

**Wellbeing and relationships between people, space,  
place and time: Canterbury primary school principals’  
perceptions of wellbeing in the context of their school  
environment**

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A thesis submitted for the degree of  
Master of Health Sciences  
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May 2019



## ABSTRACT

Interest in wellbeing in schools is being influenced by diverse stakeholders unified by a rising global economic agenda which requires schools to ensure students take responsibility for their own wellbeing to ensure personal, national, and global achievement and success, yet, there is no collective definition of wellbeing. Principals have found wellbeing and wellbeing initiatives difficult to define and identify and New Zealand has a piecemeal approach to wellbeing in education. The important role principals play in promoting wellbeing in schools and the scant knowledge of how principals understand, observe, and experience wellbeing led to this qualitative study, which included both seated and walking interviews. The perceptions of ten Canterbury primary school principals, within the context of their school environment, were analysed in a thematic manner.

Although the conceptualisation of wellbeing in education is becoming narrowly, neoliberally informed, increasingly future focussed, binding wellbeing to achievement and success, this study found principals' perceptions of wellbeing were expansive. Principals' perceptions were mediated through sentimental connections of care for people, *whenua* [land] and *whakapapa* [connection], enriched by personal and professional experiences and beliefs over time, and were, therefore, history laden and needs focussed. As schools underwent processes of change through innovation, principals socially recreated spaces with their teams and students. Principals engaged in advocacy and amelioration when responding to pressures from educational, social, and economic policies and processes. However, while principals could be resilient, motivated by care and social justice, and attracted likeminded teams, the impact of broader government policy and economics created friction points that led to principals having to balance their own wellbeing in response to the role demands. This study

has implications for the development of a unified vision for wellbeing in educational settings that includes and appreciates school principals' experience and perceptions.

## **Acknowledgements**

I am grateful for the support I received while developing this thesis:

The University of Otago's Department of Population Health and the Department of Psychological Medicine offered a unique opportunity for dual departmental supervision to better support the hybrid nature of the research topic.

Associate Professor Lee Thompson and Dr Dave Carlyle provided expertise, encouragement, energy, and humanity.

Mel, my wife, who patiently and passionately supported me in this study journey through earthquakes and many other losses.

Suzy Ruddenklau, RN, my fiercely supportive colleague and friend, who listened, read, and encouraged.

Other family members and colleagues in education and health, including the Tumuaki/principals I work closely with provided ongoing interest and support, often at uncannily critical times.

The ten inspiring Canterbury primary school Tumuaki who trusted and opened up their heads, hearts and spirits, and schools, sharing their scarce and precious time to allow this exploration of their world.



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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

After the 2011 Canterbury earthquake, school principals were experiencing rapid changes that appeared to be directly related to post-quake recovery, while also facing a growing local and global interest in wellbeing in schools. Rising concerns within schools, communities, the Ministry of Health (MoH), and the Ministry of Education (MoE) about post-earthquake mental health, led to the creation of the School Based Mental Health Team (SBMHT) in 2013. The SBMHT was one of 26 initiatives within the National Government's Youth Mental Health Project that aimed "to help prevent the development of mental health issues and improve young peoples' access to youth mental health services" (MoH, 2016, para.1). In the four years after the Canterbury earthquakes there was a 69% increase in children referred to the Canterbury Child and Adolescent Family Mental Health Services (Humphrey & Rensin, 2015), with no reduction in subsequent post recovery years. The longevity of the impact of the disaster was expected, because as international experience suggests psychosocial recovery can be expected to take between five and 10 years after the event (Morgan, et al., 2015).

The SBMHT initiative was a joint response between the MoE and Canterbury District Health Board (CDHB) (MoH 2016), and was tasked with developing a school based mental health action plan. The SBMHT began working with schools in Canterbury in 2013, to identify, understand, and support the growing mental health and wellbeing needs of students, families, schools, and communities in the disaster recovery period (CDHB, 2016). There was considerable political pressure on the SBMHT to quickly develop school based interventions that increased wellbeing and resilience to reduce not only the distress for students, families, and schools, but to reduce pressure on government. In my role as a Registered Nurse (Mental Health) in the SBMHT, I collaborated with primary school principals of schools within a

Community of Learning (CoL) named *Kāhui Ako*, [a group of schools, within a locality who work together], representatives from the MoE and the manager of the local Resource Teacher of Learning and Behaviour (RTLB) service, in a principal led inquiry and survey, that stemmed from their observations of an increase in frequency and intensity of challenging behaviours by students in their schools. The principals also reported an increased number of children starting school exhibiting challenging behaviour.

*Challenging behaviour* is defined by Emerson (1995, p. 3) as “culturally, abnormal behaviour[s] of such intensity, frequency or duration that the physical safety of the person or others is placed in serious jeopardy, or, behaviour which is likely to seriously limit or deny access to the use of ordinary community facilities”. One explanation for this was that that earthquakes had disrupted children’s early development. One study had found three times the rate of post-traumatic stress symptoms in Canterbury school children who were aged 24 months or younger at the time of the earthquakes (Liberty, Tarren-Sweeney, Macfarlane, S., Basu, & Reid, 2016). Post-traumatic stress symptoms include arguing, losing one’s temper, defiance, and difficulty concentrating (Liberty et al., 2016). International research has found that students exhibit more challenging behaviours in schools post-earthquake. These behaviours include: increased arguing, fighting, hitting, hyperactivity, regression, and inability to control emotions (Widyatmoko, Tan, Seyle, Mayawati, & Silver, 2011). Media attention has also focused on challenging behaviour in Canterbury schools post-earthquake, leading media to report: “Christchurch schools require most support for student behaviour crisis” (Murphy, 2016).

The increased incidence and severity of challenging behaviour, has also been reported in schools and early childhood centres that are unaffected by earthquakes. As early as 2004 the Associate Minister for Education, Marion Hobbs, acknowledged that “Early childhood education services and schools are reporting that they are struggling with more children and

young people with increasingly challenging behaviour” (New Zealand Government, 2004, para.1). In 2012, the Minister of Education acknowledged the effect of challenging behaviours on young people’s wellbeing, stating that “to learn and achieve, students need to feel safe, secure and well supported in their learning. Difficult behaviour and bullying affects young people’s wellbeing, learning and achievement – the bullied as well as those who bully” (New Zealand Government, 2012, para.1). The media have covered many stories on such behaviour in schools in New Zealand including headlines such as “Violent kids push schools to the limit” (*Northland Age*, 2015), and “Specially-trained teachers needed for violent children” (Bilby, 2015). Whilst there are many reports and observations of increasing levels of challenging behaviour there is less known about why it is happening and what can be done about it.

The lack of information, therefore, led the principals in the *Kāhui Ako* to undertake their own survey about challenging behaviour, which included questions about wellbeing initiatives in their schools. I had worked closely with the principals and their schools and had observed that, in their surveys, they under reported much of what they did to support school wellbeing in their schools, and subsequently principals discussed the difficulties they experienced defining, articulating, and identifying wellbeing. In an attempt to assist principals uncover how wellbeing is evident in schools, I designed and trialled the *Wellbeing Snapshot* (a walking interview, including taking photos, undertaken with a school principal). During these interviews I discovered I held an unexamined notion of wellbeing but I had no working definition to draw on. I did have some preconceptions, in that I could see representations of what I perceived as *wellbeing* within the school and drew principals’ attention to them. I have intentionally not sought to define wellbeing more tightly because during the course of this study it became evident that wellbeing is subjective, diverse, and situational. This trial provided an opportunity to explore wellbeing in the context of the school environment, eliciting principals’

observations about how students' wellbeing was enhanced or diminished within their physical school environment. I anticipated the walking interview might enhance understanding of aspects such as situated sensory experiences within a school, for example, if quiet spaces were being used to assist students who needed support to develop self-regulation, relationships between staff and student wellbeing, and specific wellbeing initiatives. The findings from the trial of the *Wellbeing Snapshot* increased my curiosity to find out more about how principals perceived wellbeing in the school context; motivating this current Master's research study. The earlier findings from those initial walking interviews from that CoL are not discussed in this thesis. This study is based on qualitative research undertaken with different principals in schools scattered across Canterbury. The overarching research question is: How do Canterbury primary school principals understand wellbeing in the context of their school environment?

In order to provide context for the investigation of how principals understand wellbeing, a broader framing is necessary. The next chapter (Chapter 2), therefore, initially investigates how wellbeing is defined in academic and grey literature and by various stakeholders, followed by an examination of the trickle-down effect of wellbeing discourse from an international level, to a national level, and then as it filters down through educational stakeholders to schools and principals. Particular attention is paid to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) intentions for countries to shape schools into wellbeing providers. The chapter then discusses the way the MoE and New Zealand educational stakeholders differ in how they interpret and react to the OECD's call to become wellbeing providers. Next, how educational stakeholders evaluate, measure, and connect wellbeing in relation to school space and place is contrasted with the practice of pastoral care and also with the literature about relationships between wellbeing, space, and place. This is followed by an overview of the dynamic intersections between these elements in post-earthquake Canterbury. Having provided the broader background for wellbeing globally and locally this chapter then provides a brief

introduction to the role of school principals, including their growing responsibilities and influence in relation to wellbeing.

Chapter 3 discusses the methodology and methods used in this study. The findings are presented in Chapters 4, 5, and 6. Chapter 4 discusses principals' perceptions of wellbeing in school spaces, including spaces that were in processes of external and internal change associated with the reconfiguration of learning environments. This chapter also explores the sentimental relationships that develop in a place and how senses and place combine and contribute to sustaining wellbeing. It also considers principals' roles as leaders and advocates for play in the presence or absence of significant spatial change. Chapter 5 explores how principals define and manage personal and professional wellbeing, the importance of reciprocity of collegial support and trust, and the challenges principals face addressing wellbeing practically in schools, in contrast to neoliberal conceptions of wellbeing. Chapter 6 illuminates the way principals experience and manage wellbeing for themselves and for their schools through values, culture and spirituality. The thesis conclusion and recommendations are outlined in Chapter 7.





## **Chapter 2**

### **Background and literature review**

#### **Introduction**

There is increasing interest in wellbeing in schools yet little is known about the competing agendas of those who seek to prioritise wellbeing in schools. Because of this, undertaking a study of school principals' perceptions about wellbeing first requires a broader understanding of how wellbeing is currently framed, including knowledge of whom the stakeholders are who are leading the growing conversation. Given the broad nature of the research question, and by agreement with my supervisors, I have subsequently kept this literature review broad, rather than opting for a more limited systematic style review. Wellbeing is becoming an increasingly complex topic with many stakeholders, and therefore, before wellbeing is examined further, it is beneficial to first consider how it is defined.

#### **Defining wellbeing**

The concept of wellbeing can be interpreted in many ways (Dodge, Daly, Huyton & Sanders, 2012). Whilst Western psychology has long considered mental health and wellbeing as existing in the absence of psychopathology (Westerhof & Keyes, 2010), research, including the work of Ryff (1989), Ryff and Keyes (1995), and Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) suggests that positive mental health and wellbeing can be experienced in the presence of symptoms of mental illness (Bos, Snippe, Jonge & Jeronimus, 2016; Westerhof & Keyes, 2009), or adverse life events (Panter-Brick & Leckman, 2013). The difficulties in gaining consensus when characterising wellbeing led to a multi-disciplinary review of the definition of wellbeing, which suggested that "optimal wellbeing is a pivotal balance point between an individual's challenges and resources" (Dodge et al., 2012, p. 230).

The lack of precision in the use of the term wellbeing is evident when agencies choose a variety of definitions. The World Health Organization (WHO) blended concepts from the OECD and the Australian Unity Wellbeing Survey, in their attempt to gain coherence, when they created the following definition for wellbeing: “Wellbeing exists in two dimensions, subjective and objective. It comprises of an individual’s experience of their life, as well as a comparison of life circumstances with social norms and values” (Wismar, et.al, 2013, p. 1).

The WHO also defines mental health as “a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to her or his community” (WHO, 2014, para.1). In this definition the WHO links mental health and wellbeing with productivity and responsibility. Rose (1999) warned that the vocabulary of citizenship is encoded by agents from a distance (like WHO and governments in this case), to attempt to align citizens’ values, rights, and responsibilities, with their reforms or programmes. MacPhail and Munoz (2016) observe that the agendas that drive the interest in wellbeing can narrow understandings of wellbeing and inhibit its development. Wellbeing, therefore, is not simply a reflection of social norms and ideals, but represents broader agendas (MacPhail & Munoz, 2016). One of these broader agendas is pervasive neoliberal thinking with its attendant approach to economics.

### **Wellbeing and economics**

The OECD’s agenda, described as “promote[ing] policies that will improve the economic and social well-being of people around the world” (OECD, 2018, para.1) has generated increasing philosophical and economic debate about how effectively countries can conceptualise and measure wellbeing. The OECD’s encouragement for the international re-conceptualisation of wellbeing as a key economic performance indicator, directly affects many government policies

including education. However, the interlacing of wellbeing and education appears to advance the neoliberal notion of the individual entrepreneur who productively contributes to the economic greater good (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

Neo-liberalism became a dominant force internationally, with New Zealand being one of the earlier countries to embrace its economic tenets. This move was favourably reported by the OECD and the World Bank (Kelsey, 1997); however, the neoliberal goal for “ever-increasing economic growth” (Kelsey, 1997, p 358) is viewed through a narrowed lens of progress that does not reflect the values of all citizens. The MoE’s current vision of education in 2025, of schools “prepare[ing] students to participate as successful citizens in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century” (MoE, 2015a, p. 1) demonstrates the New Zealand Government’s ongoing amenability to neoliberal agendas, as they desire schools to support students to take responsibility not only for their own learning but for their wellbeing (Davies & Bansel, 2007).

Economic success has typically been measured by a country’s gross domestic product (GDP) per capita, calculated by considering measures of production, expenditure, and income (Osberg & Sharpe, 2002). In this way citizens become reframed as consumers within economic policies that have been criticised for widening inequalities (Kelsey, 1997, p 271). The conflation of individual success or failure and wellbeing draws attention away from the damaging impact of socioeconomic reform on the self-concept and self-worth of those vulnerable to economic insecurity and changes in social policy (Hall & Lamont, 2013).

For this reason, approaches where policy decisions are based on GDP measurements have been criticised for focusing too narrowly on people’s aggregate income and expenditure (Sen, 1974), in relation to their outcomes and opportunities (Kuklys & Robeyns, 2005). In addition, it was thought that the GDP did not accurately reflect how well off people perceived they were

(Osberg & Sharpe, 2002), for example, it was relationships in children's immediate environments, and not GDP, that were found more likely to predict their subjective wellbeing (Lee & Yoo & 2015). Gluckman and Hayne's (2011, p. 1) concern that "adolescents in New Zealand high rate of social morbidity" relative to those in other developed countries also indicates that healthy GDP per capita does not necessarily reflect good wellbeing for young people.

Reliance on the narrow neoliberal economic view of GDP as the only measure of success was thought to limit social welfare decisions that encouraged a restricted state role (Sen, 1976), and as a consequence economic advisors began to turn their attention to Sen's Capability Approach (CA), which was developed in the 1980s. CA considers people's "actual and potential states of being" (Kuklys & Robeyns, 2005 p. 01), their functional ability to engage in the things they value doing or being (Alkire, 2005), and people's actual freedom to achieve these things (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993). CA is focused on reducing poverty and increasing freedom and social justice (Alkire, 2005) by "make[ing] room for" human acts, considering them as "important in themselves", rather than a utilitarian means to an end (Nussbaum & Sen, 1993, p. 33). Yet, there are also inherent challenges in changing economic approaches and the CA has often been critiqued as being difficult to operationalise (Schischka, Dalziel, & Saunders, C., 2008).

### **OECD, social and emotional wellbeing and education**

The OECD's interest in wellbeing and education is rooted in the neo-liberal agenda of global markets, economics, and people's productivity which is expressed in their statement that "education's star has risen in the political constellation," in a belief that economics, international competitiveness, and globalisation should inform and drive the future direction of

schools (OECD, 2015, p. 16). In a 1997 project called *Schools of Tomorrow* the Centre for Educational Research and Innovation (CERI) (one of many specialist focus OECD committees), analysed how young people learn and under which conditions they might learn better (OECD, 2017). CERI's cryptic conclusion was that OECD countries were progressing towards amorously named knowledge societies and that these would demand and expect more of citizenship, which would require reinvention of education systems into Innovative Learning Environments, so that the youth could meet economic demands and expectations (OECD, 2017).

The OECD sees education as a cost effective vehicle for their economic ambitions, wanting schools and families to create what they troublingly call the "whole child", who is "talented, motivated, goal-driven, collegial, able to weather the storms of life, performs well in the labour market, and as a consequence achieves lifetime success to better face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century" (OECD, 2015, p. 15). Ecclestone (2007, p. 465) argues that this type of discourse originates from an assumption of deficit [of the less than whole child], which creates "pessimistic images of people's resilience, agency" and capability. The OECD wants schools to measure and develop children's social and emotional skills through programmes to enhance individual well-being and lead to what they ambiguously call "social progress." (OECD, 2015, p. 15). The OECD assumes parents and teachers also view children as economic investments and "will want to know their efforts at developing these skills are paying off" (OECD, 2015, p. 15).

Although the OECD is progressing their plans for education to enhance wellbeing, they also acknowledge that there are few studies, and therefore limited data, to support their assumption of causal relationships between education, social and emotional learning, and the achievement

of lifetime success (OECD, 2015). The OECD is banking on the “coherence” of educational policy across school, home, and community and through the stages of schooling to “maximise the returns to skills investment over the life cycle.”(OECD, 2015, p. 15). Having considered the OECD’s agenda, this next section starts with a brief introduction to the New Zealand school system and some of the main stakeholders in educational wellbeing. The section then outlines how wellbeing is evaluated in schools, and then particularly focusses on wellbeing and the school environment before considering wellbeing in the post-earthquake environments of Canterbury schools. The role of the school principal is examined which highlights the role pressures that are associated with managing school wellbeing and how these pressures affect the wellbeing of principals.

### **New Zealand schools and wellbeing**

There are different school structures in New Zealand schools including; state schools which are secular (non-religious), special character schools / state integrated schools whose aims and objectives reflect their own values, philosophies, and religions, and designated character schools that offer particular educational approaches or traditions. Māori-medium education, *Kura Kaupapa Māori* [total immersion Māori language schools] are state schools that are guided by policies and principles within the foundation document *Te Aho Mātua* (MoE, 2018a). Roll size and socioeconomic information are currently the main determinants of school funding, because schools are free, aside from voluntary donations, with most schools relying heavily on local fundraising to cover costs that are not government funded, such as developing playgrounds and paying for school trips (Wylie, Cosslett, & Burgon, 2016). Local education boards had previously governed schools (Wylie et al., 2016); however, this system was abolished in 1989 under what Codd (2005, p. 200) described, as “the rhetorical banner of decentralisation”, where every school became self-managed. Each school now has a board of

trustees who governs the school and holds legal responsibility for their school's performance and the appointment of teachers and principals (Wylie et al., 2016), with increasing responsibilities towards student (ERO, 2013) and staff wellbeing (Worksafe, 2017). Subsequently, the MoE is therefore left with an operational role that includes, responsibility for strategic leadership, policy development, property portfolio management, interventions for target student groups, as well as support and resources (MoE, 2018a).

Whilst New Zealand schools can be characterised as self managing, having differing structures and working independently yet also collaboratively in CoLs with each other, their understanding of wellbeing in education has been informed by Sir Mason Durie's Māori health model *Te Whare Tapa Whā* [the four cornerstones (or sides) of Māori health] since 1999. Since this time Durie's model has been included in the New Zealand health and physical education curriculum. *Te Whare Tapa Whā* reflects Durie's representation of indigenous people as outwardly thinking people who develop their understanding through observing the nature of wider relationships, and that therefore an ecological approach to health better fits the Māori world view (Durie, 2011). It is easy to find simplified, stripped back explanations of *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, but I have chosen to quote Durie, because the repetitive use of abbreviated versions does not support developing a deeper understanding of Māori context. Durie explicitly describes the wider relationships between people and the environment in his description of *taha wairua* where he states: "A spiritual dimension (*taha wairua*) recognised the importance of culture to identity as well as the significance of long-standing connections between people, ancestors, and the natural environment" (Durie, 2011, pp. 29-30).

