves to caution readers over claims that might be made from this research.

The following caveats need to be taken into account in any use of this evidence for purposes other than those of this study. Authors in educational assessment (Crooks, 1993; Harlen, 2005; 2007; Kane, et al., 1999) also warned of the need to monitor what consequential interpretations and decisions are made on the basis of evidence gathered for a specific purpose, particularly when such decisions are high stakes. Any subsequent decisions need to be appropriate given the purpose, processes and evidence gathered.

Firstly, in this study I interviewed six school principals, one participant group. I deliberately focused research attention on the human beings who are the subject of principal appraisal and on their experience(s) as they articulated them. Interviews held three times over a 14-month period increased both the richness and the credibility of this study but it is a small study in size and duration. I also acknowledge the limits of my skill in story and poetry writing. To compensate for this, I declared my aims and described my actions in crafting these forms, and recognise the privilege of representing the principals' experiences using their words.

I am making no claims of generalisability to the experience of other principals or to the application of this research to other contexts. This study was conducted in the mid-2010s in the Waikato region of New Zealand under the government policy, societal relations, and economic situation of the time. Six primary school principals within this nation's education system were the participants with one well-supported doctoral researcher (myself). This research highlights the importance *of interaction* and *of situation* in appraisal of school principals. Consequent attempts to generalise from the experience of these principals to other principals and to apply research insights to other contexts could be problematic.

My research concern was with appraisal of principals' work but limiting my focus to appraisal aspects was difficult. The two, work and judgement of work, are obviously linked. Thus, at times, I do talk about principals' work when I resolved that it was important to do so. There is much more to say about principals' work as a result of this study that waits for another time.

Re-Visioning: Possibilities for a Better Future

To heed Eisner's (1988) warning, this is not the time to cease exploration. In this section, I make some recommendations for principal appraisal policy, two recommendations for principals and professional development, followed by suggestions for future research.

Recommendations for policy: formal appraisal design

On the basis of this study there is little justification for more time and effort to be spent on determining and refining criteria on which to judge school principals. Classroom assessment research tells us that highly prescriptive and high stakes summative processes tend to undermine the outcomes being sought. Accountability leads to greater evaluation and comparison. Comparison leads to identification of people both superior and inferior to us on whatever scale we use for our evaluation and stimulates competition, a feature of McDonaldisation (Ritzer, 2008). Kohn (1992) argued that striving for excellence is conceptually and experientially different from striving to be first in a competition. Gergen (2009) suggested, "Most rituals of evaluation are born of distance and distrust.

They inform a person that he or she is not fully acceptable, and that continued scrutiny is necessary" (p. 341). Insecurity undermines wellbeing. Caution in risk-taking undermines pace and confidence in decision-making, something these principals did a lot of. Torrance (2007) reminded readers that greater 'clarity' of criteria leads to instrumentalism with the checklist, detailed guidance, and training/coaching on the interpretation of criteria. Such efforts to ensure success, Torrance claimed, lead to the domination of procedures and practices over the challenge of learning, with compliance replacing the satisfaction of achievement. Any expansion of efforts to increase consistency through more detailed criteria in principal appraisal will be a cost to schools and to principal time, and may also increase pressure for more evidence, more regular or repeated appraisal events, and practice reviews. Demands for more evidence will likely mean a further reduction in the variation in performance goals across principals and, therefore, less attention to local and individual needs.

Principals in this study felt highly involved in the determination of their performance goals and positive about ERO's new school self-review programme. However, this sense of self-control and working efficiently likely hides a strengthening of the sameness of policy implementation in schools. If Ritzer's model of McDonaldisation (2008) holds further applicability, the implementation of school 'self-review' (which also works as government cost saving) will show signs of decreasing school autonomy and increased central control through prescribed guidance and requirements over time.

Loss of trust between the Ministry and school leaders, schools and communities undermines the healthy functioning of schools. Appraisal for accountability can be high stakes for the individual principal but the potential use of the resulting information can also raise the stakes for a school board and any contracted appraiser, thus also influencing the work of these people. In this way, the potential for risks in summative judgements ripple beyond individual principals to other individuals and groups.

If accountability is seen as normal, even necessary, and without prejudice, then the government, which shapes accountability systems (Møller, 2009), could be more directly accountable through standards for the system (Darling-Hammond,

2009-2010). Shore and Wright (1999) commented that if accountability and monitoring are self-evident and benign then it does not make sense that accountability goes only one way and that government is not more directly accountable to public, stakeholders, schools and students. Møller (2009) said "it is highly dubious that we have this absence of accountability for anyone above the level of schools" (p. 41). The Ministry of Education then would be accountable to schools and communities to provide the resources and environment needed to meet New Zealand's educational goals.

Within formal appraisal, it was the formative process of principal-appraiser interaction that provided feedback and support. This feedback included suggestions, ideas and identification of opportunities, and recognition of the positive impact of past changes. In this study, principals valued the feedback they received particularly for professional development recommendations in the report to the board. They said that formal appraisal, as a requirement, was 'not motivating'. This was understood at the time to mean that formal appraisal was not a driver for improvement. Perhaps the principals also meant that appraisal was not motivating in the sense of being not energising through a lack of possibilities to pursue learning for professional growth. The best case for appraisal policy would be to keep principal appraiser interaction as a valued aspect of any appraisal process and to support the identification and pursuit of individual growth goals. The introduction of other individual professional support, such as regular appointments with a trusted and understanding someone to talk with, similar to regular supervision such as that counsellors receive, would be appreciated to help sustain wellbeing, resilience and commitment for those in this complex relational work.

Recommendations for principals and professional development
On the basis of this study, I would encourage the valuing of principal self-care as an aspect of principal effectiveness, in principal preparation and/or development programmes. Self-appraisal developed self-knowledge and ongoing learning. Self-knowledge enabled these principals to maintain self-care. Educational leadership literature on leadership styles typically lists personal characteristics. So too does literature on models of 'successful and effective' principals. Rather than closer examination of their personal attributes, those who work as school leaders could

236

use questions reflecting the significance of self-care in formal support programmes.

Another recommendation for principals and professional development coming out of this study is the valuing of management as an aspect of principal effectiveness. For the principals in this study, knowing what was happening and, if not noticing and recognising for themselves, then being informed, was a significant aspect of 'keeping things on track' and moving forward. Noticing is an ability to read a situation and recognising what you have noticed comes with experience and developing school principal professional judgement. Recognising what is noticed includes an understanding of the people involved, weighing the risks involved, knowledge of possible options to respond, the pace of decisions required to be made, and of the support sources available. These are all specific to the school setting and situation dependent. Principals and those involved in professional development through preparatory or in-service programmes could explicitly use the components of 'noticing, recognising and responding' to raise awareness of management aspects for principals.

Drawing attention to the significance of interactions between community groups, along with the already recognised importance of the principal's relationships with others, may also increase valuing principals as managers. Through developing understanding and valuing principals as managers, further research might even go some way to explain why some principals are successful in one school setting but not in another. This may also help to retain and sustain individuals in principalship.

Future Research

Future research: who supports school principals?

Further research on the ways principals are supported is needed. In an environment of limited feedback, idiosyncratic networks, and complications between school board, Ministry and ERO's roles, who supports principals and who advocates for them are questions worth asking.

Future research: are there 'better' questions for self-appraisal?

Further exploration of self-appraisal may be a research challenge. The six principals in this study were happy to talk but did not write down their self-questioning. Exploring variation in individual principal approaches, the types of questions used and sources of questions, and the nature of principal relationship with her or his critical friend (and who this person is in a small school), may provide insight to principals as learners and as professionals.

Future research: what is a school community?

It is time to examine more closely what we mean by 'a school community'. This term suggests a cohesive group of people, active and participatory in supporting the local school. From evidence in this study, a school's community is unlikely to be cohesive and may not be entirely supportive. This study was not explicitly about the importance of understanding a school 'as a community' or the importance of a school's relationships (partnerships) with community. The nuances noticed in this study suggest the significance and the influence of the nature of 'the community in which the school operates'. Research attention could increase our understanding of the nature of the local contexts in which principals work.