Such attention to the significance of connections and relationship to place is central to this study. Durie described the remaining *taha* of *Te Whare Tapa Whā* as follows:

A cognitive and emotional dimension (*taha hinengaro*), based on Māori ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving drawing heavily on marae encounters. *Taha tinana* (physical wellbeing) encompassed more familiar aspects of bodily health, while social wellbeing was reflected in *taha whānau* (family aspect) (Durie, 2011, pp. 29-30).

The MoE's decision to insert a Māori health model into a section of the curriculum as a framework for wellbeing demonstrates their commitment to attempt to decolonise aspects of education, but it is unclear if the process upheld the reciprocity and mutuality that Hudson, Roberts, Smith, Tiakiwai, and Hemi, (2012) describe in their cultural model of "Negotiated Space". Mila-Schaaf, and M. Hudson, (2009, p. 15) consider Negotiated Space as the "intercultural space: the in-between terrain where distinctive worldviews and knowledge bases enter into some form of engagement or relationship to potentially be expanded and innovated." Although Jiménez (2008, p. 2) describes wellbeing as a "toolkit for policy making" that helps to "cut through and unify cross-cultural understandings", Greene (2004 p. 212) suggests caution is required as there is a risk of the "politicization of culture and its treatment as property". How wellbeing, culture and curriculum intersect is also matter of interest for other educational stakeholders.

### **How wellbeing is measured in New Zealand schools**

There are two main agencies that are currently measuring wellbeing in schools: The Educational Review Office (ERO) and New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER). These agencies are briefly introduced here and their approach to measuring wellbeing in schools is discussed. ERO is the government department that has the power under the Education Act (1989) to review and investigate education and wellbeing in schools, and report their findings to the public and policy makers and is therefore a significant educational stakeholder. ERO developed a document *Wellbeing for Success: Draft Evaluation Indicators for Student Wellbeing* (ERO, 2013) for the evaluation of primary school wellbeing. Their draft



indicators explored schools' values and how they were enacted, the quality and continuity of leadership and partnerships throughout the school, the schools' ability to respond to and improve wellbeing and demonstrate effective curriculum, teaching, learning and wellbeing practices, and manage the school wide and individual systems and initiatives to support wellbeing. ERO chose this definition of wellbeing created by Australian wellbeing researchers to underpin their New Zealand draft evaluation indicators:

A student's level of wellbeing at school is indicated by their satisfaction with life at school, their engagement with learning and their social-emotional behaviour. It is enhanced when evidence-informed practices are adopted by schools in partnership with families and community. Optimal student wellbeing is a sustainable state, characterised by predominantly positive feelings and attitudes, positive relationships at school, resilience, self-optimism and a high level of satisfaction with learning experiences. (Noble Wyatt, McGrath, Roffey, & Rowling, 2008 p. 30).

ERO described this definition as “providing a basis from which students, parents, *whānau* [families] and teachers, leaders and trustees can start to define what aspects of student wellbeing are most relevant to student strengths and the context of the school” (ERO, 2013 p. 4). It could be argued that this definition reflects how neoliberal ideology can reframe students as consumers in education. The original draft indicators are important, as whilst the subsequent 2016 Wellbeing for Success: A Resource for Schools document maintained the same definition of wellbeing as the 2013 draft indicators, many of the original indicators became more generalised and linked to learning in following iterations. The change from wellbeing in schools, being solely defined through *Te Whare Tapa Whā*, to also becoming conflated with high levels of satisfaction with learning experiences may reflect findings in ERO's first

evaluation of wellbeing in New Zealand primary schools. ERO found that most schools predominantly focus on, and measure, academic achievement, and many schools had limited coherence in processes of self review and planning for wellbeing. In relation to values and wellbeing ERO found some schools had a superficial understanding of the relationship between values and wellbeing. Students and teachers often did not share an understanding of the values and occasionally the principal or leadership team had developed school values without consulting others. Because of this, ERO found that some schools' values did not reflect the communities' strengths and aspirations. ERO also found sparse culturally responsive use of school values, with some schools borrowing Māori concepts without exploring what they really meant (ERO, 2015). Yet, ERO's (2015, p. 3) recommendations following the evaluation were that the MoE support schools to ensure students became "confident, connected, actively involved and lifelong learners," with no further discussion about how schools could improve their process for developing cultural and community values. ERO instead recommended that schools strengthen teachers' understandings about student partnership and students' ability to make and take accountability for their own choices, which reflects the government's interest in a self-responsibilised model of wellbeing. ERO is not the only agency making wellbeing recommendations to schools. The MoE and the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) have also made significant contributions to how wellbeing is being discussed and evaluated in schools.

NZCER is New Zealand's independent, statutory education research and development organisation that operates under the NZCER Act 1972. NZCER is funded to carry out and disseminate education research including reports on principal and school wellbeing by government grant, contestable research contracts, and from sales of their products and services. They also provide information, advice and services, such as online school wellbeing surveys,

test marking, and analysis (NZCER, 2018, para.1). NZCER was funded by the MoE to develop the *Wellbeing@School* surveys. They do not, however, provide a definition of wellbeing that the surveys are based on. Report authors Lawes and Boyd (2018, p. 3) state that a “sense of wellbeing is central to students’ success at school and in life” and that the MoE thinks wellbeing is “important” (Lawes and Boyd, 2018, p. 3). NZCER’s surveys hint at breadth, yet their brief from the MoE was to focus on bullying by eliciting students’ and teachers’ perceptions about the extent that “different aspects of school life create a safe and caring social climate that deters bullying” (Lawes & Boyd, 2018, p. 5). The heightened focus on wellbeing in schools that has developed with the global linking of wellbeing, education, and economics and the pursuit of new definitions and methods of measuring wellbeing could create an impression that wellbeing in schools is new. Schools have, however, supported student wellbeing over many decades before this more recent surge in interest in a process known as pastoral care.

### **Wellbeing and Pastoral Care**

Principals hold significant responsibility for the provision of practical student and family welfare often called pastoral care. Beddoe and de Haan, (2018) describe New Zealand principals as often being the gatekeepers of pastoral care in schools. *Pastoral care* is defined by Calvert (2009, p. 267) as “the term used in education to describe the structures, practices and approaches to support the welfare, well-being and development of children and young people”. Rossi, Pavey, Macdonald, and McCuaig (2016) found pastoral care to be focused on student wellbeing, and regarded as pivotal to student’s health and welfare. However, like the term *wellbeing*, the understanding and use of the term *pastoral care* is often not clear. Some have called for evaluation of pastoral care, as whilst it is a responsibility of all schools, it is argued clearer role delineation would help balance proactive and reactive pastoral care responses, encouraging the provision of timely responses and preventative approaches (Cross,

Lester, & Barnes, 2014). Calvert (2009) reveals how the meaning has changed over time, in response to changing priorities and discourses, describing pastoral care phases as: care and control, care as an individual need, as a group need, and then becoming connected to the curriculum.

Although meanings and terminologies change, the nature of pastoral care work in schools is generally understood as involving student and family support which can include intermittent or ongoing support for when students families experience challenges such as material hardship, food insecurity, parental illness, incarceration, separation, and death. Pastoral care is also provided in times of crisis, when schools frequently respond to “complex mental health issues involving self-harm, serious child neglect, managing high risk behaviour, and abuse” (Rossi et al., 2016, p. 12), and therefore pastoral care can take up significant time. School leaders were required to provide extensive pastoral care in post-earthquake Canterbury, and extended the understanding of the pastoral care role, when O'Connor and Takahashi (2014) found principals made use of community resources and agencies to give extra support to children and their families, due to the additional needs generated by the natural disaster. Pastoral care is therefore an important part of student wellbeing within the school environment.

### **The school environment and wellbeing.**

Broader and deeper understandings of space, place and people are necessary foundations to build an understanding of wellbeing in schools, particularly when considering the potential impact of a cascade of change of global and national economic pressures, post-earthquake recovery and educational reform. Yet, EROs wellbeing audit only focusses narrowly on school signage and the design and layout of student liaison areas, for example, health centres, sick bays, and counselling rooms, rather than where children undertake their day to day activities,

such as play areas and classrooms. The NZCER wellbeing survey briefly explores the school environment, asking if school buildings and the physical environment are safe and create a sense of community. Andrews, Chen and Myers (2014) posit that research currently focusses on individuals in spaces, where and when wellbeing occurs, and not the intimate ways in which wellbeing arises in everyday life. It is unclear why there is a paucity of inquiry in connecting wellbeing not only in school space but in place, when the MoE uses the work of Bronfenbrenner (1976) to underpin policy and curriculum. Over four decades ago, Bronfenbrenner (1976) identified and connected a school's environment and ecology to student development and experiences over time (Houston, 2017). He identified five systems, operating from the *micro* (the closest and most specific) through to the *macro* (the furthestmost and most general) and includes the *chrono* system to discuss temporality. Bronfenbrenner's model was developed prior to the rise of globalisation and therefore does not include a global systems level (Christensen, 2010) that demonstrates how global power permeates, circulates, enables, or constrains (Houston, 2017). In Bronfenbrenner's model, schools exist within the microsystem where "pattern[s] of activities, roles, and interpersonal relations [are] experienced by children, in [school] settings with particular physical and material characteristics" (Bronfenbrenner, 1979, p. 22)

Although some attention is paid to the physical and material configuration of schools in international literature in relation to technical issues like acoustics, or relationships with greenspaces, the school space is often considered to be a container in which wellbeing can be examined and interventions can take place. When, however, McGregor (2004) used Massey's (1999) conceptualisation of the social production of space, she uncovered hidden power relations and contestations in the examination of spatiality in schools. As a consequence McGregor found schools were not physical or social containers but were social spaces that

were reciprocally and mutually constructed. Fortunately a more critical turn for research within school space is being signposted; an example of this is Alerby's (2018) study that enriches understandings of silence, power, space, and politics in schools. This is described by Andrews et al., (2014) as the emerging research of the nature of space that is often taken for granted. The next section of this chapter discusses the dynamic nature of space, place, wellbeing, and politics in post-earthquake Canterbury to provide further context for the Canterbury primary school principals' perceptions within this study.

### **Post-earthquake wellbeing, politics and school environments**

The human and geographic narrative of the destructive Canterbury earthquakes of 2010 and 2011 included loss of life, injury, damage, and the destruction of thousands of homes as well as commercial and public buildings, including schools. Many schools had been lauded for being vital wellbeing hubs for families and the wider community post-quake (Mutch, 2015a). In spite of this, the Chief Ombudsman's post-earthquake investigation of the MoE's closures and mergers of schools, found schools had "experienced a sequence of events that shattered the trust between Canterbury schools and the Ministry of Education at a time when it was most needed" (Boshier, 2017, p. 20). The main factors that informed the MoE's post-quake response to schools were complex, but require discussion because they form part of the background of this research and are summarised as co-existing and dynamic physical, relational, political, and systemic factors.

Before the earthquakes the physical condition of many school buildings and property was considered to be aged and deteriorating (Office of the Auditor General [OAG], 2006) with many not even watertight (MoE, 2012), and school layouts were typically clusters of buildings including halls, gyms, administration blocks, and single classrooms (single cell) (Cooper, 1981). Aside from the need to physically update school buildings, the MoE also thought the

single cell layouts did not support “modern” teaching and learning and needed to be “retired” by closing and merging schools, in exchange for modern facilities that could fit more children in, on existing MoE owned land (MoE, 2011, p. 16). The Canterbury earthquakes provided the opportunity for this to happen (Boshier, 2017).

Although greater understanding of potential educational fragility after disasters or within conflicts is increasingly sought (Mosselson, Wheaton, & Frisoli, 2009), there is scant study of the effect of rapid, radical post-disaster change on the wellbeing of principals or their schools. The opportunistic plan to convert schools to new forms of learning environment has been described in a MoE publication as the unbundling of schools, “a term normally associated with business, where innovators deconstruct established structures and routines and reassemble them in newer, smarter ways” (Hess & Meeks, 2010, p. 41 as cited in Bolstad, Gilbert, McDowall, Bull, Boyd, & Hipkins, 2012). However bundling and unbundling space and place also disrupts human beings and material objects (Schwanen & Wang, 2014). Davidson (2009) contends that feelings of displacement can arise when places are changed, however Shaw and Hagemans (2015) state that change is inevitable, but it is the scale of change and the availability of alternatives that is the key.

The nature of the pre-quake relationship that New Zealand schools had with the MoE is characterised as having frequently changing levels of school autonomy and top down government intervention, described as a dramatically “see sawing approach” (Boshier, 2017, p. 11). The MoE created a plan to close and merge schools but did not disclose this to principals, and therefore, as principals engaged in good faith with the MoE in the process of the 2012 Education Renewal Plan that included “school design” and “the modern school environment” as two of the sub clauses (Boshier, 2017, p. 07), they were unaware that many schools were about to be closed or merged. A subsequent investigation of the MoE’s post-earthquake response, found a “severe breach of trust”, with schools “feeling totally blindsided” (Boshier,

2017, p .11), which generated such distress for schools and communities (Mutch, 2015c; Mutch, 2016) that the MoE had to make a public apology to schools and their communities (Boshier, 2017). The Ombudsman, however, found that the MoE’s apology lacked veracity because the MoE failed to acknowledge their process was flawed (Gerritsen, 2017). Although Canterbury schools are well on the road to physical recovery these events have created considerable consternation.

The rapid development of *Innovative Learning Environments* (ILEs) has continued post-earthquake but has met with ongoing critique. A simple physical description of ILE in relation to teaching is that two or more teachers teach 60 or more children collaboratively in large open plan buildings. The MoE has used a variety of terms to describe the new school designs including *Flexible Learning Environments* (FLEs) and *Modern Learning Environments* (MLEs) (MoE, 2016. p. 12). The MoE eventually stopped using the term MLE, because the word *modern* created discomfort in teachers by locating the learning environment in a time and place which could therefore become outdated (Smardon, Charteris, & Nelson, 2015). The teachers’ discomfort was well founded as the early adopters of ILEs have found that these learning environments require ongoing innovation and serial redesign (Blackmore et al., 2011). The MoE currently uses the OECD created title of ILE (Smardon et al., 2015). The language used in OECD documents is interesting as it is characterised by terms such as “innovation contagion” (OECD 2015, p. 19) “tech-rich” (OECD, 2015, p. 33) as well as charismatic rhetoric like “flourishing new metrics” (OECD, 2015, p. 22). Other terms are reminiscent of science fiction novel such as, “learning eco-systems with different species of providers” (OECD, 2015, p. 17) and “interlocking systems” (OECD, 2015, p. 17). This phrasing and rhetoric combines to obscure understanding of what ILE really is. The MoE defines ILE as the “whole learning ecosystem”, including the physical environment and the science of teaching (that is, its pedagogy) (MoE, 2016, p. 12). The MoE (2016) believes that the OECD puts pedagogy at the



core of learning environments and that ILE is based on a strong foundation of research. Yet others contend there is scant empirical evidence demonstrating the ILE pedagogical connection to use of space, or improvement to student learning outcomes (Blackmore et al., 2011).

The rapid proliferation of ILEs is not informed by evidence from longitudinal research (Blackmore et al., 2011) and the MoE appeared to face challenges locating current research that connects FLEs to student outcomes, because 56% of the references in their 2016 literature review are between 10 and 30 years old. The Office of the Auditor General's report found no link between the MoE's development of school property and their wider education aims and outcomes. The Auditor General therefore recommended that the MoE produce a strategic plan that could make this link (OAG, 2006). When the MoE produced *The New Zealand School Property Strategy 2011-2020* in response, again the Auditor General could not find evidence of how the MoE's investment in, and management of school property contributed to educational outcomes for students in the 2011-2020 plan (OAG, 2017). The Auditor General therefore rejected the MoE's claims that they are intentionally creating flexible learning spaces for the purpose of educational achievement, stating that the MoE's property strategy was written ahead of, and in isolation from, broader education planning (OAG, 2017).

ILEs are not the first New Zealand experiment with a paucity of connection to evidence of educational achievement and physical space. During the 1970s and 1980s *Open Plan Learning* (OPL) was an educational trend in New Zealand and internationally (Shield, Greenland, & Dockrell, 2010) where single cell classrooms were modified or OPL spaces were architecturally designed and built (Cameron, 1986). Like ILEs, OPL featured large open spaces where teachers engaged in team teaching (Brogden, 1983); however, OPL environments were found to negatively affect wellbeing by generating unacceptable noise and visual distraction,

leading either to the retrofitting of open plan to semi-open plan units (Shield et al., 2010), or to complete revisions back to single cell classrooms (Cardno, Tolmie, & Howse, 2017).

OPL environments, like ILEs, drew strong criticisms, including that there was little evidence to underpin their initial enthusiastic promotion (Bennett & Hyland, 1979; Weinstein, 1979), and little training provided for teachers to transition to OPL, so many teachers maintained isolative teaching practices (Brogden, 1983). The parallels between OPL and ILE are concerning, and it is yet too early to tell if educational outcomes and wellbeing will be improved by ILE. What is clear is that the Auditor General found New Zealand educational outcomes and buildings are not connected, and the Ombudsman's investigation showed that places like Canterbury schools are vulnerable to political opportunism in the aftermath of disasters. The final section in this chapter now considers the role of school principals in relation to wellbeing for others as well as their own wellbeing.

### **How school principals influence, manage and experience wellbeing in their roles**

Principals in New Zealand are described as the “lynchpin in our self-managed school system” (Wylie, 2017, p. 3) and are believed to hold considerable influence within their schools (Gurr, 2015). Principals are the intermediary between the MoE and their school, yet, even though schools are self-managing, the most significant changes, like curriculum and policy, are driven by the MoE from the top down. The abolition of education boards and creation of self-managed schools has resulted in a higher degree of centralised control that has changed the educationalist's roles from leaders to managers within a global education industry (Codd, 2005; Wylie, 1997). Yet, there has been inadequate training to reflect this change (ERO, 1999; OECD, 1998), exacerbating significantly increased workloads (Brooking, Collins, G., Court, & O'Neill, 2003), both in New Zealand and internationally (Brundrett, Fitzgerald, & Sommefeldt, 2006; Cranston, 2014).

Although principals are expected now to be both managers and leaders, only 17% of New Zealand principals think they have enough time for the educational leadership part of their job (Wylie, 2008). Whilst principals have been described as being “change leader[s]”, setting direction, developing people, leading change and improving teaching and learning (Gurr, 2015), Blackmore et al. (2011, p. 224) suggest more needs to be known about the less official and emotional aspects of school principal roles. Including “principals’ deep emotions [such as] empathy, compassion and care, fear, anger”, within the “culturally diverse school populations and communities” [that experience] “organisational change and entrenched educational inequality”. Although research in post disaster recovery has found that Canterbury principals demonstrated leadership in managing staff, student, and community wellbeing, within their school environments (Mutch, 2015b; O’Connor, 2013) and change associated with government initiatives, little is known about the effect on principals’ wellbeing. However, as New Zealand principals rate government initiatives as their third highest source of stress (Riley, P., 2017), with only a third of principals believing they can manage and sustain their workload, or make time for educational leadership (Wylie, 2017), then Canterbury principals stress is, accordingly, likely to be high.

While principals experience stress associated with government initiatives, they are increasingly targeted by the government for legislative responsibilities towards wellbeing. The MoE sees student wellbeing as “not only an ethical and moral obligation for teachers, leaders and trustees but also as a legal responsibility” (MoE, 2016, p. 4), a responsibility for which they can now be penalised or prosecuted for failing to comply with their legal duty under The Health and Safety at Work Act 2015 (HSWA) (Worksafe, 2015). The HSWA specifically states that it now covers not only physical but also mental health, and schools, like other businesses, need to promote staff resilience and wellbeing, and demonstrate their use of preventative practices to reduce psychosocial risks like bullying (Worksafe, 2017), (see Figure 1). Principals and schools

are also bound by other legislative requirements in relation to wellbeing including the Vulnerable Children’s Act (2014) which requires each school to have their own written policy to say how suspected neglect and abuse will be identified and reported. They also need to comply with safety checking all school workers and the National Administrators Guideline (NAG 5) (MoE, 2017c) that states boards of trustees must provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for students.



Figure 1 – WorkSafe’s (2016) view of work-related health and wellbeing interventions

Concern has also been raised about principals’ wellbeing; principals already work long hours and the demands of their role have increased, leading Wyley (2017, p. 9) to suggest that “rising expectations cannot be met by asking principals to work more”. Riley (2017, p. 15) expands on Wyley’s concerns, stating that “the level of demand is dangerous to the long-term health and wellbeing of principals who find consistently that the resources available to them are not concomitant with the demands.”

Paradoxically, although principals’ predominantly report their morale as good, their levels of optimism have reduced in two successive surveys (Wylie, 2017), and principals report high levels of emotional demand and burnout (Maxwell & Riley, 2017). Caring is recognised as a significant emotional demand for principals, and they demonstrate caring in a number of ways with staff, students and the school community, yet, unless principals’ are supported to care, it

is thought to become an “uphill battle” (Smylie, Murphy, & Louis, 2016). It is worthwhile considering the potential impact of role pressures on the wellbeing of school managers and leaders, because studies have found that principals positively or negatively influence teacher personal and professional confidence, wellbeing (Peters & Pearce, 2012), and attitudes (Price, 2012), and can create a sense of resilience, commitment, and effectiveness among staff (Gu & Day, 2103). Principals’ influence on staff, indirectly affects students, because principals can enhance teachers’ ability to respond to students’ mental health needs (Sisask et al., 2014; Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009) and affect school culture and climate (Griffith, 1999; Dinham, Cairney, Craigie, & Wilson 1995).

The ability of school principals to influence a welcoming and supportive environment is seen as crucial in developing and maintaining relationships between parents and schools (Barr & Saltmarsh, 2014). Wellbeing can be reciprocal as parental engagement and involvement has been found to be a key factor in building a caring and supportive school (Gavidia-Payne Denny, Davis, Francis, Jackson, 2014). Principals can support cultural wellbeing. Māori *whānau* believe principals can enable engagement by demonstrating *rangitiritana* [advocacy, leadership and commitment], which includes, promoting *te reo* [Māori language], culture and *tikanga* [Māori customs], practising and valuing *whānaungatanga* [kinship, relationships and connections] by persistently reaching out to *whānau* and nurturing Māori potential through *manaakitanga* [caring] (Hall, Hornby & Macfarlane, S., 2015).

## **Summary**

The relationship between school principals and wellbeing is complex especially at a time when interest in wellbeing in schools is increasing. While principals influence and manage wellbeing, their role demands challenge their own wellbeing. Increased interest in wellbeing creates an increase in assessment and measurement; however, there is a narrow focus on wellbeing and

learning that leaves space and place unexplored. The multiple stakeholders that are external to schools have similar agendas, yet differing definitions of wellbeing, particularly in relation to space and place, hence the focus in this study on principals' perceptions of wellbeing in the context of their school environment. The next chapter *Methodology and Methods* provides detail on how this current study was designed and undertaken.

## Chapter 3

### Methodology and Methods.

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the methodology and methods used in the study. Many studies that seek school principals' perspectives on wellbeing and mental health use quantitative survey methods (Iachini, Pitner, Morgan, F., & Rhodes, 2015; Riley, 2014; Rowling, Whitman & Briewener, 2009). Whilst quantitative studies do provide important information, these methods are not suitable to investigate this study's research question: 'How do Canterbury primary school principals perceive wellbeing in the context of their school environment?' To best address the research question I therefore chose a qualitative, interpretive approach within a constructivist paradigm.

This study did not seek to hypothesise about an objective reality in the belief that findings could be identified and generalised, and that wellbeing could therefore be predicted and controlled (Creswell, 2009). The very "localness" of the focus of the study creates difficulty in generalising, due to the unique conditions arising in people and place (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Loe, Kelman, Fjærtøft & Poussenkova, 2017). Booth (2015, p. 25) cautions that attempts to generalise can discount and strip away meaning and meaningfulness resulting in the "untelling of places and people".

This thesis therefore uses Massey's (2005) ideas and also those of Lefebvre (1974) to explore space, time, and place, to open space and place up to deeper understandings than those currently being sought by the stakeholders of school wellbeing. Whilst there are no explicit references to Foucault in this thesis, much of the literature cited has been informed by his examinations of space, place, power, and governmentality. These theoretical lenses enable the seeing of space and place as: political (Elden, 2007, Massey, 1991) and politicised (Massey, 1996), local and localised (Massey, 1991), and personal (Warf & Arias, 2008). Theories outside of those

traditionally used in health and education can therefore provide a scaffold for understanding complex and challenging situations similar to the change cascade that occurred for many schools located in Canterbury.

In this chapter I first discuss the constructivist approach, followed by a reflexive account of my positioning and location in the study. The chapter next offers a detailed description of the qualitative methods used, including the justification for the selection of a walking interview in addition to a traditional sedentary interview. A description of the method used to analyse the data concludes the chapter.

### **Constructivist approach**

I have used a constructivist paradigm because it encourages consideration of the knower and the known as being both interactive and inseparable (Lincoln and Guba, 1985; Yilmaz, 2013). The constructivist approach supports the view that knowledge is made within the landscape (here of the school environment), and that the participants contribute to this landscape through their uniquely ascribed meanings and ideas about wellbeing. This study, therefore, seeks to elicit both the principals' role in the active and social construction of wellbeing within the schools, and their understanding of the broader influences on schools (Agarwala et al., 2014; Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Rather than claiming to be an objective observer, within a constructivist paradigm, the researcher is understood to be part of the research process which gives rise to the need for reflexivity.

### **Reflexivity**

The constructivist approach locates the researcher within the study beyond a superficial disclosure of positionality to consider “the practices and ways of thinking that shape how we approach and construct distinct objects of research” (Knafo, 2016, p. 28). Creswell (2014) suggests, for example, that the nature of a research question expresses the world view of a



researcher. Although the principals and I both had no formally agreed working definition of wellbeing at the start of each interview, this probably helped, because when we walked around the schools together there was space for the principals' ideas to emerge and for me point out areas or items of interest. The connection of the researcher to the research does not stop there but unfolds throughout every step of the research process (Malterud, 2001, Probst, 2015). The reciprocity in the research relationship therefore requires continuous reflexivity (Berger, 2015, Probst, 2015) from the researcher to make their position explicit (Lamb & Huttlinger, 1989).

As a general Registered Nurse I was trained to practice reflectively, to bridge the gap between theory and practice. This is a process of reflecting on your practice, developing insight and self-awareness, where the reflections inform and improve future practice. Whilst there is some reflection required as a researcher, there is also the need for reflexivity. Reflexivity is a focused activity that looks not only inwardly but also outwardly to the other forces that influence the researcher and the interactions between the researcher and the participants (Sandelowski & Barroso, 2002). As an example of this, Trinh (1991) suggests that if the research study is a tale, reflexivity will interrogate the truth of it. And on this basis reflexivity is a practice that acts in the interest of the truth, rather than a practice that is only a technical and methodological process to be carried out to achieve the aim of transcending subjectivity through confessions and candour (Pillow, 2003). Hodges (2017, p. 235) has a similar argument – that at the present time, it is also critical to inspect how truth is more broadly constructed in education and health due what he describes as a rise in “slippery use” of “manufactured truths”.

In my current role as a school based mental health nurse I have had the opportunity to develop relationships with school staff, including principals. I have observed parallels in the frustration that many educators report experiencing, of being hindered by systems. These frustrations are expressed by of some of my colleagues within the Child, Adolescent, and Family Mental Health (CAFMH) Service as educators and clinicians often share the experience of being

hindered rather than supported to help others. Because SBMHT is a collaboration between the MoE and MoH I find myself advocating for schools across both education and health sectors.

The new role of school based mental health nurse has been a challenge for schools and for others in our own traditional specialist mental health service to understand. After five years of our new role development we often refer to ourselves as hybrids (mental health nurses who can now understand the language and landscape of education). This role development has been aided by relationships with school staff and principals, as they have orientated us into their worlds and taught us how we can be of benefit to their schools. There is variability in the nature of the relationships with schools, and some principals have embraced the relationship with their key SBMHT contact by regularly involving them in the day to day school business, and other principals describe the SBMHT as a service they know they can call on if they need it. This variability in relationship may have some effect on my research relationship with participating school principals as it suggests I could be seen by the school principal as either an insider, insider/outsider or outsider (Pillow, 2003). As a European it is imperative that I consider potential cultural issues when researching with Māori. The process of Māori consultation was undertaken prior to undertaking research to ensure appropriate cultural engagement.

### **Māori Consultation**

I read the reference materials provided by the University of Otago for the Māori consultation process and reviewed literature about Māori education, Māori wellbeing, Māori human geography and Māori immersion schools and then completed the University of Otago Māori Consultation Form. I met with the Māori Research Advisor, to discuss the research proposal and to gain feedback. The advisor's recommendations included the use of the 2013 Census question for collecting ethnicity and a clear plan of identified partnership with Māori for advice and support, including seeking advice for dissemination of results to Māori.

## Methods

### Participant recruitment

Purposive sampling was used to recruit 10 primary school principals. Potential participants were approached by telephone, and those principals wishing to participate in the study were provided with an information sheet and consent form and given the opportunity to ask any questions they may have about the process. Purposive sampling helps to ensure rich data are gathered (Suri, 2011). Purposively selected participants (primary school principals) are those who have direct experience of the phenomenon of interest (wellbeing in schools). The location of this study is *Waitaha* (Canterbury), which is situated in the central east of the South Island of New Zealand; it covers 44,508 square kilometres (17,185 square miles), with a population of 600,100 (CRC, 2014). Within the Canterbury catchment area there are 48,900 students in primary schools and 206 primary schools (MoE, 2017a). The schools selected fall within a large geographic area of Canterbury, from Kaikoura to Ashburton districts. High school principals were excluded from the study due to the distinct differences in primary and high school environments and the size limitations of this as a Master of Health Sciences' project. The sample excluded principals with less than two years' experience or principals with less than one year's tenure in their current school, on the assumption that participants included in the study would need to have greater role experience, and be able to bring greater insight to discussions of wellbeing in their role. Principals were recruited from diverse school types, including state schools, *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, and state integrated schools (which are also known as special character schools). There was also diversity in terms of school roll size (from under 100 to over 700 students) and school decile rating (from low to high).

## **Data collection**

As discussed in the introduction chapter, some school principals experience challenges defining and identifying wellbeing in schools. Rubin and Rubin (2011, p. 5) state that in-depth interviews are “especially important when the processes being studied are nearly invisible,” suggesting that interviews are a suitable method for exploring the study question. Kvale (1996) considers the role of the interviewer to be similar to that of a miner or a traveller. The miner is the interviewer who attempts to uncover the buried knowledge of the participant, and the traveller position (fitting a constructivist approach) is where the interviewer and the participant are both travellers in a journey. Kvale’s (1996) connection of the traveller position to the Latin origins of the word *conversation* of keeping company with, wandering together, suggests the concept of conversational wandering could be considered a metaphor, as a means of the interviewer travelling both in conversation and physically with the participant within the school environment. A constructivist approach also considers an interview the “site for the construction of knowledge” (Kvale, 1996, p. 301), where the researcher and participant are co-constructors of the findings, as their roles interact with each other and the environment (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Sin (2003) expands on Kvale’s (1996) concept of knowledge construction, by suggesting that identity and power are also dialogically constructed with the place of interview.

Schools are organic places of interaction between people, objects, place, and time (McGregor, 2004), and Berger and Luckmann (1991) note, the world of everyday life is structured both spatially and temporally (p. 40). Because of this, I chose both mobile and seated interviews to explore principals’ perceptions of wellbeing within the spatial context in which it exists. Mobile interviews (also known as walking interviews, go-alongs, mobile methods, and

bimbles) are a growing interview technique and have roots in ethnographic methodology (Butler & Derrett, 2014; Clark & Emmel, 2010; Garcia, Eisenberg, Frerich, Lechner, & Lust, 2012; Jones, Bunce, Evans, Gibbs & Hein, 2008). When comparing and contrasting traditional sedentary interviews with walking interviews it is found that walking interviews generate more place specific data (Evans & Jones, 2011), give richer understandings of place (Evans & Jones, 2011), create a more equitable dialogical line of inquiry between researcher and participant (Brown & Durrheim, 2009) and allows the researcher to temporarily experience the life of the participants (Anderson & Jones, 2009). The walking interview has been found to access people's attitudes and knowledge about their environment and connections to community (Evans & Jones, 2011; Farmer et al., 2016; Ottoni, Sims-Gould, Winters, Heijnen, & McKay, 2016).

Interviews were undertaken with participants in their schools. The interview had two stages, a shorter seated interview and longer walking interview. The audio from both stages of the interview was digitally recorded for the purpose of generating a transcript from which a thematic analysis was created. The first part of the interview was in the principal's office and consisted of semi-structured interview questions taking approximately thirty minutes, which focused on how the principal defined wellbeing and what supports the principal identified that they engaged with for their own wellbeing.

The second part of the interview used the walking interview method. I had considered asking semi-structured interview questions while walking with the participant around their school; however, I did not proceed with that so as to leave plenty of space for the principal to share thoughts, and the walking interview provided considerably more dialogue about contextual wellbeing in the school environment than was anticipated. This approach is described in the literature as spontaneous data elicited from environmental prompts (Van Manen, 1990) and

suggests spaces create feelings, which may be more synchronously communicated in time and place when connecting with participants in person (Opdenakker, 2006).

The walking interview took approximately forty five minutes and I carried the digital recorder. Although it has been suggested that a digital recorder with a lapel microphone is effective in picking up the participant's comments and a researcher's questions (Carpiano, 2009; Clark & Emmel, 2010; Harris, 2016; Lynch & Mannion, 2016), I anticipated the physical distance between the principal and myself might result in one voice being lost. At times the recorded background noise captured in busy spaces like classrooms, playgrounds and administration areas created minor difficulties during transcription, a factor which was also found in other studies where considerable noise levels in environments reduced the ability to capture the conversation (Carpiano, 2009, Clark & Emmel, 2010). The interviews were conducted in summer both inside and outside. Days with rain and cold spells did not pose restrictions to accessing outdoor areas (Carpiano, 2009; Harris, 2016) but did shorten time spent outdoors in school grounds. The different time of day the interviews were undertaken meant different types of activities were happening (Carpiano, 2009, Harris, 2016) in the school such as students playing outside, and staff eating lunch in the staff room. The start and end of the school day are normally busy times for principals, and therefore interviews were conducted at a time convenient for the principal but usually included one of the school play times.

While fixed routes are easier for transcribing, helping to more accurately align the recorded interview to the space it is occurring in (Jones et al., 2008), they lose the autonomy and empowerment of a participant-led walking interview (Jones et al., 2008). Participants in this project chose their own route, I inserted verbal prompts during the interview, as recommended in similar studies, to create spatial context for the audio recording at the time of transcription (Carpiano, 2009, Jones et al., 2008). I elicited the principals' observations and descriptions of wellbeing within their school setting, including any purposeful design and use of spaces,

including the intentional creation and use of quiet learning spaces, signs that stated the schools' values and personal displays in offices. I had anticipated that I would need to prompt participants if necessary, to visit specific areas such as staff rooms, administration areas, offices, playgrounds, staff amenities, and class rooms.

I found most participants required some direction at the beginning of the walking interview. The most common spaces principals were redirected to after walking out or past were their own office and the staffroom. Although principals could confidently discuss wellbeing in relation to their personal and professional lives, many initially appeared less certain about what wellbeing looked like and where it existed within their school environment at the start of the walking interview. Many initially asked where to go next, and what to show, often stopping to check out their suggestions of routes. This awkwardness and hesitancy at the start of walking interviews has been attributed to the unconventional nature of self-directed interviews (Carpiano, 2009) due to a subversion of traditional interviewer-interviewee power relations (Brown & Durrheim, 2009). The uncertainty led one principal to comment:

*Isn't it funny now I'm walking I'm trying to think what am I going to do what am I going to say.*

Although generating some periods of uncertainty, the walking interview helped elicit what has been described as the un-thought aspects of wellbeing (Pile, 2010, Andrews et al., 2014 ), which appear less easy to identify, measure, rate, locate, and judge (Andrews et al., 2014). People's emotional and physical states can be affected, or cause affect (Pile, 2010), in the mobile flow of interactions with objects, bodies and environmental effects (Andrews et al., 2014); however, this is often less considered (Pile, 2010). The initial disorientation of principals at the start of the mobile interviews also suggests that there is much about wellbeing that is pre-cognitive, intuitive, unnamed, and unexpressed and that feelings emerged into

consciousness within the mobile interviews. Mobile methods create different kinds of knowledge (Rickett-Hein, Evans & Jones, 2008) and can provoke and stimulate responses including interactions with objects, engender emotions, and transition through atmospheres, (Sheller & Urry, 2006). At the conclusion of each interview I allowed time to record my reflexive notes about the interview process, interactions, and discoveries, including reactions. This practice helps promote the levels of researcher self-awareness required for this interactive linking that takes place between myself as the researcher and the participant in co-created constructivist research (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, p. 111). Whilst reflexive practice enhances the researcher's awareness of their part in the research process it does not negate the requirement for ethics approval, which is a mandatory and protective process that is undertaken on every research project.

## **Ethics**

This project was deemed low risk and ethical approval was granted by the Department of Population Health, University of Otago. Documents were subsequently audited by the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee. In spite of the project being low risk, there were some ethical dilemmas that emerged. One of the most significant ethical concerns in the study design was how to de-identify principals' without, as Nespor (2000, p. 555) describes, "detaching" or "disconnecting" them from a study concerned with place.

Although pseudonyms are commonly used in research (Lohman et al., 2015) to de-identify participants, they were not used in this study because they were deemed to still pose some risk of identification as quotes would be attributed to one principal when read together. The risk of identification, or what Kaiser (2009, p. 1632) calls "deductive disclosure" can compromise anonymity. Scheper-Hughes (2007) reflected on the difficulties of providing anonymity in place based research while considering the impact of deductive disclosure on the village she



studied. Similar risks of deductive disclosure existed in this study, as identifying characteristics of place were interwoven in quotes. Saunders, Kitzinger and Kitzinger, (2015, p. 623) described how they discussed place without revealing participants' links to locations within their study.

To reduce the risk of deductive identification, space, place, and environmental factors and features were discussed with care, and quotes that had significantly identifying details were omitted. However, to avoid de-contextualisation the study was located temporally and spatially, in post-earthquake Canterbury, with differences being noted regarding schools that experienced damage, or rebuilds, to avoid generalisation. Principals' gender was also de-identified by avoiding use of gender specific pronouns, which is considered appropriate when gender does not play a pivotal role in the analysis (Baker et al., 2016).

It is common knowledge to many schools and other services, that I work in schools in North Canterbury and Kaikoura, and therefore participants were also invited from schools that the rest of the SBMHT support in Mid Canterbury and Christchurch, to reduce the chance of the participants being identified by peers or others by association with my geographic boundary. This is particularly important for *Kura Kaupapa Māori* and state integrated schools whose unique features and low numbers in Canterbury may increase the likelihood of identification. No explicit references were made to schools' specific religious or cultural identity.

It is also necessary to consider psychological safety in ethical research and because studies have found that principals' have stressful roles (Devos, Bouckennooghe, Engels, Hotton, & Aelterman, 2007; Riley, P., 2014), and because the interview's focus was on wellbeing, I provided an information sheet about supports for wellbeing at the time of the interview. This included contact details for Employment Assistance Programmes, Life Line, and the Mental Health Foundation.