Future research: how do principals' and local expectations 'match'?

Another research opportunity arising from this study is to look at the 'match' between a principal's expectations and other local expectations. Sydney talked of being a 'better match' as 'the kind of principal' the school's board was looking for than 'the last principal'. What influence does 'a match' of expectations have on the ability of a principal to do their job? Such research could contribute to our understanding of what expectations board of trustee members, for example, have of their school principal, how much members of a school's community know about and understand of principal work, and how these people judge their principal on 'effectiveness' and 'success'.

Ongoing project: re-examine the vocabulary we are using

As a result of this study, the key words (Williams, 1985) 'appraisal', 'relationships' and 'community' warrant further attention, just as the concepts of 'principal as CEO', 'board of trustees as employers', and 'ERO as reviewers of

schools' are all contestable in relation to principals' work and the judgement of this work. However, St Pierre and Jackson (St Pierre, 2013; St Pierre & Jackson, 2014) reminded us that claims of clarity and transparency of language reinforce notions of a 'real world'. But 'the worlds' in which school principals work and are judged are contextualised, situated, relational, complex and particular. Attention to the language being used by different interested parties, including principals themselves, could be an ongoing project.

Potential educational assessment research in classrooms

To bring this study full circle, I want to consider whether, if educational assessment can be the disciplinary perspective for a study of principal appraisal, what research potential the insights presented here have for research in classroom assessment practice, particularly assessment for formative purposes in classroom practice and the growth of life-long learners.

These principals valued conversation with their appraiser, the confidential conversation with trusted friends or mentors. They used questioning in their self-assessment and, although they may be doing this in the night hours, they preferred to self-assess in conversation with someone else.

Professionals in complex and demanding relational work, such as school principals, valued trusted interaction. They found this supportive, particularly in the decision-making involved in their work, and of themselves as individuals in developing self-knowledge, sustaining resilience and developing their own judgement.

If a study of principals in appraisal could have something useful to offer to students and classroom teachers, then there is the suggestion here that the content of interaction (questioning, shared understanding of criteria, feedback and self and peer assessment) might not be as significant for formative assessment as the interaction between human beings that takes place within the questioning, sharing criteria and feedback, and through self and peer assessment. It was the interaction itself that mattered most – the understanding, trust and support, the opportunity to talk and be listened to, the exploration of ideas and advice *without* judgement. This has potential as a focus for classroom assessment research.

Thesis close (temporarily)

In this study I focused on school principals and on the appraisal of principals' work in order to propose alternatives for a better principal experience in the future. Burkeman (2012) spoke to attempts to focus on 'some aspect'.

> Formulating a vision of the future requires, by definition, that you isolate some aspect or aspects of your life, or your organisation, or your society, and focus on those at the expense of others. But problems arise thanks to the law of unintended consequences, sometimes expressed using the phrase 'you can never change just one thing'. In any even slightly complex system, it's extremely hard to predict how altering one variable will affect the others. 'When we try to pick out any thing by itself,' the naturalist and philosopher John Muir observed, 'we find it hitched to everything else in the universe'. (pp. 92-93)

The 'everything' in this case includes the multiple contextual factors and interest groups, a milieu in which the principal works and the principal and appraiser interact, monitors monitor, and policy makers make policy. The short answer to my opening question is that appraisal criteria for judging school principals need not be exhaustive in capturing the complexity of their work to serve the purpose, nor highly detailed in an effort to ensure consistency because interpretation is always involved in judgement. Individual leader characteristics and the quality of their relationships may actually serve to stall discussion on how principals are supported, and on the expectations and influence of the community in which the school operates. Finally, understandings from educational assessment research can help appraisers give consideration to the person, the human being and learner, who works as a school principal.