## **Data transcription**

Skukauskaite's (2012) study of reflexivity in the transcription process highlights the need for transparency of technical decisions made during transcription, due to the accountability researchers have to their participants and the research community. As is recommended by Liamputtong (2009), I personally transcribed the digital audio recordings as soon after the interview as possible, prior to the commencement of another interview. The process of transcribing itself Lapadat and Lindsay (1999) describe as both interpretive and constructive, and it is therefore not a technical step but an analytic process (Skukauskaite, 2012). Brown and Durrheim's (2009, p. 928) walking interview transcription notes discussed the text as being "inseparable from the context" and that where the talk was situated invoked context. Brown and Durrheim addressed this by including spatial information in brackets in the transcripts. I did not use brackets, finding it easy to recall the places tied to the talk.

Because the transcription process is both interpretive and prone to error (Poland, 1995, Probst, 2015), noise can contribute to omission or error in transcribing a mobile interview (Clark & Emmel, 2010), for example, a participant whispering if they are concerned about others in the environment hearing what they are saying (Anderson & Jones, 2009). For this reason, a copy of the de-identified transcript was emailed to the participant for feedback on accuracy, agreement on successful de-identification (Kaiser, 2009), and general comments. Participants were given a two week timeframe for responding to ensure the study timeline was adhered to, and while some principals responded quickly, others did not respond. I noted that some principals expressed a sense self-consciousness about their transcription and joked that they had "waffled" or "hoped that they made sense".

## **Method of analysis**

Transcripts were analysed thematically. Thematic analysis begins with coding features of interest in the data. (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 88; Braun, Clarke, & Terry, 2014, p. 101). In this process, the content of the data direct the coding, which informs the broader development of themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p.83). Malterud, 2001, describes this process as involving both decontextualisation and recontextualisation, where elements are lifted out of the transcript to be investigated more closely. Due to the volume and diversity of the data, one of the key tasks was working out if the data were substantive enough to become themes or if they were just codes. This required considerable development of my analytical thinking skills to look beyond superficial patterns. When the data are recontextualised they must still concur with the context in which they were created (Malterud, 2001). This is a recursive or “non-linear process” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 86), which took me both back and forward many times.

In order to refine the themes from the significant amount of data covering many concepts I constructed thematic maps. Braun et al., (2014) suggest, that the visual process helps shape and organise information and guide decisions about data relationships. Even so the process of visual mapping also required many iterations as I had to challenge myself about the relationships between the themes. I eventually identified a small number of major themes. Those themes were analysed more deeply and that too required circling back to relevant literature and theory that I had gathered during the creation of the proposal and background chapter. I also found new literature to reflect content in themes that I had not considered during the initial literature review. To complete the analysis I then mapped the themes I had developed from literature over my existing visual maps of themes from my data, to further check thematic coherence, challenge the rigour of my analysis and to support the teasing out of sub-themes. The themes form the basis of the discussion in the next three chapters. The next chapter is the first of three

findings chapters, which discusses principals' connectedness to space and place and wellbeing that develops through their relationships with people, nature, and observations of interactions between students and staff and the school environment. It also considers principal's roles as leaders and advocates as many schools undergo significant spatial change.

### **Limitations**

Although I aimed for high ethical standards and rigour in the research process this study has some limitations; the most significant one is that this study cannot be generalised to wider populations because it is a qualitative study, with a small sample size, and therefore the findings may not be transferable. The sample size for this type of study was estimated to be 12 at the start of the study; however, the quantity was determined by the amount and quality of data gathered, the scope, and the timeframe for a Master's project as well as the point of data saturation (Guest, Bunce, & Johnson, 2006). Although the data do not provide a completely exhaustive account of wellbeing in schools they provide an exploration of new insights to challenge existing ideas (Malterud, Siersma, & Guassora, 2016). In addition, whilst being an outsider brings other ways of knowing to a constructivist study which influence the interview process and data analysis, because I am not an educationalist, my world view of wellbeing in education is not informed from a pedagogical perspective.

## Chapter 4

“Sort of areas”, sentimental spaces and contested playgrounds

### **Introduction**

This chapter investigates principals’ narratives about their school space. Such investigation enables the seeing of places beyond the surface of space on a map (Massey, 2012, p. 131). Principals’ narratives have the potential to be obscured as educational agencies who are the governments’ regulatory stewards (Winson, 2017) “develop and promulgate a shared and compelling story of the education system” (MoE, 2016, p. 10). Within this story schools are undergoing re-conception by agencies in what is described as “experimental and innovative ... rapid cycles of change” (MoE, 2016, p. 11). However, it is not simply principals’ narratives that are contested in Canterbury, but also school space and place, as schools are also undergoing rationalisation due to their age and maintenance requirements, the earthquakes (Ministry of Education [MoE] 2011), projected changes to school rolls (Boshier, 2017; MoE, 2011), and the proliferation of ILEs.

Charteris, Smardon, and Nelson (2017, p. 818) found that changes and spatial reframing associated with ILE in schools can “collapse bodies, feelings and histories together”. School “principals mediate and filter these changes in relation to their school philosophies and pedagogical journeys” (Charteris et al., 2017, p. 809). It is, therefore, understandable that principals connected pressures and changes in school space and place to wellbeing. The first sub-theme in this chapter explores ILE and transitions in relation to wellbeing, identity, and the ripples of change. The ideologies and pragmatism that drive the changes discussed in this first sub-theme contrast with the second sub-theme which explores principals’ sentimental, affective and intimate perceptions of place that are intertwined with relationships over time. The third and final sub-theme in this chapter, examines how principals manage the

deconstruction of play areas to pave the way for ILEs, and considers their role as advocates for students' play.

### **Wellbeing in 'sort of areas'**

Not all the principals who were interviewed in this research had schools damaged by earthquakes, but every principal interviewed was on a continuum of engagement with ILEs. Some were near completion of significant rebuilds, some had a few new ILE buildings, some were awaiting ILE builds and some had completely rejected the MoE's advances to become ILEs. A principal had refused to change their school into an ILE, seeing ILE as a threat to intimacy due to the larger factory-like spaces, where learning became impersonal, as teachers could not possibly really know all of their students due to larger class sizes:

*There is going to be a small amount of building here but we are very conscious that we are limiting the size of the school ... so that there is a sense of space and intimate connection in the school, because we don't want this to be a sausage factory.*

There is a tendency for discussions about ILEs to become stuck in binary discourses about "traditional classrooms and contemporary learning spaces" (Mulcahy & Morrison, 2017, p. 751). The factory metaphor used by the principal is also used by ILE proponents (Osborne, 2016), who argue that pre ILE, education was industrialised, and therefore antiquated, and required change (Osborne, 2016). Flamboyant descriptions of ILE such as "Laboratories of Learning Change" (OECD, 2015, p .7) or "awesomeness incubators" (Osborne, 2016, p. 1) encourages further "disavowing [of] connections" between what is posited as the old and the new (Mulcahy & Morrison, 2017, p. 751). The principal's decision to remain a non ILE school increased applications for enrolments by parents seeking to remove their children from ILE schools or avoid enrolling in them altogether. The principal shared a parent's comments from a school orientation session prior to enrolment of a new student. The parent was removing her

child from a nearby ILE school because when she had approached her child's teacher, the parent believed that although the teacher had known her child's name the teacher did not really know the student.

Principals commented that the change from old to new environments generated uncertainty and stress about ILE and what would happen if the ILE experiment failed to work as planned, especially with concerns about noise in the open environments:

*“What’s plan B when this fails, what’s plan B?” and it was dads walking around with a decimetre on their phone going looking at sound levels and things like that...It was really interesting what some of the parents thought.*

However, at this early stage of the establishment of ILEs, principals could also cite a few examples of where they had received some initial positive feedback from students.

[quoting a student] *“this is going to be a mistake, it’s not going to work, you shouldn’t be doing it” and then at the start of this year she went home and said “I got it wrong it’s brilliant. I love it, this is the way we should be learning”.*

*I asked one of the boys when we came here, “are you liking it?” and he said ... “it feels like the school was built for us”.*

Because there is scant literature to support this type of anecdotal comment, and it has been acknowledged that “space is an under acknowledged and under theorised concept when attempting to understand how ILEs work” it is still unclear “not only how they [ILEs] work, and who, and what they work for” (Blackmore, et.al, 2011, p. 750), but also how they may not work and who they may not work for.

The unease created by the prospect of New Zealand schools becoming ILEs has been connected to the potential of ILEs to represent a break from the past (Osborne, 2016), a process that may conflict with schools’ prevailing values and norms (Osborne, 2016), as well as their “historical

development, progress and accumulation” (Simons & Masschelein, 2008, p. 689), by challenging a school’s understanding of itself, where time was privileged over space. In contrast, ILEs privilege space over time by locating the environment in the here and now, a reconceptualisation of space and time (Simons & Masschelein, 2008). ILEs are claimed to be modern by an abrupt and symbolic drawing of a line in the sand to demarcate where today’s practice and place become outdated tomorrow, a process that requires the un-knowing of past and place, a “dissolving of collective identity” (Rustin, 2008, p. 3) so it can be reconstituted again to become momentarily innovative (Simons & Masschelein, 2008). The neoliberal process of undoing and unknowing schools, requires emotion to be reframed as a calculable, transactional resource (Hanley, 2015), but conversely, principals spoke passionately about the fluidity of time, of identity, *whakapapa*, history, and succession, in places where people created space:

*What you will see is photos, photos of the legacy, which is very important here ... so it starts from the very first photo of when the school opened here and it goes around and so that’s what I mean ... I get a bit teary eyed when I talk about that.*

Examples of disruption to the historical knowing of space were evident in a number of comments principals made, including a story about a library. The library, once capable of commanding its own room and having an historical identity as a place of knowledge, of rules (no eating, be quiet), or retreat for students seeking escape, silence, or warmth on cold days, was dissected, dislocated, and harder to recognise as it inhabited a new space in a “*sort of area*” of multiple uses including library, after school care, and a social space:

*So we have our student common and this is a whole dilemma between conservative thinking and modern thinking, so the student common is our library sort of area ... the hang out area where the kids come and ... play different games they can just hang out*



*and do their work in here, or just meet and eat or talk or whatever, and then you have our [staff member] who comes, and goes, “I just want a reading space where the kids are quiet and they can sit and read books and they are not disturbed by anybody,” and I say, actually, you can do that anywhere you want.*

The library story suggests that space in ILEs can appear superficially co-formed and contentiously occupied, as one person has experienced the displacement, undoing and decomposition of their space, whilst the other person expressed excitement with the new configurations. Massey (2005, p. 152) contends that all space is socially regulated, and involves negotiation and contestation. Social regulation also includes controls and “traces of power and exclusion”, which are often less visible and therefore harder to contest (Massey, 2005, p. 153); for example, the co-locating of a library space with after school care and common rooms, could be more driven by economics than innovation.

Libraries, administration areas, resource areas, and staff rooms are considered non-teaching spaces by the MoE (2017a), and unlike teaching spaces the MoE do not fund them (MoE, 2017a). If a school has less space than it is entitled to (worked out by a calculation based on its current space and its roll size), it can apply to the MoE for special funding to cover non-teaching spaces; however, this funding is based on a government prioritised ranking system (MoE, 2017a), so schools do not always get approval.

It is not only the traditional function of school space that is challenged and changed by ILEs; the traditional language of school space is also transformed (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Simons & Masschelein, 2008) with space, objects, practice, and roles being renamed and redefined. Schools become “learning environments”, students become “learners” and teachers become “coaches and designers” (Davies & Bansel, 2007; Simons & Masschelein, 2008). The newness of the ILE terminology has generated some awkwardness in its use and application for some

principals, similar to a tourist using a phrase book to communicate as they travel in a different country. A principal tussled with the language when discussing a more open plan style of classroom in the school with me:

*This [single cell classroom] has just been enhanced, so the idea of this, is we are going to have some team teaching in this space ... I get very confused, I don't like to jump on that terminology, I think flexible learning space is what we would say.*

The deployment of ILE also had the potential to disrupt school occupants' understandings of space (Jeyasingham, 2013). One principal described a disruptive state of flux as they awaited the building of ILEs within their school, and were preparing for the new space by practising collaborative teaching in space that was not suited for the purpose:

*Some of the stuff they are doing here they are practising here, because it is quite crowded in here with 90 odd kids in this one space, and they have a teaching space over there but they are trying out some things here before they move to the new block.*

One school had used an open plan model pre earthquakes but due to earthquake damage they had been temporarily relocated into single cell classrooms, which many of their teachers, students, and parents had not experienced before. This principal converted the single cell classes into open plan spaces. The experience of moving through and working in open plan design in contrast to the single cell classrooms led this principal to consider the hidden impact of doors on parents:

*I think the thing that stood out to me most when I arrived after about six months was the damage that that thing does [points to door] because as soon as a parent ... sees that that door is shut they go, "oh I had better not go in", whereas what you have in those open plan spaces is this ability to wander and sit down ... you just have this free flow. These things [doors] kill it as people don't feel like moving through it.*

Dale (2005) suggests that doors, like all material, can be imbued with meaning, therefore materiality is not just the stuff of the world, as humans exist within the same world as the material and are also changed by it (as cited in Delaney, 2010). In this sense, a door can divide space and signify power differentials and spatial tensions as is evident with the classroom door. Doors can also protect from noise. Research tends to privilege the power of people and not of materiality and objects (Hurdley & Dicks, 2011); however, in this study the people were found to be in relationship with the material, “mobilize[d] constantly reflexive, displacing/emplacing ways of knowing” (Hurdley & Dicks, 2011, p. 290), where principals were often sensitive to the power of materiality and objects:

*I did have a low table, we put a table in and we actually did that as sometimes it's an actual board table to work around ... it's like the kitchen table.*

*It's about being comfortable, making people feel comfortable, comfy seats.*

However while attempts to manage materiality and space could create comfort, they could also create tensions particularly in preparation for or settling into ILEs. In one large and noisy open plan classroom where teachers were practising ILE teaching with 60 students before moving into a new ILE building, a sign said “Zen”:

*The zen zones were originally going to be silent corners and in this space it was a little bit more challenging ... it hasn't worked as we would have liked, but we still know that in the new space there will be more opportunity for that ... there are two [zen zones] in this space and sometimes they are used as teaching spaces but kids will go [to the zen zones] if they are not in the big talky collaborative mood, if they're in more of a “I want to work independently” mood.*

Whilst this comment reflects the hope and belief that the “new [ILE] space” will be less challenging, Mulcahy and Morrison (2017) found that uncertainty remains and unsettles and

challenges teachers for some time after they have moved into an ILE. The need for quiet space was addressed in different ways in other schools; with purposefully designed and built smaller breakaway rooms with large glass walls looking into the larger spaces, or as a creative remediation of a noisy space after a build. The generation of space was also demonstrated when a quiet space was created within one large ILE through the erection of a large canvas gazebo, within which students wore headphones to excise sound from the ILE soundscape.

*Oh you can just see the kids sometimes, like you can see [name] he's in there he's just got the headphones on, it's their cave space.*

Similarly, in Charteris et al's., (2017, p. 818) study, principals perceived that “teachers re-territorialise ILEs as a means of coping, carving out familiar silos in which to re-group”, and Blackmore et al. (2011) describe the ongoing serial re-design of ILE space once students and teachers move in. The ripple effect of response to change was similarly noted in Lefebvre's (1974) musing that trial by space occurs when external ideas confront the ways people are used to experiencing a space, and that people will feel the need to generate space in response (as cited in Molotch, 1991). Even so, not all spaces in schools with ILEs are in states of constant change as some spaces such as staffrooms became peripheral in the ILE re-design.

During the walking interviews some principals left the staffroom off their route. I was interested in the role of staffrooms in wellbeing and prompted principals to detour to them. Teachers see staffrooms as places of rest, but also as professional spaces to work and learn within (Lisahunter, Rossi, Tinning, Flanagan, & Macdonald, 2011; Christensen, Rossi, Lisahunter, & Tinning, 2018). The MoE can disregard staff rooms as being part of ILEs, but Roffey (2008) argues that staffrooms are spaces of influence on student and staff wellbeing and are part of the larger school ecosystem. Principals conveyed a strong sense of responsibility for staff wellbeing and some felt that the staff room was not a wellbeing enhancing space:

*I just feel so sorry for my staff in terms of our staff room because it's such a small space for so many people and it gets so noisy in here on occasions.*

Offices and staff rooms have been described as the “backstage” areas of schools (Hargraves, 1994), or “off stage” spaces that provide an “oasis” for staff seeking a restorative environment, that promotes wellbeing and reduces the negative impact of emotional labour (Saito, Irving, Packer, & Solnet, 2015, p. 695). They provide a reprieve from the energy needed to manage behaviours and emotions in more public work spaces (Saito et al., 2015) and are considered to provide a contrast to the indifferent re-knowing and re-making of educational space (Haywood, 2014). In this study, however, many school staffrooms were described as being cramped spaces in leaking buildings with aged interior design and furniture:

*It's a leaky building it needs to be completely refurbished for the staff, I guess if you look at our classrooms we tend to spend any extra money in there.*

Many of the staffroom and administration areas that were leaky buildings sat in stark contrast, immediately next to the brand new, warm, and watertight ILE buildings that were filled with modern ergonomically designed furniture, had new bathrooms for children and new kitchenettes for parents. Some expressed hope that staffroom and administration spaces would also be re-built:

*Yeah what we hope is that ... our admin block is hopefully going to be replaced and come down, it's a leaky building, it's just a bunch of old prefabs pushed together, so when that happens we are going to create another shape ... with the centre of the school in the middle, we will get there, we will get there.*

Principals' comments about ILE highlighted their ambivalence and those undergoing process of change frequently described a combined sense of uncertainty, hopefulness and pragmatism in relation to the ongoing spatial reframing. They spoke not only of space, but also place, of

legacies of connectedness and the purposeful use of the material to create a sense of comfort, which Allen (2013, p. 56) describes as a type of unofficial, entanglement of space, materiality, and identity. Within this entanglement principals also revealed their sense of place and place attachment, which is defined as “positive emotional and functional bonds between places and people at different spatial scales signifying the varied interplays of spatial, environmental and human factors” (Hashem, Abbas, Akbar & Nazgol, 2017). This next sub-theme seeks to illuminate the sensory and sentimental aspects that principals discussed.

### **Sentimental and sensory space and place**

In those schools that had transitioned to ILEs, funding was prioritised to teaching spaces, and therefore most principals’ offices had not been re-built, and as a result, looked less innovative and more homely. Most offices were layered with personal art, children’s art, thank you cards, in-jokes from colleagues, knick knacks from past students and colleagues and *taonga* from previous roles. Dewey (1998) reflects on how connections to existing environments are created, believing order stems from relational interactions and interchanges, not external impositions: “The career and destiny of a living being are bound up with its interchanges with its environment, not externally but in the most intimate way” (Dewey, 1998, p. 397).

Office decorations can be considered physical and intimate identity markers, as they also signal intentional and unintentional information about the occupant of the space (Elsbach, 2004), including who they are or who they want to be (Byron & Laurence, 2015):

*This is not a boastful display of certificates, it’s a reminder of the journey where I have come from.*

Objects in principals’ offices often preserved history, prompting nostalgic, sentimental recall, or mood shifts, which was confirmed in a study finding personal items at work increase

workers' comfort and connection (Byron & Laurence, 2015). It is interesting to consider potential threats to this type of intimate space as schools become increasingly redesigned and rebuilt. The homely ambience of principals' offices and sense of place is experienced in their office space that is also a gallery, a museum, a meeting space, and a place of respite. Belk (1991) contends that the past becomes increasingly important to people when their identity is challenged by intense change and mobility, and that objects and adornments offer stability and support. Objects in offices marked transitions, achievements and the passage of time, often contrasting with wider school environments that were rapidly changing, history shedding, mobile, temporary transformations of space:

*It is things like this, it was made for me a by a pupil in my very first class and she is now 41 years old. So I hold on to those things, I am quite sentimental about that sort of stuff.*

To gain a place in the principal's office an item did not have to be of high quality or have the hallmarks of a successful artisan of a future workforce:

*Even this thing, not because it's got my name, but that was something he just brought to me randomly and I thought it was just so cool.*

Principals expressed joy when pointing out student art and writing adorning office walls and shelves, describing the emotionally reciprocal nature of regular connections with students in their office:

*I ... celebrate and enjoy having conversations with children about their art, they bring that to me, I give them a certificate, a little gold star and badge ... engage with them and that ... makes their day and makes my day when it makes their day.*

Offices not only held reminders of student or collegial connections but also of family and *whānau*. Principals frequently mentioned the importance of support they got from their partner

and pride in their children or grandchildren, some of whom were students in the same school. Personal effects and photographs were used to signal the importance of family to the principal, engender pride and joy or keep the presence of loved ones close by, and share something about their identity outside of work (Byron & Laurence 2015).