De Waal (2005) calls pragmatism "a philosophy for frontier towns" (p. 176). The old rules and a defined well-known universe no longer work in a new context. In education, in globalised western market economies with 'neoliberal government agendas' and 'audit cultures,' contemporary pragmatism is the opportunity to use our intellectual scepticism in a hopeful way. Further consideration of principals'

experience of appraisal in the future could, as Charles Handy desired for all organisational systems and Csikszentmihalyi (2003) suggested for employers, get the *best* out of people rather than the *most* out of them. It is by drawing attention to the 'taken for granted' that we reopen possible alternative future(s).

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: School Area Census Information (2013)

Appendix B: Interview Outline

Appendix C: Interview Schedule

Appendix D: Information for Participants

Appendix E: Leadership Performance Goal Example

Appendix F: Appraisal Report Content

School Area Census Information

Table A.1: School area information from 2013 census

School area information from 2013 census	Population/Gender mix	Unemployment rate and most common occupation	% Children	Internet & cars	Ethnicity/born overseas
K1 School enrolment 52	2,500 and increased from 2006-slightly more male than female	3% unemployment 84% over 15 have formal qualifications Managers	Approx 60% of households have children Twice as many under 15 as over 65	80 % have internet 30% have access to three or more cars	94% European 6% Maori 20% born overseas 2% speak Te Reo
R1 110 students	450 decreased from 2006 slightly more females than males	9% unemployment 60% over 15 have formal qualifications Managers	Approx 60% of households have children 10% over 65 and 26% under 15	64% internet 17% have access to three or more cars	70 % European 47% Maori 6% born overseas 8% speak Te Reo
K2 70	975 and increased from 2006-slightly more male than female	4% unemployment 77% over 15 have formal qualifications Managers	Approx 55% of households have children Twice as many under 15 as over 65	85 % have internet 27% have access to three or more cars	90% European 8% Maori 16% born overseas 1% speak Te Reo
T1 18 students	420 decreased from 2006 slightly more females than males	9.8% unemployment 54% over 15 have formal qualifications Managers	Approx 60% of households have children 17% over 65 and 20% under 15	50 % have internet 14% have access to three or more cars	74% European 45% Maori 8% born overseas 13% speak Te Reo

Table A.1: School area information from 2013 census. cont . . .

School area information from 2013 census	Population/Gender mix	Unemployment rate and most common occupation	% Children	Internet & cars	Ethnicity/born overseas
T2 150 students	1800 and increased from 2006-slightly more male than female	5% unemployment 82% over 15 have formal qualifications Managers	Approx 60% of households have children 8% over 65 and 25% under 15	74% have internet 18% have access to three or more cars	88% European 20% Maori 18% born overseas 7% speak Te Reo
A1 Not big enough to constitute an area in itself 52 students					

Interview Outlines

Outline for Interview One: *Principal Formal Appraisal*

Tell me about how the formal principal appraisal process works in your situation. (Who, what, when, how, why, aspects and influences)

What criteria are used? What use do you make of the 'Kiwi Leadership for Principals' framework document? (How would you describe the expectations?)

Describe your role in the formal practice of reviewing your work as principal. What impact does the appraisal process have on your work? (Any impact/flow on to your staff?)

A story of when appraisal worked well? A story of a time appraisal did not go well?

What are you looking for in the process? What do you think the BoT/MoE are looking for?

Any changes you wish to see? Predictions for the future?

Outline for Interview Two:
Last time we talked about formal appraisal of your work, do you have any further thoughts you would like to add?

This time we look at informal judgements and expectations of your work? Do you get informal appraisal of your work? Who judges you? What does this community expect of you?

Where/ from whom does your feedback come from? (Affirmation, encouragement, challenges, reminders). What feedback is most significant in terms of resulting in action/change?

Where does your support/advice come from? What kind of things do you seek advice on?
How would you describe your daily work? What or who influences this work?

Where do your ideas about being a principal come from?
What does it mean to be a principal?

Outline for Interview Three: *Principal 'Self-assessment'*

Building on our talk about informal appraisal last time, please tell me more about what you do for yourself in reviewing your own professional practice and growth in between more formal events? (Reflection, review, goal setting, records?)

How do you judge/assess your own work? What happens next as a result?

Do you have signs or clues that help you judge your work and your ability to do the work (capability, just-in time learning, workload, health and wellbeing)?

Tell me about your learning experiences for school leadership? (Past, present, upcoming, formal, informal, models and sources) What have you learned?

How are your learning experiences related to formal appraisal processes and what is looked at? Professional development planning? Performance agreement priorities?

Anything else you think I need to know that will help me make sense of your situation and context regarding appraisal of your work?

APPENDIX C

Interview Schedule

Table A.2: Interview schedule: The order of participant interviews across the three sets

Interviews	Set A (late 2013)	Set B (early 2014)	Set C (late 2014)
Ruby	2	1	5
Sydney	1	4	4
Dana	3	3	2
Doug	5	5	3
Mickey	6	6	1
Nate	4	2	6

Information for participants

Greetings

This is an invitation to participate in a doctoral research project titled:
Self assessment in formal and informal professional appraisal of rural primary school principals

The research aim is to explore the practice of principals' self-assessment as they negotiate the challenges of their role and align formal appraisal processes with their own priorities for professional growth. Principals of rural schools, in particular, need to negotiate the complexities of principals' role plus intensified and additional challenges of the life and culture of these types of schools and communities.

I am seeking up to seven principal participants who currently have a position as a small rural school principal within relatively easy driving distance of the University. By small I mean up to 150 students enrolled.

Please note that this research is not about assessing principal's work. The research aim is to develop our understanding of self-assessment as practiced by principals and to support a coherent approach in what is recognised as important and/or assessed in principals' work.

Attached to this invitation to participate is an information sheet giving more details about what participation in this project would entail and a consent form.

Please take a few moments to consider participating yourself and/or pass this information on to someone else you think might be interested.

Thank you.
Kind regards,

Kerry Earl
Doctoral Researcher

Senior Lecturer
Department of Professional Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Waikato
Hamilton, New Zealand

Research Information Sheet
Date: February 2013

Project title: Self assessment in formal and informal professional appraisal of rural primary school principals

Researcher: *Kerry Earl, Senior Lecturer, Department of Professional Studies, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand*

I qualified as a primary teacher and taught in school for 15 years mostly in New Zealand rural primary contexts of the South Island. My particular interest and involvement in the field of assessment is the foundation of this study.

What is the purpose of this study and who is invited to participate?
The research aim is to explore the practice of principals' self-assessment as they negotiate the challenges of their role and align formal appraisal processes with their own priorities for professional growth. Principals of rural schools, in particular, need to negotiate the complexities of principals' role plus intensified and additional challenges of the life and culture of these types of schools and communities.

My research questions are:
1. What is the nature of formal and informal principal appraisal?
2. What is the nature of principal learning?
3. What is the relationship between formal and informal assessment processes?
4. What concept of self-assessment is appropriate in formal and informal principal appraisal and learning processes?

I am seeking up to seven principal participants who currently have a position as a small rural school principal within relatively easy driving distance of the University. By small I mean up to 150 students enrolled.

What would be my part in this study?
As a participant, you will be involved in three semi-structured (audio-taped) interviews and one focus group session over a period of 16 months. Interviews will be held at your school or other place of your choice at a time that suits you. These interviews will be no longer than 1 ½ hours duration. The focus group session will be at a mutually agreed location, date and time and will be scheduled for no longer than 2 1/2 hours and catered. Your costs, for example in travel and any release time needed, will be met. I would also like to view any other documents from your review practice that you and I might agree are relevant and useful for the purposes of this research.
I would also be asking you to check the transcripts of the interviews and make any necessary amendments before analysis proceeds. This is likely to take up to half an hour per interview. At any time up until one week after receipt of the transcript of the third interview you will have the right to withdraw your consent to participate without any need for explanation. This can be done by contacting the researcher. If you elect to withdraw at this time any material already gathered will be destroyed.