*So my daughter made this ... this is our family in a representational form in ... a Māori sort of context ... without wanting to be overt, as in here's a picture of my kids ... it's a reminder that they are here with me.*

Principals also engaged in reconfiguring their own space. A principal who had attended a workshop on decluttering space had initially cleared out their office to find that it was not only not comfortable, it was not practical:

*I went to a workshop by [name] and it was all about optimising your time and your workspace and he talked about taking all the distractions, the photos, everything, all this was gone out of my office and there was just blank, there was nothing, and I lasted about three days and I thought people come in here and think "oh how boring, there is nothing here" and things like my guitar, you know when I pick it up to use it, it wasn't here, I would leave it in the hall and think that's ridiculous.*

The majority of principals' offices faced into the playground and a principal described the spatial barriers set up by the previous principal:

*When I arrived here the blinds were almost always closed and the outside was out and the inside stayed in and it was quite separated.*

The professional and emotional need to engage with students were commonly expressed, and principals described themselves entering into conversations through open windows, shooting water pistols or providing an appreciative audience for impromptu student performances in breaks:



*You are ... almost outside ... it makes it easy just to get up and go for a wander and connect with what is going on because ... I don't want to be a person that's isolated ... if someone wanted to see me they could just wave on the outside and I could just pop out and see them , they don't have to go to the office if they need to talk to me ... I'm facing out to them, I'm not facing in to here, I think that's really important.*

A principal pointed to the view from their office window that provided a source of inspiration through the recollection of the positive memories of time outdoors. Such natural views from office windows can improve affect and cognition (Bratman, Daily, Levy, & Gross, 2015) and levels of job satisfaction (Lottrup, Stigsdotter, Meilby & Claudi, 2015) by buffering role stress (An, Colarelli, O'Brien & Boyajian, 2016). Although neoliberal ideology may perceive such emotional benefits as “resources” (Hanley, 2015), Santayana’s (1955, p. 119) less reductionist description of this type of aesthetic temporal recall as “the hushed reverberations” generated by associated feelings seems more fitting:

*You can't see it now but behind that cloud is mount [name] and I run up there quite regularly and sometimes I just like that lookout, it's quite inspiring ... I like light and I like outdoors.*

Principals often pointed out and appreciated natural features of their school environment, connecting them to their own wellbeing as they facilitated respite and nurturing reflection:

*It's a place with green, it's that connection outside in and the calmness of nature and it puts things in perspective when you are pondering and when you are looking at things.*

The ability of nature to offer temporary stability fits with Dewey’s (2005, p. 16) notion of rhythm between the interactions of humans and nature within the “whirlwind of flux and change” of life; however, it is striking that principals’ wisdom about this “ebb and flow, systole

and diastole of life” (Dewey, 2005, p. 16), goes far deeper than the MoE’s limited linking of outdoor spaces to student achievement. Thus, in this study, principals’ affective narratives challenge what Mulchay and Morrison (2017, p. 757) describe as the “official, singular, neutral and apolitical, ILE literature”. Affect also involves other senses beyond sight; a principal’s olfactory perception of coffee led him to have a coffee percolator in the office:

*The smell of coffee is something that keeps me going.*

The same principal’s sensory relationship with coffee led to investment in a coffee, hot chocolate, and soup making machine for the staff room. Lefebvre (1991), cited in Simonsen (2005) argues that the body is also a spatial realm (a practico-spatial or sensory realm) where space is perceived and also produced through the senses of hearing, sight, touch, smell, and taste, yet these are less considered in spatial discourse. Degen and Rose (2012) call for increased awareness of the relationship between sensory experiences embedded in design and the provocation and formation of sensory biographies:

*Yeah the coffee machine is really important. I like to think that the staffroom is an oasis of calm for people, even though it’s very glass walled, but it’s still a separation if they need a place to work and things.*

Smells, like the smell of coffee, can cross boundaries, connect and create social bonds and are associated with memory and intimacy (Marusek, 2015) of people and of place. Highmore (2016, p. 154), contends that these types of less “explicit indefinite and diffuse formation of feelings” that arise cannot be “siphoned-off and analysed as they saturate life-worlds in complex ways, as mood, attitude, manners and emotions” (Highmore, 2016, p. 149). Sound can also affect wellbeing, and principals were attuned to soundscapes within their schools: noises associated with building, noise in staff rooms or classrooms, nature sounds, and music. The saturation of positive feelings associated with music was often described as being shared

by principals, staff and students in classes, when broadcast from student run radio stations and at play times:

*We have noticed the change and influence of playing waiata [song] during playtime and before school starts ... during lunch time [it] really does something to the dynamics during play time. Music creates happiness, music creates excitement ... depends what type of music and also we are advocates for Māori music ... I like music ... I like to sing ... so it's quite normal for the kids to hear me singing away and the kids love singing ... it sets a mood so ... its quite natural to hear kids singing while they are working away ... it was just sort of "let's play music ... why don't we get a sound system put out."*

How space feels, was often described as a shared experience, as a principal described a time when chairs in a staffroom were reconfigured, resulting in what Nautival (2016) called “communal solidarity” in sensing place.

*We deliberately put our staffroom chairs like this - you are having individual conversations but you are focused on each other ... originally we had it in the shape of a 'W' (where) you have your back to others and people didn't like that, we tried it for wee while and then thought no, it's about how it feels.*

The way places exist becomes transmitted as a type of social knowledge as part of accumulated and “sedimented” experiences of collectivity (Berger & Luckman, 1991, p. 88). The staff become the collective “knowers” (Berger & Luckman, 1991, p. 88) who value face to face connection with each other, and have attached meaning to the formation of the chairs, which symbolise the “normative dignity” (Berger & Luckman, 1991, p. 111) of their relational roles and values. My argument in this sub-theme is that principals sense space, take an active and relational role in shaping space, develop strong connections to place, and that these connections

are at the heart of wellbeing. It is therefore not surprising that principals in this study often noticed students' relationships with space and place, particularly in play, and that they believed their role as leaders included facilitating access to and helping shape play space. Principals' perceptions of play and wellbeing are the subject of the final sub-theme for this chapter.

### **Playground contestations**

“They paved paradise and put up a parking lot” (Mitchell, 1976).

During the interviews, some principals expressed concerns, regarding barriers to children's right to play, to have appropriate areas for play, and all principals thought that play was crucial to children's wellbeing. The ILE rebuilding or remodelling was seen by some principals as a threat to children's ability to play because the process of construction could require an initial degree of deconstruction of play areas, however, the MoE would not pay to re-establish play areas. Outdoor play had increased post-quake, helping children to feel school was a fun place again (O'Connor & Takahashi, 2014) and there is a wide range of research on children's play and playgrounds (Bagot, Allen, F. C., & Toukhsati, 2015). Green space in schools has been found to improve students' cognitive development (Dadvand et al., 2105), can reduce the intensity of students' ADHD symptoms (Faber & Kuo, 2011), and reduce what Louv (2005) identified as “Nature Deficit Disorder (NDD)”, where children spend less time in green spaces, have less exposure to everyday green spaces and are less connected to nature. Children themselves desire both natural and created play and activity spaces in schools and link these to their own wellbeing (Simmons, Graham, & Thomas, 2015). They see playgrounds as places for fun and adventure, and want objects and equipment to play on, along with more natural features including water, plants and animals (Burke & Grosvenor, 2015).

Adults' more prescriptive views of play and conceptions of play space (Thomson, 2005) can differ from and dominate children's views (Bagot et al., 2015). Adult views are often in

opposition to children's unrestrained views of play (Glenn, Knight, Holt, & Spence, 2013). Adults think play requires control and spatial limitation through rule enforcement and boundaries (Hyndman & Telford, 2015; Thomson, 2005).

The MoE's indifference to play and playgrounds within school environments is evident in the limited mention of them in their report on the physical impact of design on student outcomes (MoE, 2016). Playgrounds are often omitted in ILE discussion (Blackmore et al., 2011; Osborne, 2016), raising concerns that play could be at risk of becoming ideologically downplayed as a result of the proliferation of ILEs (Bojesen, 2017). Currently, playgrounds must be funded by the school's Board of Trustees (BOT), from funding sources such as fundraising and grants from trusts or community groups (MoE, 2018). Even though it is the school's money, the BOT must gain consent from the MoE to spend it on playgrounds. Consent is dependent on the school meeting all required criteria including their financial status and property standards (MoE, 2018), which one principal noted was challenging for an old school that had competing maintenance requirements. If schools can afford it, can meet the criteria, and are granted approval by the MoE, they are then required to cover the ongoing cost of insurance for playgrounds (in an earthquake prone area), out of their own funding, because playground insurance is not covered by the MoE (MoE, 2017b). Two principals had been able to raise the funds, either through available funds held by the BOT or by Parent Teacher Association fundraising.

*Yeah well the board of trustees invested a lot of money into trying to change the environment ... so it's not really a typical school environment ... in many respects with some of the planning and seating and pathways [doubling as creative play and meeting spaces] the MoE didn't really want us to have it, they said you can't afford them and we said yes we can and so we just did it.*

*The PTA have raised in that time over \$XX,XXXX, because all that the Ministry provided us was a sandpit.*

In one school a large, new, ILE building sat surrounded by what had been a pre-existing play area, but which was now an area of mud churned up by construction, with existing aged landscaping and plantings. There was no available BOT funding to pay for a new play area:

*We will have to fund that on our own over time, which we will but the opportunity was to do it there right now ... but we will get there ... we will get there slowly*

Internationally schools in disadvantaged communities struggle to undertake projects to develop green areas in school grounds, unlike more affluent schools and communities (Dyment, 2005). The loss of play areas and no funding for their development caused multiple pressures across the school community. Overall, principals spoke of the significant time and energy that it took them and the wider school to re-develop their playgrounds:

*So when we arrived here we had nothing, just the buildings. Some children went through our school minus a decent playground for their whole time at school.*

It is unclear how this situation reflects the United Nations policy that protects children's right to play, where it is explicitly stated that children not only have the right to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities, but that this must be respected and promoted (United Nations, Article 31, UN Convention, 2009).

Progress in ILE builds and rebuilds was often reported as not being linear, and frequently needing to be re-done due to quality problems or damage caused by ongoing building. This disrupted developed play spaces, had a negative impact on students, and caused stress for principals and staff. Principals described other pressures associated with the physical aspects of managing both a school, school playgrounds, and a construction site, including obvious ones like coming up against "*regulatory loggerheads*" and long term "*banging and crashing*".

*I would say that from this, that this has definitely reduced people's wellbeing, so just like little things, like here we had a truck come through yesterday you know [points to churned up mud becoming a hazard due to rain] just that and the fences and the stones ... I mean we are getting to the end of it but it's really added some stress to some people.*

*Sorry about the mess, they just wrecked the pathway, they just had to put cabling through to the new build over the back there.*

*We got sponsorship for [names project] which was all through that area but then that's now being demolished because of [construction of] stage x.*

One principal used their observations of students' play and took advantage of the ongoing building related to ILE in the school, demonstrating an understanding of what kind of play environments children need, and a willingness to break from the status quo to provide these types of areas:

*That hill over there is actually the spoil from the building site and we said we want to keep it, don't throw it away, and they said "what do you want to do with it?" and we said leave it there and we will let it go wild ... that will be part of a wild play area.*

Similarly, a principal broke with tradition by providing play equipment for older children after noticing some students became lost as they transitioned between the junior and senior areas of the school:

*Our [year] 7s and 8s ... got a bit stuck, "don't want to be over there playing anymore or, am I now at high school?" ... "maybe I need to be over here, but there is no playground" ... now they can still play ... at the time people were sort of thinking it [the new addition of a large play apparatus] should be in the primary school ... but I tell you, the day we put it in ... [in the senior area] it was packed, year 12s and year 10s and everyone on the playground.*

The principals' observations are supported in a study that found higher levels of physical activity and motivation in pre-adolescents in school environments with spacious grounds and rich outdoor activities (Delidou, Matsouka, & Nickolaidis, 2016). The developmentally transitional nature of Year 7 (age 10-11) and 8 students' play behaviour was also commented on by a principal, who described how Year 7 and 8s took over a long jump which was part of an outdoor fitness area created by adults and used it as a sandpit:

*A big part of understanding that we have got older kids in our school who ... still need to sit down and dig holes without being told ... stop doing that ... [is] they don't play with their peers or go out and play rugby ... so that's ... giving them a space where they can just be who they are ... we've got a long jump pit ... which they have just colonised ... you will see a blue box, we have filled it with spades and things so they can play ... you can see our senior kids ... Year 7 and 8, sitting in the sand making sand castles.*

The children's response to the long jump could be considered a re-territorialisation (Sachs, 1986, as cited in Thomson, 2005) of a prescriptive space where a specific activity was designated (Thomson, 2005). School staff had initially created the three main components associated with territoriality, classifying (the long jump as being for a sport activity), creating a boundary (designating the area that the long jump fell within), and then enforcing control (over what happened within the long jump area). This principal's response to the children's resistance suggested that in this school, children and their spatial experiences are valued and considered (Thomson, 2005) and demonstrated a deeper, practical, and inclusive understanding of play than can be found in ILE reports and guidelines. Children associate their wellbeing at school with having a voice and being heard (Anderson & Graham, 2016), and principals seemed attuned to their students' wellbeing needs in relation to play, re-affirming that a recursive nature exists between principals, students, place and objects. The relational



attunement demonstrated by principals to their students, staff and communities has also been found to have reciprocal benefits as it influences the development of a principal's identity (Stynes, & McNamara, 2018) and appeared to be one of the major influences underpinning their passion and advocacy.

### **Summary**

Principals described wellbeing as interwoven in space and place, their roles included leadership and significant advocacy related to spatial changes in their schools and they had a strong sense of curiosity, appreciation, protection and connection of and to their school environments. However the duality of leading and advocating for externally led change, whilst advocating for wellbeing of staff and students created some ambivalence. Although principals were staunch advocates for children's spatial rights in play and sympathised with staff over substandard staffrooms and frustrating disruptions of construction, they also expressed ambivalence for some staff concerns raised after ILE significantly changed a space.

Principals found moments in natural environments and other quiet places supported their own wellbeing, however they could also be advocates defending ILE from parental concerns about noise levels. Yet, principals also expressed concern about noise levels in ILE and showed how their schools had remade ILE space in a variety of ways to provide designated places that offered peace, quiet, and reprieve. The experimental nature of ILE puts principals in a position of defending changes for which there is no current evidence. Innovation therefore symbolised impermanence, as people continued to reshape space and place based on their experience of it, attachment to it, and their sense of place identity. Principals revealed discrepancies, pointing out ILE inhabited spaces which abutted other areas that were being contested or had been left behind in leaky decline, and principals' advocacy was often focused on the incongruous way people's wellbeing was valued in school space and place as funding privileged learning spaces.

Wellbeing was found to exist in spaces and places that are less discussed in current discourses and many spaces that were described by principals as wellbeing enhancing had not been exposed to innovation, either due to the way funding was allocated or when schools were not ILEs. These areas were physical pockets of intimate personal space including offices where displays of personal and professional identity intertwined with artefacts that represented principals' value of sentimental and longitudinal relationships. Principals viewed space relationally, describing being personally and professionally nourished by observing and interacting with children and connecting and being attuned, for example, to the way furniture could enhance or disturb connections in relational space for staff and families. Principals described the sounds of *waiata*, the sights of nature and smells of coffee, emotions and physical feelings that contributed to the unique sensory experience and attachment that they perceived within their school environment. Principals' appreciation of children's individual needs and development and their own appreciation of natural spaces informed their awareness about the impact of funding inequalities for play areas on children and schools. The next chapter discusses how principals themselves define wellbeing and maintain wellbeing personally, and professionally, including collegial relationships of support and the dynamic intersections of wellbeing and capacities of school, students and their families, and systems.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Navigating the intersections of wellbeing and support**

#### **Introduction**

In the previous chapter I discussed the way that principals were in the midst of many external changes for which schools developed compensatory responses. It was clear that principals thought the external school environment was important to wellbeing, but they also described emotions and senses in places and spaces through interwoven connections with nature and people over time.

This chapter shifts focus from the principals' perceptions of wellbeing and space, to wellbeing in relation to the principals' role and the associated personal and professional challenges. The first sub-theme of this chapter explores principals' definitions of wellbeing and how they manage it, including role pressures and transitions from work to home. The second sub-theme discusses how trust in professional relationships in leadership teams and other professional and collegial relationships provide support in their demanding roles. The third sub-theme addresses the complexity of the role of the principal in relation to the responsibilities they hold for the practical side of wellbeing and pastoral care where school, societal, and governmental boundaries and scopes are often unclear and shifting.

#### **Navigating wellbeing**

The theme of navigating wellbeing considers how principals not only define but also experience and manage their own wellbeing in light of the considerable responsibilities of their role. Many principals asked if they were being asked to define wellbeing professionally or personally and were advised they could comment on both. Principals also provided insights into their own wellbeing in a range of spaces, including home and work. The difficulty of

defining wellbeing is frequently discussed in wellbeing literature (Dodge, Daly, Huyton, & Sanders, 2012; Gillett-Swan & Sargeant, 2015; Hone, Schofield & Jarden, 2015), and therefore it was not surprising that principals' definitions were varied, being informed in differing degrees by their personal and professional experiences, ideologies, and the education curriculum.

As previously discussed the New Zealand health and physical education curriculum currently sets the direction for wellbeing in schools (MoE, 1999) and is based on Durie's model *Te Whare Tapa Whā* (Durie, 1994). However, using the *hauora* [health] framework did not guarantee ease in defining wellbeing:

*I actually think that it links really closely with hauora and the five elements that are there, so as like a framework for wellbeing if you think of physical, mental, social, spiritual ... I think of that like a framework to then define what those five things mean for wellbeing, so yeah very difficult to define.*

The *hauora* framework was also folded into personal beliefs and observations of what wellbeing looked like:

*Wellbeing is to me is being happy in your own skin and that it involves the whole hauora, the spiritual side comes in for me ... but you know when I look at a child with wellbeing, if they are happy and they are comfortable and you can tell by looking at them, if they are well fed they have slept, they are cared for, that's all part of the wellbeing.*

Some principals described wellbeing as an individualistic process of self-reflection and monitoring, with a sense of self agency and responsibility:

*I think it is having a handle on where your body mind and soul are in a holistic sense, being happy with where you are at and where you are heading.*

*On a personal level wellbeing for me is about balance and making sense of my life on a day to day basis really and managing the ups downs, pressures, in a way that has me still feeling ok.*

Individual responsibility for handling and managing wellbeing is a central tenet of neoliberalism (Rose, 1999). In the late 1980s the term *wellbeing* was used sparsely in newspaper reports, with only 117 mentions associated with concepts of national governance, economics, and societal wellbeing in 1985, but concomitant with the rise in neoliberal ideology, it became increasingly used and personalised in the 1990s, rising to 2243 mentions (Sointu, 2005) in 2003. As personal wellbeing becomes more frequently discussed in mainstream media it also becomes increasingly idealised (Sointu, 2005) and potentially becomes one of the pressures Bauman (2005) identified as the rising fears about being left behind, in the accelerating changes and daily consumption and disposability of modernised life.

Principals found that discussing wellbeing could create a sense of pressure, particularly when the increased focus on wellbeing post-earthquake created challenges for a principal who observed that wellbeing discussions with staff required balancing as staff had differing experiences:

*When they happened [earthquakes] we needed to talk [about wellbeing] ... we had staff at all different places with horrible events and houses and others who had hardly any impact at all and we needed to talk about those things as part of managing that ... it's that balance.*

Although many principals and their staff were managing their own post-earthquake wellbeing challenges outside of school, they were identified as quiet heroes, because during that time and for many years after, they managed emotional space in schools for students, communities, and

themselves (Mutch, 2015b). It has been acknowledged that principals' roles require them to hide their own emotions at times and that this creates a heightened emotional labour (Riley, 2017). There was generally increased pressure for people to manage their own post-earthquake wellbeing and display resilience, which led to the recycling of the "keep calm and carry on" message that was originally created by the British Ministry of Information at the time of the World War II blitz in the United Kingdom (MoI, 1939), (Figure, 2). However a survey found that people's sense of pride in coping after the Canterbury earthquakes significantly diminished over time, as did any prior increases in resilience (CDHB, 2017). Weichselgartner and Kelman, (2015, p. 262) point out that "resilience should not be detached from the underlying causes of (what is effectively social-political) vulnerability".



Figure 2. Keep Calm and Carry on (Ministry of Information, 1939).

The neoliberally led detachment of concepts like wellbeing and resilience from broader social contexts, highlights the current commitment to a focus on the role of the individual and a focus on human capital. In schools, this focus is discussed as the way that an individual's wellbeing and education contribute to national economic success. However, this approach conversely reconstitutes the individual as the end product of societal transformation (Bauman, 2005),

where wellbeing, or more explicitly self-control (Tangney, Baumeister, & Boone, 2004) and self-development (Türken, Nafstad, Blakar, & Roen, 2016) are being positioned as desirable commodities (Sointu, 2005; Türken et al., 2016), as indicated in one principal's definition:

*From an individual's perspective it's around how they react, how they use the opportunities in life to be successful.*

This conception of wellbeing as ideal responses for opportunistic gain fits well with the current economic positioning of wellbeing in schools however most principals described applying considerable effort to maintain wellbeing in the face of the volume and at times erratic, complex, and dynamic tasks which are described by Starratt and Leeman (2011, p. 39), as “a multiplicity of a daily parade of problems”, which have been found to impact principals' abilities to have predictable routines (Forsyth & Adams, 2014). It is not surprising, therefore, that a principal wondered if wellbeing was achievable:

*I'm not sure if you actually get into that professional wellbeing state because the nature of the beast with principal-ship is if you see the light in the tunnel it is always an oncoming train, it never is actually the light at the end of the tunnel and there is just something else coming on.*

The constant need to manage oncoming issues impacted on workload. Some principals in this study had recently calculated their working hours and were surprised at how many they did:

*I say that I am not going to do any evening work, which is impossible because there is always a couple of hours of emails or whatever ... happening, that's 57 hours this week. Last week was 66.5 hours and that's not outstanding.*

A longitudinal study of New Zealand primary school principal wellbeing found many principals working long hours due to the high volume of other administrative work that conversely reduced time to think about teaching and learning (Riley, 2017). It is suggested that

leaders will sacrifice or trade off dimensions of wellbeing to manage time deficits and pressures (Atkinson, Fuller, & Painter, 2016).

*I'm the first one to say to anyone of these [sick] teachers, don't come to school, you know, can't afford to get sick, but if I'm sick I'll be the last one to actually take sick leave ... we play an enormous role in wellbeing.*

Paradoxically, by engaging in “sickness presenteeism,” a term described by Hansen and Anderson (2008, p. 956) as a phenomenon where a person decides to go to work despite feeling ill, this principal may have been undermining the wellbeing they sought to foster by working while sick. Principals also report higher levels of emotional labour, burnout, and stress related symptoms than the general population (Riley, 2017). Several principals overtly commented on their own mortality with one wondering if the heart attack experienced was related to wellbeing more broadly:

*I had a bizarre year ... I had a heart attack ... I don't know if that relates to wellbeing or not, but so that was frustrating I guess mainly because it impacted on my [names sport] because that is the thing that keeps me going.*

*I was diagnosed with cancer ... while I am in hospital, as much as I love my job and love being here every day, that wasn't my first thought, it was my family ... that was the focus for me.*

Roffey (2012) argues that the promotion of staff wellbeing enhances their capacity to meet the needs of students. However, ERO's (2016) focus is solely on student wellbeing, stating that ideal school cultures move from an adult focus to a student focus. The MoE (2016b) has a webpage devoted to staff wellbeing but no specific MoE publications on staff wellbeing, instead directing site visitors to hyperlinks to external sites for general information on basic topics related to health and wellbeing.



Principals also located wellbeing internally, as a transitory headspace, frame of mind or mental space, “*being in the right space*” or conversely “*not in a good space*”. Being in the right space can be connected with “interiority” (McCarthy, 2005, p. 112) or the space an individual can access to achieve a reflective internal space, to gain freedom from the external world by creating a sense of distance from external conditions (Pimlott, 2018). Noise is thought to hinder states of interiority and whilst noise in staffrooms and in classrooms was discussed in the previous chapter, it is worthwhile noting that Owen-Smith (2017, p. 23), highlighted “the paradox of innovative pedagogies being inattentive to introspective practice”. It could be argued that ILE design is preparing students for the broader global move to open plan workplaces (Davis, Leach, & Clegg, 2011; Roderick, 2016), which could render interiority an endangered habitat of the future. Workers who do not voice positive appreciation of their experiences of an open plan office, which can include loss of privacy, increased noise, and hot desks, are at risk of being portrayed as less resilient or neurotic (McCone, Cordonnier, & Moore, 2017). Although principals discussed managing their wellbeing at school they also suggested that they contemplated their wellbeing as they traversed from school to home.

Principals described mental transitions from work to home, with some principals describing things they did to ameliorate the potential risk to their relationships at home. While job stressors, including long hours, can predict lower psychological detachment in non-work time, the ability to disengage psychologically from work when at home has been found to reduce burn out and increase wellbeing (Sonnetag & Fritz, 2015). Principals reported making decisions to create rituals that defined and demarcated the transition and detachment from work space to home space:

*When your head is racing it's about how you get away from it you know ... sometimes it's beneficial to let it race and other times it's switchoffable ... what I've started doing*

*... is to tend to hop on the iPad and watch some Netflix or something, just distraction stuff.*

*I walk in the door and put my keys down in the plate on the table down at the front entrance and my phone goes beside ... when I get home it is not work time.*

However some experienced intrusions of work during sleep due to worries:

*There have been times over the last three to four years where it's been pretty full on, to the point where we have had to trespass a parent, so they are the horrible times, the times you wake up in the night.*

Some principals felt the need to further reduce potential work intrusions by segmenting their professional self and their personal self within the community:

*I like separation from my work, I like to be known as [name], the guy next door, or [name] on the golf course, I don't want to be known as [name] the principal, or talking in the supermarket every five minutes about someone's child.*

However this separation of personal self and professional self did not suit all participants, some of whom described a more integrated sense of engagement in their role:

*I'm just around the corner and I love it, I absolutely love it, you know it's not that work carries on, it's that I have connections and you know I can go into the supermarket and I know people and they say hello and I say hello and every-where, down to the rugby field, you know its connections for me and I like that, otherwise I drive off somewhere and I don't have those connections.*

The preference for segmentation or integration has been found to be neither inherently good nor bad, however, improved congruence between a person's segmentation preference and their

perceived segmentation could reduce work-home stress and increase job satisfaction (Kreiner, 2006).

Principals' personal ideas of wellbeing influenced their professional thoughts about wellbeing, which created a natural fusion of their own beliefs and experiences and *hauora*. Principals had different approaches to managing their own wellbeing, navigating the transitions between home, family and work, sickness, and health as well as their proximity to their workplace. While principals cautiously encouraged students to take some responsibility for wellbeing, they did so whilst considering the capacity and resources of the students' families. Principals also thought that increased communication about staff wellbeing had the potential to create pressure for staff and were often the last to take care of themselves. Principals are leaders, managers, and connectors, however they also described a significant reliance and need for reciprocity of trust and support within their closest professional relationships. The role of inter-collegial and professional support is discussed in this next sub-theme.

### **Trust and support**

The pressures associated with the centrality of the principal role led to discussions about where principals drew strength and support. Principals identified mentors, supervisors, leadership teams and principal colleagues who contributed to their professional development and who also supported them to manage and sustain their wellbeing, although not all principals had a current mentor. However, the amount and type of support required was notably different for first time principals, who valued being able to reach out for advice at the times they needed and to be able to rely confidently on the advice they received.

*You've got the experienced principals and you know when I talk to them about a topic they are like, "oh yeah don't worry, that stuff happens you know, we have dealt with it 100 times and it will go away.*

First time principals have been found to place more importance on trust and confidence in mentor relationships than more experienced principals (Bakioglu, Hacifazlioglu, & Ozcan, 2010); however, some long time principals questioned their relevance to the younger, newer principals around them:

*I guess a lot of them are a lot younger than I am ... are principals of brand new schools ... and they are quite busy doing a whole range of things that they don't need muddied up by someone ... I mean there is plenty of phone calls ... being one of the oldies on the block ... you tend to get a few calls, "have you ever heard of this?", "what do you know about that?" sort of style which is good.*

Consistent with A. A. Smith's (2007) findings, having a good match with professional experience and wisdom was important in mentoring and supervisory relationships, as well as feeling connected. In addition to these findings, A. A. Smith (2007) found that principals' perceptions of the quality of mentoring in their mentoring relationships reflected the status principals attributed to those relationships and any associated learning opportunities, and also informed principals' sense of professional safety:

*cut to the chase there was no mucking around ... he knew what running big schools was all about ... professionally very knowledgeable ... I have known him when he was a principal, we have shared confidences...it was just so easy to sit and talk with him about anything and everything.*

While mentors and supervisors were important, most principals felt the most indispensable wellbeing enhancer was their relationships with their leadership team, personal assistants and

board chairs and frequently discussed their professional connections and workplace as being very important to their own wellbeing. Whilst principals are the leaders of the school many rejected their role as being top down or hierarchical, emphasising their belief that they were connected to and a part of the team by characterising their leadership as alongside, which Butt and Retallick, (2009, p. 23) describe as a horizontal approach where “power and expertise are shared”. Principals also described managing from the bottom up, only occasionally needing to manage from the top down:

*It is a web of intrigue almost ... it's all connected ... the connections are everywhere and ... the little ripples will move through ... I've got my fingers on the pulse of the web and the threads come to me but it's then my job to take those threads, unpack them with colleagues to provide a solution for them and not to act in haste.*

Principals described a reciprocally responsive and relational network, where close colleagues could “pick up the vibe” on days when the principal was “feeling off kilter”. Similarly, principals also described sensing the emotional needs of their team:

*When I arrived there was a whole lot of TLC needed to get the school into a good safe, physical and emotional headspace for staff.*

Trust was paramount for principals, with openness and confidentiality being repeatedly discussed as enhancing the principals’ sense of wellbeing; this is interesting because there is a plethora of literature about teachers’ trust in principals (Leis & Rimm-Kaufman, 2015; Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015a; Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2014), but little about principals’ trust relationships:

*On a deeper level is the senior leadership team that I have, we work really well together, we are really open and transparent about what we do, if things aren't working so well we are comfortable to have that conversation.*

The importance of trust highlighted their sense of their own and others' vulnerability (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015b), and their ability to draw others into the leadership team who share similar benevolent values (Tschannen-Moran & Gareis, 2015b) like caring:

*When we interview people for a job, I have [caring] at the top of my criteria ... they fit in our team if they are caring, and I appointed them all ... that is the sort of people that I would employ ... there is almost an implication ... that ... you can't ... [be caring and get the job done] ... but I think it's easier to be able to get the job done while caring than if your focus is only on getting the job done, the caring can get forgotten.*

Attachment was forged by shared experiences both fun and difficult and the feeling that the team had each other's backs:

*My senior staff my two DPs [deputy principals] and my SENCO [Special Education Needs Coordinator] and my PA [Personal Assistant], they bat ... all of them, if it's complicated and messy then you know very quietly two or three people will leave the office and go over and sort something out ... most of those issues are managed, that says a lot about wellbeing because those people are helping teachers to do what it is that they want to do, which is actually teach kids without someone throwing chairs around or whatever.*

The caring nature and quality of the relationships were also described as having a sustaining effect:

*There are times when I don't actually like the job but I love the people I work with. For me collegiality you know if I came to school and I thought I didn't belong I wasn't part*

*of this and it was us and them type thing then I would find the time and effort that I put into things really difficult so I feel having that place is really important for me personally*

The importance of collegiality was further detailed when some principals recalled challenging situations where they had needed support from their leadership team and that in these situations the principal and other team members took on roles like good cop or bad cop, a practice which has been recognised in a previous study of principals (Berkovich & Eyal, 2017):

*My DP is gold , she is incredibly skilled in dealing with people ... her and I make a really good double act because there's times when she can be good cop and I'm bad cop or the other way around we can and so yeah it's great.*

Whilst principals spoke frankly about the challenges to wellbeing they also attributed role sustainability to being able to share humour (Ho, 2016; Hurren, 2006; Kiliñç, Receptoglu, & Kosar, 2014) and collegial compassion (Eldor & Shoshani, 2016; Smylie et al., 2016), which have been found to be predictors of a healthy school climate but are not featured in MoE or ERO wellbeing documents:

*We have a lot of fun, a lot of fun, that's what it's about ... lots of laughter.*

*... a compliments book ... gets passed from pigeon hole to pigeon hole so I might receive it ... someone has written a lovely message I can go back and have a look at what everyone else has been writing about each other, all 100% positive and then I will start looking for someone that I feel has done something really amazing, write them a message, pop it in their pigeon hole ... it's been going for over two years circulating.*

Connection, collegiality, care, and being part of a collective were critical to the wellbeing of principals in this study, which paradoxically co-exists with a rise in the focus on individual success. Principals particularly described how they valued their teams when they detailed how

they supported each other to meet the various complexities of needs of students and society. For this reason the final sub-theme of this chapter discusses principals' perceptions of these types of social responsibilities and political and moral intersections of wellbeing.

### **Principals and principles at the intersections of wellbeing**

Within schools, day to day student wellbeing is supported by school pastoral care systems (MoE, 2017), which facilitate the practical care and consideration for student wellbeing. Principals described a hidden dimension of space and wellbeing that existed simultaneously with the physical environment, where the school gates could be a threshold, with the gates becoming both material and symbolic sentinels and heralds of potentially different world views and experiences of wellbeing. At these intersections, school principals are considered to hold a gatekeeper role of a go-between, buffer, and filter, and their role is associated with ambiguity and ambivalence, due to their responsibility to balance the needs of many internal and external stakeholders (Kelchtermans, Piot, & Ballet, 2011).

Families are school stakeholders and are a source of bi-directional influence for wellbeing between home and school. The quality of a family's network or collective social resource (Field, 2016) can influence a student's behaviour at school (Parcel & Dufur, 2001), whilst a student's academic (Bai, Reynolds, Robles, & Repetti, 2017) and peer problems (Chung, Flook & Fuligni, 2011) can influence a student's relationship with their family (Parcel & Dufur, 2001). Principals described the many pressures and challenges of their role in relation to wellbeing, as children traversed the dual worlds outside and inside the school gates. On the issue of obscenities, for example, one principal commented:

*And for me I can't say to a child, "you shouldn't swear ..." "but I swear at home"[child]..."well you shouldn't be swearing at home" ... I might believe that, but you can't verbalise that and you have to put that and park it, but what I can say is "at*



[name of school] *we don't swear". Even this morning when I arrived, the caretaker told me he heard a parent saying to a child who was having an altercation with one of the children ... " how many f'ing times have I told you about swearing?"*

This swearing incident, and other exchanges the participants shared between school, home and community, demonstrate the school staff's engagement in a homeostatic process of socially normative regulation (Collins & Coleman, 2008) as they attempt to maintain social boundaries within physical boundaries. Collins and Coleman (2008, p. 295) suggest schools have a role in shaping social identities, yet schools also have "hidden [and sometimes competing] geographies" including geographies of the political, socioeconomic, ethnic, social, gendered, cultural, rules and boundaries. For this reason, schools are considered "useful sites for examining the structure-agency tension, and the geographies of power" (Collins and Coleman, 2008, p. 282), because schools provide time limited isolation and segregation of children from wider social and spatial contexts. Some participants shared the view that by providing a different environment for wellbeing at school, in contrast to home, a student could act differently at school:

*Just because stuff happens to you at home, you can make a choice when you come through this gate ... once the children understand, and the vast majority of children understand that, it means that they can be a different person in a different situation and I think life demands that.*

Although on the face of it, comments like this seem to responsabilise the individual child, the comment resonates with a study that found that when some school staff perceive deficits in students' homes, they also report their schools as having transformative effects (Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2011). Another study described this as a compensatory response to their perception of parental inadequacy (Broomhead, 2013). However, a principal also described

having had to adjust their own thinking to be able to cope with the difficult reality that, for some students, out of school time was spent in homes that may not be safe, suggesting that in some instances some elements of student wellbeing could be controlled or enhanced within the school space, but not beyond:

*I have come to a clear understanding that I can only change the things that I can change, I can't change the home backgrounds for a number of children at this school, I can't change the circumstances that some children are finding themselves in or the experiences they have outside of the gate but I sure as heck can when they are inside the gate.*

Many principals thought wellbeing at school could be enhanced not only through the physical boundaries of gates, but the non-physical boundaries of structure, rules, and curriculum. The relative consistency of the presence and application of these non-physical elements in schools were thought to provide a buffer by some principals who believed there was a societal change in parentally applied boundaries:

*I don't believe that children can feel safe without boundaries and I think that is why there seems to be a lot of issues with wellbeing in schools at the moment because ... I don't think parenting today has the boundaries that kids need, so they are not feeling safe.*

Sugrue (2015) found principals reported boundaries between home and school have become blurred and traditional school authority has eroded, leading to some principals experiencing vulnerability through shifting power relations (Sugrue, 2015). Principals also described having to balance parental concerns. The struggles parents face to both work and care for children are thought to be exacerbated by the neoliberal projection of the “ideal parent” (Beauvais, 2017, p. 165; Holloway & Pimlott-Wilson, 2013). So-called ideal parents are both good parents and

good citizens who are “financially independent economically active, caring for their young children, present at their children’s school” (Vincent, 2017, p. 547), and are in partnership, engaged, available for ILE design, planning and preparation discussions (Beauvais, 2017; MoE, 2017e). However, overly engaged parents can also be seen as pushy or helicopter parents (Beauvais, 2017, p. 161; Vincent 2017; Schiffrin et al., 2014).