How will confidentiality be protected?
As a participant in this research you will have the option to include your name or choose a pseudonym otherwise a coding system will be developed for reference in research records, the thesis and publications. Your name will not be used unless you agree in writing to be named. All procedures regarding secure storage and respect for confidentiality will be taken by myself to minimize the risk of participants being identified. However, given the size and nature of national, educational and professional

networks in New Zealand, it cannot be guaranteed that an individual participant's identity will not be found out.

Please note that this research is not about assessing you or your work. The research aim is to develop our understanding of self-assessment as practiced by principals and to enhance a principal's role in formal appraisal processes to support a coherent approach in what is recognised as important and/or assessed in principals' work. The interview questions will be framed to be constructive and appreciative.

What will the information be used for?
The information gathered and analysed will be used in my PhD thesis, and seminars or other oral presentations at conferences, in public arena, and published in journal articles and other academic and professional publications.

Do I have the opportunity to receive information resulting from the study?
You will have access to an electronic copy of the thesis lodged permanently in the University's digital repository: Research Commons. You will also have the option of being advised of the initial published article by email. If you elect to receive this notification you will receive the reference, abstract and, if possible, an electronic link to the article.

What if I have any further questions or concerns?
Please do not hesitate to contact me if you want any further information, clarification or have your concerns addressed: Kerry Earl, on email kearl@waikato.ac.nz or phone 07 838 4506 during the daytime or 021 0404794 evenings and weekends.

If you have any unresolved concerns about this study please contact my chief supervisor:
Professor Christopher M. Branson, Faculty of Education
University of Waikato, Private Bag 3105, Hamilton, New Zealand
Phone +64 7 838 4466 extn 7904 Email: cbranson@waikato.ac.nz

If you are willing to be involved in my research please sign the attached consent form and keep this information sheet for future reference.

This study was been approved by the Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee on: 28 March 2013

Consent to participate in Research

Project title: Self assessment in formal and informal professional appraisal of rural primary school principals

Researcher: *Kerry Earl, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education, University of Waikato, Hamilton, New Zealand.*

- ❏ I have read and understood the information sheet provided about this research project (dated February, 2013)
- ❏ I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have them answered.
- ❏ I understand participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw myself, and any information I have provided without any need for explanation, at any time up until one week after receipt of the transcript of Interview 3.
- ❏ I understand the intended use of the information.
- ❏ I understand my rights pertaining to confidentiality, and that anonymity cannot be guaranteed.
- ❏ I agree to take part in this research
- ❏ I agree to individual data from my interview being discussed at the focus group session.
- ❏ I wish to be advised of the initial published article.
- ❏ I wish to select my own pseudonym to be used in the research records, thesis and publications. My pseudonym:

Participant Name:

School:

Signature:

Contact details (including email address):

Date:

Approved by the Faculty of Education Ethics Committee, University of Waikato on 28 March 2013

Leadership Performance Goal and Indicators Example

Table A. 3: LEADERSHIP GOAL: to ensure coherence of school goals and aims across the communities.

Professional Standards for Primary Principals	Tātaiako	Registered Teacher Criteria
AREA OF PRACTICE: Pedagogy Analyse and act upon school-wide evidence on student learning to maximise learning for all students with a particular focus on Maori and Pasifika students.	**Ako** *Practice in the classroom and beyond* Reciprocal teaching/learning; parent, whanau, hapu, learner, teacher, effective learning by Maori learners effective pedagogy Effective curriculum for Maori learners	**DIMENSION: Professional relationships and Professional Values** **(4)** Demonstrate commitment to on-going professional learning and development of personal professional practice. **DIMENSION: Professional knowledge in practice** **(6)** Conceptualise, plan and implement an appropriate learning programme. **(11)** Analyse and appropriately use assessment information which has been gathered formally and informally.
Indicators	**Actions**	**MONITORED & EVALUATED through**
Tataiako Consciously sets goals, monitors and strategically plans for higher achievement levels for Maori learners. Actively prioritises Maori Learner achievement, including accelerated progress of Maori learners achieving below or well below expected achievement levels. Provides and supports on-going professional learning and development for staff that strengthens the school's ability to raise Maori achievement. Actively ensures that Maori learners have access to high quality culturally relevant programmes and services.	**Make** connections between LCN, PB4L, and student achievement Ensure students, teachers, leaders and community are clear about how professional learning foci connect to school goals and aims. **Consider**: How do we communicate Maori student learning and achievement effectively with parents /whanau to foster an authentic partnership in learning? e.g. learning maps **Support** teachers to gain student voice to inform teaching and learning practices and environments.	Tool for Evaluating / monitoring school community understanding of being an inclusive school. Learner, parent, teacher and BOT voice. Assessment both formal and informal that are used within the different professional learning