When considering what constituted good boundaries and parenting practices, principals often relied on what could be described as a cultural (Sugrue, 2015) or moral framework that included how they were cared for as children and brought up their own families (Riley, M, 2008):

[Principal quoting mother] *“He doesn’t sleep so he’s up at 2am playing with his iPad”*,  
[principal thinking to self] *it’s like where are the rules? ... So I started ...* [principal talking to mother] *“when is his bed time?” ... She said to me “well how did you know when you had children when to put them to bed, if they are not tired?” ... and so I went through the whole “when I was a child we used to have a routine at night” ... and it was ... really? Like it was something she had never heard, and I thought I can’t believe that ... parents today ... I didn’t actually believe that she didn’t have a bed time for her kid.*

One principal thought the school’s ability to enhance wellbeing was not due to separation between home and school, instead describing school as an extension of home:

*Home is school and school is home, every environment has learning in it.*

This principal considered their school to be *“within the village that it takes to raise a child”* where staff were encouraged to *“kanohi ke te kanohi”* [be face to face], with students’ families for all aspects of wellbeing and learning. The ERO posits that the extent of shared beliefs held by parents and staff in valuing partnerships that share responsibility for children’s learning and well-being, influences engagement (ERO, 2008), but shared responsibility for some areas of

student wellbeing was not clear cut in areas like student incontinence at school. Local media reported increased faecal and urinary incontinence in Canterbury school children post-earthquake (Carville, 2013), a finding also observed internationally in post-earthquake environments (Hafskjold et al., 2016; Messiah et al., 2016):

*One of the kids ... he's had major issues he would just pooh himself once or twice a day, wee himself ... three or four times a day ... when you talk about ready for school ... at what level do you go ... the teacher would ... take him and so what's happened to her class? And the parents would go, no he's not wearing pull ups because of the stigma attached to that, so ... when you are talking about wellbeing, the stress and strains on teachers just dealing with one kid and one issue, that's massive.*

Parents' concerns about their child feeling different, their expectations of schools being well equipped and responsive to their child's continence needs (Fereday, Kimpton, & Oster, 2011), and health agencies' views of schools as potential places to provide solutions (von Gontard, 2016), combine to create increasing pressure on Canterbury schools. Principals voiced a shared agreement that many parents felt overwhelmed by, or ill prepared for, parenting:

*I think we are dealing in my school with people [parents] who know what they should be doing but they are so overwhelmed with living that they are just forgetting.*

*This morning, you know, two kids walking in just in a short sleeved polo shirt ... shaking, freezing ... I ... say oh goodness put your sweatshirt on ... I'm thinking someone has just dropped you off on a freezing cold morning and you haven't got a sweat shirt, you haven't got a coat, you have got nothing ...*

Yet it is not only parents and carers who are experiencing a sense of being overwhelmed by trying to meet students' learning and wellbeing needs. Principals also discussed the pressures and expectations they felt in relation to their changing role. A principal told a story of a student

who had fallen and broken both arms while playing in a hedge at school years earlier and the principal jokingly gave the student a certificate for over achievement. This principal thought the new Health and Safety at Work Act (HSWA) 2016, left principals open to prosecution, because the MoE protects the BOT but not principals from HSWA prosecution, creating increasing personal financial exposure that could lead to significant personal loss and could spur early retirement:

*I see myself being the curriculum leader at the school, that's what I trained for and now in amongst all of that I am told that the government, my employer has said, [principal's name] by the way, you're going to be personally liable \$600,000 so thanks for coming, you have lost your house [if you have to pay that] ... who wants that job? Who wants it?*

There is some irony in the possibility of Health and Safety legislation, designed to protect health, having an adverse impact on the wellbeing of principals. Principals who identified safety as their top priority in relation to wellbeing often referred to Maslow's hierarchy:

*At the very top is; make sure this place is safe and secure and once we tick that off we can start delving deeper into it.*

Maslow himself cited no fixed order for the basic needs which include "physiological, safety, love, esteem and self-actualisation" (Maslow, 1943, p. 372), stating that the individual's most predominant need will "monopolise their consciousness" (Maslow, 1943, p. 394). The physiological need that principals most frequently spoke of was hunger, as many students arrived at school hungry, bringing either inadequate amounts of food to school, or no food at all:

*I've never really seen it as bad as it is now you know ... one of the teachers said to me today "oh so and so ... hasn't got any lunch in her lunchbox", she had a banana and she didn't want to say anything.*

The stories of student hunger are often reported in the news media with headlines including “Kids going to school hungry” (Hudson, 2014), “Child hunger still a thorny political problem” (Moir, 2015), and “Full tummies, another task for teachers?” (Johnston, 2015). Food insecurity is also the subject of reports to the government (Wynd, 2011). Principals from schools in both more advantaged and disadvantaged communities thought that both demand and expectations for schools to accommodate needs that came through their gates were increasing and that resources did not follow the needs. They described challenges responding to the increasing basic needs of students including food insecurity and poverty, which longitudinal studies show are growing and are linked to structural issues in the economic and political systems (Carter, Lanumata, Kruse, & Gorton, 2010), yet are treated with ambiguity in government policy and ministerial directives.

While schools are required to promote healthy food and nutrition for all students (MoE, 2017), paradoxically, 21% of students do not have daily access to fresh fruit and vegetables and 20% do not have meals that include protein at least every second day (Simpson, Duncanson, Oben, Wicken, & Gallagher, 2016). Experts have advised central government to create a national strategy to provide food in early childhood centres and disadvantaged schools, as currently only a few organisations provide food in school programmes in some schools (Office of the Children’s Commissioner, 2012); this however, ignores hungry students in more advantaged schools. The political inertia may be connected to Treasury’s concerns around risk of “scope creep” if government were to fully fund food in schools (Treasury, 2013a, p. 3). Using terms like scope creep attempts to depoliticise issues (Jessop, 2014). Bacchi (2009) contends we need to consider how governments represent problems to understand their silences and assumptions.

In this case, the problem is represented as responsibility rather than food insecurity; fiscal responsibility versus the responsibility of parents or irresponsible parents. This obscures the governments' fear of taking responsibility for feeding hungry children. Underlying political understanding and sentiment about the provision of food in schools is found in parliamentary transcripts, where a politician mistakenly thought this was about teaching children to grow food. Another thought it to be the so-called “ambulance at the bottom of the cliff “ and another thought it was both the fault and responsibility of parents (Education [Food in Schools] Amendment Bill – First Reading, 2015). Blaming families de-couples families from the wider economic and systemic problems that they face and has been associated with the neoliberal re-framing and responsibilitising of family adversity as a personal crisis (Botrell, 2013). See Figure 3.

## Kids' lunch should come from parents - Government

ALICIA BURROW

Last updated 13:25, March 24 2015



ALICIA BURROW/stuff.co.nz

Minister Paula Bennett says feeding children is a parental responsibility but figures show New Zealand has some of the poorest families in the developed world.

Figure 3. Kid's lunch should come from parents – Government (Burrow, 2015)

Most school principals thought differently from politicians, demonstrating more reluctance to blame families.

*I think I am in a bubble at [name of school] because if you come to work here you can't be like that [blaming families and holding limited world views], people who come to work here don't have that kind of thinking, they have a very strong belief in social conscience but I know it is still out there in the wider world and it really concerns me.*

The belief in social responsibility was voiced by all of the principals in this study but may have been intensified for those whose schools were directly affected by earthquakes (O'Connor & Takahashi, 2014). All principals in this study fed hungry children who came to their attention, thinking this was the right thing for the school to do. Although they believed it was a family responsibility to provide food, they recognised how difficult it was for some families to achieve this, and offered other supports or referred families to appropriate services. Some principals dealt with each instance on a case by case basis, allowing teachers to make or buy something when they discovered a student with no lunch, whilst another principal had enabled a parent social group to meet weekly, purchase food, make up sandwiches and freeze them so children could discreetly help themselves.

*I guess you have got to have the environment where there is no stigma attached to it, so when the kids come and get lunch, they come and get lunch, we don't care, it doesn't worry us ... just keep it in perspective really, what's important."*

Another principal of a school with a strong collectivist view of wellbeing described their school vegetable gardens as a source of seasonal food, connection, education and experience for students' families and staff. This principal's observations resonate with a study in which



participants identified benefits associated with a Christchurch community garden, including enhanced social contact, increased self-confidence, and optimism (Schischka, et al., 2008):

*We encourage whānau to come in and pick it themselves or we will harvest them ourselves and send bags of kai home and it's amazing how many of our tamariki [children] really didn't realise that the vegies don't come from Pak'n Save.*

Principals saw themselves as influencing the collective wellbeing of students, staff, families and communities and also as having responsibility for them:

*The responsibilities are huge [for the principal] ... it's not just for our kura it's for ... the wider community and then it can even go nationwide ... everything has to connect ... and that's why it's [the role] called Tumuaki [principal] ... we are the tumu ... the head of the waka [war canoe], the waka can't go anywhere unless everyone is rowing the same way so our job is to help guide it, not behind, not ahead but beside the people as well through the rough waves and the calm waves as long as we are going in the right direction.*

This final chapter sub-theme explored the way that many principals' use Maslow's hierarchy of needs when describing their responses to the wellbeing needs of children and families and they also relied on their own experiences and societal norms. Principals direct families to appropriate resources and provide advice and attempt to meet families' basic needs generated from social pressures and unique circumstances. These needs are not limited to material deprivation or food insecurity but also increasing family time pressures. The uncertainty politicians have demonstrated in relation to supporting schools in providing some of these basic needs has increased pressure on principals. Whilst principals were not averse to the agenda that the government has set for schools to become agents for ensuring the self-responsibilisation of

students for wellbeing, they found it increased their own role responsibilities and did not necessarily provide support for them to meet student's wellbeing needs.

## **Summary**

Principals were found to demonstrate a flexible, curious, and eclectic approach to defining wellbeing as they drew both from a range of personal experiences including their own upbringing and beliefs and more formal wellbeing models and frameworks. In this way, principals' definitions were found to contrast with the narrow neoliberally inspired governmental and global definitions, because principals did not wholly subscribe to this emerging wellbeing discourse. While the interweaving of personal and professional beliefs about wellbeing, families, and care, created a diversity in the way principals defined wellbeing, principals were found to share some unified beliefs.

Between school and home transitions, most principals shared the need for a degree of spatial separation between home and work, whether they lived within their community or outside it. Within their school community, principals described stress associated with upholding their own beliefs when managing school wellbeing; however, they thought this stress was partially ameliorated when their leadership teams shared similar beliefs to their own, as this created a sense of unity and trust and support to care, which also reduced some of the sense of isolation from the role. This chapter also found that principals' responses to school wellbeing were similarly and predominantly motivated by compassion, which Peterson (2017, p. 31) suggests creates a sense of solidarity with people to whom they feel compassion toward and also with those who share their "interest, concerns and understanding".

Principals described the wellbeing needs in schools in relationship to economic and societal pressures that affected students, families, and schools, including families' and schools'

opportunities and capabilities to respond to these pressures, and the adequacy of resources they had. Principals experienced a strong sense of responsibility to care for students' families and staff, often in the absence of adequate resources; however, this required the juggling of relentless challenges that could increase principals' stress and workload. Principals were therefore found to be engaged in processes of buffering, which is described as "a cognitive act in which principals make rational choices about policy and in certain instances will shield their school out of compassion for the teachers and students" (Wenner & Settlage, 2015, p. 503), as they navigated many intersecting beliefs about wellbeing including their own. Furthermore, principals' understandings of wellbeing were found to include personal and professional beliefs about values, culture and spirituality that co-existed with the national curriculum in harmony and also in contention. Values, culture, and spirituality therefore required deeper discussion, and are the focus of the next chapter.



## Chapter 6

### Valuing, situating and grounding wellbeing

#### **Introduction**

The previous chapter discussed the way that principals' conceptions of wellbeing were formed with combinations of personal beliefs and professional knowledge, they valued collegial relationships, and they focused on practicalities and needs. This chapter discusses how principals connect values, culture, and *wairua* [spiritual dimension] to wellbeing, including through *whenua* [land], *whakapapa* and care. In this chapter *whakapapa* [genealogy] is used to broadly describe relationships developed over time rather than solely genealogical and kin connections. The first sub-theme explores principals' comments on how values in schools are developed or imposed, explicit or implicit, utilised, experienced, and shared. The second sub-theme discusses personal and professional spirituality, and deliberates on the way *wairua* has been situated in the curriculum, particularly how this may have isolated *wairua* from *whakapapa* and *whenua*. The final sub-theme for the chapter discusses the relationship between culture and wellbeing, including the process associated with the development of cultural narratives.

#### **The evolution and evaluation of values**

During the walking interviews, the majority of principals repeatedly connected their school values to wellbeing, pointing to a myriad of posters, signs, and other visual representations of their school values. Schools can choose values unique to their school but many are selected from a list that was introduced in the 2007 mandatory National Curriculum. The list of National Curriculum Values (NCV) was informed by a report the MoE had commissioned (Keown, Parker, & Tiakiwai, 2005). The MoE directs schools to "encourage students" to value these

NCVs, teach these NCVs and provide evidence of the NCVs in “the school’s philosophy, structures, curriculum, classrooms, and relationships” (MoE, 2007, p. 10).

NCVs have also been criticised for being informed by a neoliberal agenda aimed at promoting social cohesion, to enable the development of responsible, successful citizens who would contribute to economic success (Benade, 2011). The introduction of NCVs in England was described in similar terms, as a form of identity regulation that “re-cultures schools” (Bates, 2016, p. 193) and a “re-crafting of peoples’ attitudes” through the responsibilisation of the individual, in contrast to promoting the development of wisdom and an understanding of wider social and political contexts (Miller, 2008, p. 606). Mutch (2011, p. 2) situated similar past educational values contestations in three past eras: “indigenous versus colonial; liberal progressive versus traditional conservative; and new right versus liberal left”.

One principal questioned the authenticity of the processes associated with the NCVs in schools, including the process of community engagement:

*As the world changes out there, not necessarily for the better pedagogically as people are embracing the modern learning environments ... I mean it’s a bit sad when a school has got to have a focus group to determine what their values are ... it’s almost like cookie cutter, they pluck them up, stick them on a plaque somewhere and say “well those are our values” ... “that’s what drives our school” ... You just dreamt these up one afternoon with a group of a dozen people in a community of 2000 ... and you’re telling me that that’s your rudder that drives everything that you are doing in the school?*

Communities were not widely consulted in the creation of the report that informed the development of the NCVs, and, as discussed in the background chapter, ERO found that some principals did not consult their communities when creating school values. Strike (1999),

however, highlights the improbability of unified values for some schools, due to the differing community associations where school communities are formed by geographic school zoning or created through a shared connection like religion, educational ethos, or culture. Strike (1999, p. 215) contends that the move to unify school communities can actually split them, when using values more associated with business communities than social communities. This was supported by a principal of a special character faith based school who found parents often sought to enrol their students in schools outside of their own school zone, because these parents were seeking schools that offered conservative and faith based values that encouraged the development of moral virtues and behaviours like caring for others, in contrast to more achievement orientated values:

*because the parents come in and they want values similar to what they had at school and that's the really interesting thing to me.*

The potential impermanence of school values was also interrogated, as after communities had contributed to how NCVs might be expressed in their schools, the school's values could change again, as a result of a leadership change, which challenged the concept of values being shared and also owned by a school community:

*And often as leadership changes in schools values change, new principals come in ... Lets re-evaluate everything we are doing and throw away the baby and the bathwater and lets reimage and revision the school ... hold on a minute who gave them [the right] ... who is in charge here? It's a community ... where is the connection to the community.*

Within this study, some schools were observed to have selected more achievement focused school values from the NCVs seemingly validating Nortman's (2012) findings that teachers primarily use values to enhance academic achievement. While the MoE states values should

be explored (MoE, 2007, p. 10), this study found, state school values appeared more explicit and concretised, described as often being used by staff to elicit or deter behaviour:

*And as you can see the values are everywhere but we don't just put the value up, it is defined underneath, so the conversation can be a bit more exact with people ... it's explicit, it's not assumed as to what this might look like, its explicit and there is a teaching schedule for behaviours, so its integrated into what they are doing in the class ... it is expected.*

However, as one principal commented, values were separate to rules:

*It's a value [respect] that we have here and it's how you interact with people not follow some rule like a puppet.*

There are models that can support understanding how values, rules, and knowledge interact dynamically (Gorddard, Colloff, Wise, Ware & Dunlop, 2016), however the MoE did not provide a model when they introduced the values, stating their expectations that school values will be expressed in “actions” and “interactions” (MoE, 2007, p. 10). Similarly principals thought they played an influential role in the transmission of school values, and one principal described their role in relation to the trickle down of values from the principal to the teachers and to the students:

*For a principal I think the biggest influence is with the staff and so if the staff are trained ... I am talking about a values based system really as having some clear values that we have and actually defining what those values mean. So if staff get regular training ... then it trickles into the classroom because when it comes to the student the most influential person isn't the principal it's the teacher ... my role is making sure that the teachers have the tools and skills to be able to promote that culture of the values that we have here at school.*



The same principal gave an example of how teachers operationalised school values by controlling or modifying behaviour through the senses of sight, sound, and feel. This is interesting because it extends understanding of how schools teach values by suggesting that the teachers exemplify values, employing both cognitive and affective approaches to generate repellent or appealing emotional states and sensory imaginations (Wedgwood, 2001):

*It's through everything we do. So teachers talk about what it's like to be respectful, responsible, positive and caring in whatever we do, so you go on a school trip, we would expect that teacher to stand at the front of the bus or even before going on the bus, what it would actually look like, sound like and feel like to be respectful when we leave the school.*

However while another principal thought values required ongoing modelling by staff, a repetitious approach to values for behaviour moderation could also create tension and a sense of values malaise for staff, which may reflect concerns for the values' efficacy. Crawford and Rossiter (2006, p. 15) term this "values overkill," when teachers question the gap between the proposed extent of the ability of values to change outcomes and what is realistically achievable:

*You can keep going back to them and hammering it home, I remember when we were back in the old buildings someone said to me, "look I'm sick of the word respect, you know, like it gets bandied around all the time and it feels like its lost its value" but I disagree, you know ... the key to working in a collaborative space is respect, I can't work in here if you are going to be a dick and you don't have the right to impact my learning or my opportunity to work with these guys.*

Many principals shared the expectation that students learnt and knew the school values, explaining this as students knowing the behaviours that were valued and expected:

*Whether they are the best learner in the school in regards to academic achievement or the best learner in the school because they try their heart out, every learner in the school, with the exception of some of our new, new five year olds, can tell you every one of those words and give you a rough idea of what it means.*

Communication about values between school and home was thought to influence parents, who repeated them back when conversing about their behavioural expectations of the school:

*We have done quite a lot of work on it to the point where if something does go wrong a parent will come in and go, you know, “you’re about being respectful” and you know and they list off our values, which is fantastic but they just don’t realise that at the time.*

Yet, whilst some schools chose achievement orientated values and used them to modify behaviour, principals also spoke of using values to create an environment conducive to wellbeing and frequently reiterated values like care and compassion, even though these were often not their official school values. In contrast, principals of *kura* and faith based character schools demonstrated stronger fidelity between their verbally expressed values of caring and compassion and their actual school values. This may be attributed to the fact that special character schools teach the national curriculum but their values reflect their philosophy or religion, rather than the NCVs (MoE, 2018, para.5), and schools that teach in Māori language teach a curriculum based on Māori philosophy, *Te Marautanga o Aotearoa* [The New Zealand Curriculum] (MoE, 2018, para.6). It is interesting to contemplate whether there would have been less discrepancy between the state and other schools’ values, if caring had been included in the NCVs, as recommended in the MoE commissioned report (Keown et al., 2005). The decision not to include caring may reflect a bias favouring economic values that may exclude some forms of knowledge through a narrowed focus (Gorddard, Colloff, Wise, Ware, & Dunlop, 2016). This type of values engineering was discussed in the background chapter when

I discussed the way in which Kelsey (1997) cautioned against the development of a neoliberal economic so-called truth that reconstructed and reconceptualised the state yet failed to reflect the values of many citizens.

In special character schools like *Kura Kaupapa Māori* values were often less concretised or overtly signposted than in state schools and were introduced as being visibly embedded in the environment, particularly in spaces that were shared by students, staff, communities, and visitors, like school gardens, school gyms, and kitchens, and facilitated the making and sustaining of quality relationships for learning (Macfarlane, A. H., Grace, Penetito, & Bateman, 2008):

*One of the things that is important is actually our kitchen because when we built this block we specially decided that we needed a big kitchen because it's part of looking after people. It's manaakitanga [nurturing, care, and respect], it's a huge kitchen with a big oven and that's about manaakitanga.*

Māori values expressed by principals of *Kura Kaupapa Māori* in this study could also be considered to be less concretised as they were often focused on current collective wellbeing and were embedded in designs, processes, and ways of being and knowing. The few Māori who were consulted in the creation of the report that informed the NCVs had differing views about whether Māori values should be explicitly explained and included in the NCV (Keown et al., 2005). Some of the difficulties cited were that Māori values should not be seen as an “add on”, they are contextual, embedded and just *are*, differing from the explicit use of values in instruction and signage in other schools (Keown et al., 2005, p. 11). This latter view was evident in this study, as the previous quotation highlights.