Table A.3: LEADERSHIP GOAL: to ensure coherence of school goals and aims across the communities. cont . . .

Indicators	Actions	MONITORED & EVALUATED through
RTC • Participate responsively in professional learning opportunities within the learning community. **(4ii)** • Initiate learning opportunities to advance the personal professional knowledge and skills. **(4iii)** • Articulate clearly the aims of their teaching give sound professional reasons for adopting these aims and implement them in practice. **(6i)** • Analyse assessment information to reflect on and evaluate the effectiveness of teaching. **(11iii)** • Communicate the assessment and achievement information to relevant members of the learning community.**(11iv)** • Foster involvement of whanau in the collection and use of information about the learning of akonga. **(11v)**	**Support** the school community to use a tool and dialogue to gain a clearer picture of what it means to be an inclusive school. **Use** of special needs registers in a more productive way, conversations about targeted students, our children, process goal in charter.	
Reflective questions	How do I gather and use assessment information in ways that advance the learning of my akonga?	What do I take into account when planning programmes of work for groups and individuals?
Support I need	Possibly from: Professional readings, Observations, Conversations, Peer coaching	

Appraisal Report Content

Table A.4: Examples of Principal Appraisal Reports (A-G) showing headings in order (typically 8-10 pages)

Report A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Introduction	Introduction	Summary for BoT	Process and documentation (sources of evidence)	Intro to explain report is a combination of self-review and appraiser views	Summary of findings from previous year	Details of name etc. and bullet points noting this report has been informed by:
Process description	Process description	Staff survey	Appraiser's view sections- Culture	Professional leadership	Goal A Goal, evidence, outcomes (separate sections for self review and appraiser)	Professional standards- Areas of practice (standard not met, Standard partially met, Standard met) plus bullet points on evidence observed and general comment
Culture- what is valued in the school	Executive summary	Goal(s)	Pedagogy (descriptive and signals next aim)	Strategic management	Goal B Goal, evidence, outcomes (separate sections for self review and appraiser)	Area of practice: Culture
Pedagogy- knowledge about teaching and learning	Leadership	Pedagogy	Review of goals- For each: Goal, Objective, Indicators & summary	Staff management	Goal C Goal, evidence, outcomes (separate sections for self review and appraiser)	Pedagogy

Table A.4: Examples of Principal Appraisal Reports (A-G) showing headings in order (typically 8-10 pages). cont. . . .

Report A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Systems-how things work in the school	Personnel	Culture	Self Review Professional Standard + Performance indicator-using rating out of 10	Relationship management	Goal D Goal, evidence, outcomes (Separate sections for self review and appraiser)	Systems
Partnerships and networks-creating positive links to support learning	Community	Systems		Financial and asset management	Experienced principal criteria/career structure matrix	Partnerships and networks (Up to 2 pages on each)
Principal performance agreement	Operations	Partnerships and networks		Statutory and reporting	Professional standards as major headings-general comment/ statement	Recommendations/ Actions: Proposed goals under area(s)(as applicable) of practice-
Looking forward	Board of Trustees	Recommendations for future development		Goals & statement of outcomes	Report Summary	- goal, objective, indicators
Summary & Conclusion	Conclusion & recommendations	Conclusion		Recommendations (Appendix of questionnaire results)	Areas for attention/focus next year	
Signatures	Signatures	Signatures	Signatures	Signatures	Signatures	Signatures