Values were also described by another principal as being taught with interwoven cultural, spiritual and relational connections and influences within narratives:

*If there is a behaviour for example [on] the bus ... some of the kids were eating on the bus ... but they are leaving their rubbish ... under the seat and we say put your rubbish in the bin or put it in your bag ... but then one of our teachers would say do you think [names kaumatua [elder] who has passed] would have done that? ... So [name] was one of our paramount highest esteemed kaumatua of this school ... and then they're [students] like kāore [no] ... it's the whole wairua, sometimes it's really hard to explain ... but I know that the kids get that, they understand that and we talk about their kaitiaki [guardian] because they are our guardians*

This principal's comment suggests that in this *Kura Kaupapa Māori*, Māori students are encouraged to consider their behaviour in relation to the living memory of present and past whakapapa connections, and *wairua*. Values and *wairua* exist in separate curricula currently, in the National Curriculum, (2007) and the Health and Physical Education Curriculum(1999) but Fraser (2004) believes that secular education needs to understand that Māori spirituality and values are interconnected and that separating the two has a fragmenting effect, also arguing that values and spirituality do not only exist for indigenous people like Māori, and calling for more consideration of co-existence of values and spirituality in secular education. This sub-theme found that whilst many principals strongly related school values to wellbeing they predominantly described them as a means of behaviour modification within school. In state schools values appeared to be generated from within schools for families to engage with, rather than within, the wider school community. Care appeared less valued in the process of developing NCVs and was at similar risk of fragmentation as *wairua* in state schools, but was still discussed as an unofficial but important value by most state school principals in the study. Within this study spirituality was woven through many interviews and deserves greater inspection than can be afforded within the theme of values, and therefore spirituality is the focus of the second sub-theme of this chapter.

## **Situating spirituality: *wai*, it matters and why it matters**

New Zealand's state education is secular; however, families have the choice of their children attending faith based special character public schools and private schools, which also often have faith connections. The inclusion of Te Whare Tapa Whā, has endorsed spiritual wellbeing in state schools (Fraser & Grootenboer, 2005, p. 152), as *wairua* is one of the five *tahas* or domains. Kuntz, Näswall, Beckingsale and Macfarlane (2014) consider *wairuatanga* [spiritual beliefs and practices] to be a core value of *Te Ao Māori* [the Māori world], however it is important to note education's official representation of *Te Whare Tapa Whā* in the curriculum has been found lacking and subsequently criticised (Heaton, 2011; Hokowhitu, 2004; Salter, 2000).

When defining wellbeing some principals discussed spirituality as part of the curriculum, as part of everything including land, as a commonly held belief, an individual's faith, or something that may or may not be important to an individual:

[defining wellbeing and *hauora*] *the spiritual side comes in for me.*

[defining wellbeing and *hauora*] *well physical, social, emotional, cultural, for some people spiritual*

Gibson (2014) found that principals who identify as having spiritual beliefs consider that their beliefs are both relevant and connected to their work life and that some leaders integrate their personal meanings of spirituality into their leadership to enhance their well-being:

*That is an easy answer, my family. I have got [number] wonderful kids, [number] adorable grandchildren and [number] more on the way, my faith and the people I work with really.*

Spirituality can be associated with sense-making and is continuously shaped through personal experiences (Gibson,2014), which was observed when a principal who had personally experienced cancer, described a team of supporters including family, colleagues and friends during treatment for cancer, as well as the role of personal faith and faith based supports:

*Our pastor said to me, “so did you ever think you wouldn’t get through this?” And I said to him, never even crossed my mind, and I wouldn’t say I’m the most optimistic positive person out there. It just never dawned on me that maybe I wouldn’t get out of this at the other end*

Another principal spoke of school-wide faith that supports staff professional wellbeing:

*We have the ability to draw upon God to support us and that enduring knowledge that He is with us all the time and so we are always well supported and know that we can draw upon Him in times of need.*

Within this study many principals associated *karakia* [ritual chant, prayer] with culture, spirituality and wellbeing, and prayer as a faith based practice. Some school principals drew attention to visible signs (*karakia* included in daily plans written on white boards in classrooms, printed day planner notes and *karakia* printed on walls or faith based prayer tables) of regular and routine observation of faith and *wairua* [spirit of people and place] through prayer and *karakia*. In some schools, *karakia* and prayer marked the start and close of the day, or the week, drawing everyone together in classes or in assemblies to still their minds, connect in voice and intention and acknowledge the presence of something that exists other than themselves, be it a focus on people, nature, *Atua* [gods], God, the Virgin Mary, or the Holy Spirit:

*It’s called whānau time so every team has a whānau time at the beginning of the day, it’s age specific - there are ingredients that they pull in and out of it, so this is what*

*they are doing in whānau time today ... and then reflection and a karakia at the end of the day.*

Hīroa (1949) states the closest English translation to *karakia* is incantation, and that the use of *karakia* “exceeded the bounds of religion” (p. 490), Hīroa argues that *karakia* are also used in many practical everyday activities, and can be directed to bring protection, power, relief, and curing of various ailments and to aid the memory. There are *karakia* for priests, adults, and for children (which were short to aid memorising), of chants to stop the rain or make the sun shine, and those that held no religious significance but provided amusement and interest (Hīroa, 1949).

The use of *karakia* in schools had been reported in the media as creating confusion for teachers who viewed this as being religious instruction (Bilby, 2013a). These teachers found support from the then Prime Minister, John Key, who stated schools should be able to opt out of delivering *karakia* at school if they wanted (Bilby, 2013b); (see Figure 4). However the MoE (2012) states that ERO found *te Tiriti o Waitangi* [The Treaty of Waitangi: New Zealand’s founding document] principles are evident in schools when *karakia* is valued, promoted taught and learnt. Yet surprisingly, in a colonised country where *Te Tiriti o Waitangi* exists, the Human Rights Commission (HRC) provides provision for “opting out” of *karakia* (HRC, 2009, p. 9) on the basis of ambiguity, as they posit that “the line between *tikanga Māori* [customs] and religious observance is not always clear.” The HRC gives the example that “Reciting the Lord’s Prayer in *te reo Māori* at school assemblies might be harder to justify than *karakia* being said in the context of a *powhiri* [welcome]” (HRC, 2009, p. 9).

# Sharples - Karakia is part of our culture

17 Jun, 2013 6:25pm

3 minutes to read



School children join a karakia. Photo / APN

Figure 4. Karakia (Bilby, 2013)

There is some irony that although there is some post-colonial grappling with *karakia*, westernised appropriations of eastern spirituality are being introduced in schools. One principal suggested that the recent rise in secular schools of meditation and breathing practices like mindfulness, which originated in eastern and Buddhist traditions (Zenner, Herrnleben-Kurz, & Walach, 2014) was a form of something that they had been engaged in for some time:

*I think I laughed a lot last year because we started using the breathing app and app that you have on with the meditation app ... I laughed because as a [faith based] school that is what we have always done because we have always done meditation and prayer because it is just part of our religious education.*

The principals in this study described a range of internal and external spiritual influences, like the breathing app[lication] mentioned by the principal, connections to nature, and their own faith and culture. In this way this study reflects the findings of the few studies of school leaders and spirituality (Gibson, 2014, 2016; Woods, 2007), including that spirituality was connected



with “existential, philosophical, social, cultural, and religious understandings” (Gibson, 2014, p. 531) and spiritual experiences (Woods, 2007).

In this study principals described spiritual, spatial, and relational interconnections to wellbeing during the walking interview by showing school *taonga* [treasures], collections of staff and class photographs, including teachers or children who had passed away, carved wooden plaques bearing the names of each new head boy and girl and engraved sporting and academic trophies that linked decades and generations. In this way, wellbeing was found to be linked to *wairua* through shared history through connection and reflection, reiterating the affective capacity of space (Finlayson, 2012) and materiality within the school environment, which is not ordinarily recognised as sacred space, yet still engenders an emotive encounter.

Spirituality also took other material forms, as principals shared stories about works of art (created or gifted) and special places during the walking interviews. A statue of the Virgin Mary instigated different interactions with students:

*Actually you usually have two types of children, the ones that hug Mary and the ones that notice that she has got the snake and they are the curious ones that are going, “what is that snake doing there?”*

One principal pointed to a specially crafted large chair that sat centrally within the school, it had an insert of *pounamu* [greenstone] to memorialise a treasured staff member who died. The principal acknowledged that many students and family would not be aware of its significance but viewed that as unimportant, stating what was important was the object recalled precious memories about the colleague to the principal, and facilitated a feeling of positive *wairua*.

Spirituality also existed where buildings and people had forged bonds, and this has been described as an “inseparable relationship between the worlds of matter and spirit” (Murton, 2012, p. 92). This spatial and relational connection is also observed in speech, actions and ways

of being and doing, which are passed down and on. A school *whare* [building] was described as having absorbed the collective activities, actions and intentions over time, which could be seen through western eyes as providing evidence of the spiritual porosity of architecture, where life is absorbed and stored, however, Māori see a *whare* metaphorically as a human body (Smith, 2000) that serves as a mediator, historian, and guardian.

*These are the legacy I talk about and we talk about it quite often and it covers right around, so we always talk about what is said in here is heard by the four walls and the ones who were, the ones who are up there who have passed ... This is the place where it holds onto all the stories, all the learning.*

Some principals indicated a deeper connection to land and place than just a geographical relationship. For some this was when they observed and described passive junctions or intersections where faith and the environment met:

*So it's ... a calming oasis for us really and for us as Christians we certainly recognise the presence of the Holy Spirit on this site so that people tell us that when they come here the feeling of calm whether you are religious or not, everyone tells us there is a real sense of calmness in this school, a real sense of peace.*

This principal's comment reflects the idea that for some the notion of unity with the environment goes "beyond care and nurture for the physical and biological, to a sense of awe and wonder" (Fisher, 2008, p. 100).

The spiritual connection to land was described, by a few principals, as being below the surface of the land. On some school sites a further connection to land was made through blessings and ceremonies and the burying of precious relics or *taonga*:

*Well this is where the mauri [life force] is, we believe there is a life force of whenua but the life force can be represented in any way so when we first came here there was a*

*mauri, an object placed into the whenua to create the life force of the land, so this is an area of significance.*

Durie claims that this close relationship between Māori and the environment is essential to Māori wellbeing (Durie, 2006), which Murton (2012) describes as the emplaced Māori self, through Māori knowledge; *mana wairua*, *mana tangata* and *mana whenua* [spiritual power, accrued power and status, power and authority connected to land] (Murton 2012). This involves respecting mauri as life force, not just in land but in all things including *wai* [water] (Panelli & Tipa, 2007).

*Wai is very important to us...quite often if there is an angry tamaiti [child] I will say wai mauri [life force in water], you need to have a drink of wai mauri and just calm down or put it on your head for calming, so water is really powerful.*

Hokowhitu (2016) claims that the national curriculum fails to explicitly translate Durie's model's implicit connection to *whenua*. This finding confirms Hokowhitu's (2016) concern that again: land has been taken away. The extent of the significance of Hokowhitu's criticism is exemplified in one teacher's comment:

*It is about their confidence in self, in who they are, their strength of knowing who they are and where they are from, their happiness ... colonisation has had that trickle-down effect for generations and people have been disengaged from who they are and their land and so hopefully, so we are trying to mend a lot of those mistakes and we want our children to grow up feeling resilient and happy and strong about who they are and where they are going.*

It has been argued that despite good intentions the process and the technical approach used to include a Māori world view into the health and physical curriculum actually “decontextualise[d], dilute[d] and divorce[d] Māori knowledge,” (Heaton, 2011, p. 109,113).

Findings in this study support Heaton's (2011) argument, as principals' views of spirituality challenge the confinement of *wairua* within *Te Whare Tapa Whā* and the Health and Physical Education Curriculum. This was evident when principals discussed spirituality in land, water, and *whakapapa* connections. Although a mutual association was found between spirituality and culture, there are aspects of culture that emerged in this study that require separate discussion and therefore culture is addressed in following sub-theme.

### **Culture, wellbeing and schools: “there’s a fraction too much friction” (Finn, 1983)**

Organisational cultures like those in schools are thought to be comprised of artefacts including architecture, patterns of behaviour, practices, values of what is good, right, or desirable and worth striving for, and underlying assumptions (Van Maele & Van Houtte, 2011). However, organisational culture is also influenced by neoliberal politics and neoliberal rhetoric that Nguyen (2017, p. 9) contends, compels, and penetrates to “reshape cultural practices”. There are many definitions of culture. Goldstein (1957) posits that how culture is defined can be different from how culture is actually experienced, and therefore the focus of this theme is not to define culture but to convey principals' perceptions and experiences of the intersections between culture and wellbeing. This final sub- theme focuses on principals' discussions about the process of developing cultural narratives in schools, the principals' sense of culture in their workplace, and the presence of various points of cultural friction.

Some principals discussed how cultural narratives were being developed within their schools. A document is created for each CoL to guide the design and landscaping associated with construction of ILEs. Schools also use this information to develop culturally appropriate Māori names for the school, class year groups, and buildings. These names can be based on native flora, fauna, or local environmental features that have been identified in the cultural narrative document. The documents are based on cultural values and knowledge of *mana whenua* and

are created by “*Mana Whenua* Facilitators” and *Mātauraka Mahaanui*, who are representatives of *mana whenua*, mandated by *Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu* [iwi authority for *Ngāi Tahu*] (*Mātauraka Mahaanui*, 2016). The cultural narratives are utilised in the post-earthquake Greater Christchurch Education Renewal Property Programme as part of the “project brief” that “ultimately drives the design and construction of the [ILE] project” (MoE, 2015, para.1). Cultural narratives are only one piece of broader Māori cultural work being undertaken by *Mātauraka Mahaanui* in Canterbury schools (*Mātauraka Mahaanui*, 2016) to “raise achievement, accelerate language provision and enhance outcomes for Māori learners” (MoE, 2016, p. 4). Some schools, however, had contracted and paid other cultural agencies to develop their cultural narrative, whilst some had gained support from existing external connections at no cost, or utilised the cultural knowledge within their own team. There was also a proliferation of products and services to support schools including a “Cultural Landscape (CL) tool” to help schools “unpack what they call the ‘why’ in *Turangawaewae* [place where one has rights of residence and belonging]” (Core Education, 2018, para.1) by learning about local *hapu* [kinship group] and *iwi* [extended kinship group] history.

Some of the principals enthusiastically described how their schools were developing cultural narratives which they connected to wellbeing for all students. One principal commented that the cultural narratives were a mechanism to improve outcomes for Māori:

*Success for Māori is around bringing our cultural narrative to life or defining our cultural narrative.*

However, a few principals whose schools were not involved in cultural narrative development were sceptical of this type of process, perceiving it as a hasty and superficial commodification of culture that stood in contrast to one school’s investment in a pre-existing long term and ongoing relationship with *mana whenua* to achieve similar outcomes:

*The anguish and angst that people go through in trying to engage with the local Rūnanga to actually come up with the design is almost impossible because ... they have got a very thin basis for engagement, they [the school] have generated these espoused values one afternoon and they [the school] are trying to overlay that onto a rich cultural narrative, it doesn't work ... whereas because we have a strong belief system ourselves, we have a strong culture [mana whenua] that we are overlaying and mixing with theirs*

The potential for the process to overlay onto that which may already exist, and the knowledge that some schools had paid for the process, sat uneasily with these principals.

Interpretation of cultural narratives could lead to existing features of school heritage being excluded from potential naming; as one principal reported the established native trees on the school grounds did not meet the threshold for inclusion into the narrative as they were not deemed to be local to the area:

*some of those trees aren't local trees so they didn't fit our cultural narrative and the challenge to us was whether we need to look at it ... didn't have to ... but we think about our reason for having them there and whether they were historic enough to retain, or whether they were driven by the historic connection ... or whether it was driven by the cultural narrative and so we looked at continuing with that tree theme or looking at a more ecosystem driven geography based approach*

Several principals reflected further on cultural inclusivity and cultural narratives in relation to what exists, yet does not fit and may be left out. Their ideas about cultural narratives were focused on cultural diversity and wellbeing, and were strongly associated with cultural justice and cultural autonomy. The first principal believed students' culture led the cultural narrative, therefore whilst this school was in the process of ongoing ILE development their cultural

narrative reflected the diversity of the current school culture, in contrast to the other schools who had focused on a historically local cultural narrative:

*This is part of wellbeing because it's recognition of children and children's work and thinking, these are the cultural totems a class did last year, the cultures in our school, acknowledging those people ... it's the whole business of Ako working together to create ... acknowledging the cultures in our school ... now we've got parents turning up to cultural occasions ... a kapa haka [Māori cultural group] group performing ... in Samoan and Māori ... and our community embraces that and enjoys it ... so that's a testament to the people that I think have really quietly driven that and allowed those kids in our school to embrace that and share what they know about culture*

Another principal described how their own experience as an immigrant heightened their role sensitivity as a leader of a school within a dominant western culture, reflecting on the potential impact on students of other ethnicities:

*I am a principal of a school where I am responsible for delivering a curriculum in a language that's not my first language so [recounting advice given to a student] "if I can do it you can do it" ... especially our ... boys ... we had a whole raft of them desperately wanting to be white middle class European boys, [resumes recounting of talks to students] "no you have got to be who you are, you are the only one that can be you and don't worry about trying to be someone else unless it's the good examples" ... it's so cool for me to see some of these boys stepping up to be these leaders in different cultural things because they are feeling comfortable and happy to be them.*

The principals' concerns for students from other minority cultures acknowledges that "cultural norms and values can either enable or stifle the development of capabilities for different groups of disadvantaged learners" (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 12). Morrison, McNae & Branson, (2015,

p. 6) call for New Zealand principals to respond as these principals have by deciphering what social justice means as they “endeavour to mitigate injustice”. The actions these two principals took answer that call by questioning and challenging the current dominance of the bi-cultural discourse of New Zealand education for non-European and non-Māori students. In a broader context, the government’s plan to utilise the OECD framework to measure wellbeing signals the requirement and ambition for, a working knowledge of these central concepts of the redistributive and empowering effects of education in relation to gender and cultural justice (Morrison, McNae, & Branson, 2015).

Although there was a considerable focus on embedding cultural narratives due to post-earthquake school redevelopment, the over-arching discussion about culture was more generalised and kept circling back to a central theme of “*It’s just how we are in the school*”. When principals’ spoke of the way they were in their school, they believed that although there were some unifying concepts or experiences in education and similarities across schools, but that their schools were each very different. Making a claim of “*just how we are*” requires a belief in the “homogeneity of school staff culture through shared assumptions, values, norms, practices, and behaviours” (Van Maele & Van Houtte 2011, p. 458).

Yet, Macgregor (2004) argues against the description of homogeneity, stating that social space is heterogeneous, as it is made and remade by social and material relations and includes sub-groups and power differentials. An example of a power differential and discord that challenged assumptions of homogeneity was previously discussed in chapter four, when discussing the social impact of the reconfiguration of the library due to an ILE build. When principals used similar statements to “*How we are*” they were usually communicating pride, identity, connection to place, and a sense of relationships, also described as tradition. For one principal tradition included the promotion and belief in moral character development that was discussed



in the sub-theme of values, demonstrating the sometimes close relationship between values and culture:

*I would describe the school as quite traditional in a lot of ways and that is because we can see that the children achieve really well the way we are doing things so why change it and we believe that children have to know how to handwrite so we are not going to scrub that from the curriculum, and I am really strict about the uniform rules because you know it's up to them to manage themselves and get themselves up and put the right uniform on and follow the rules you have to in society, so if you don't start doing it now*

Tradition itself has been termed “invented tradition” to reflect the symbolic, ritualistic, repetition of practices that not only reflect but instil values and normative behaviours that maintain continuity with the past (Trevor-Roper, Morgan & Cannadine, 2015, p. 1). However, culture was neither described as static nor continuously strengthening and improving in a linear fashion. So when some principals used the phrase “*the way we are now*” as they described journeys of culture improvement where the culture within their school had changed for the worse and required intervention, or where they had started at a school that they thought needed a culture change. For some principals this could mean having started their employment in a school community where the culture was concerning:

*it was really challenging because the culture had really changed [from when the principal had last been at the school to when the principal returned to take the role of principal] ... some of it wasn't really too good...you know the change where there was a lot of hitting and behaviour that is not acceptable behaviour from tamariki but I found out a lot of whānau had also been holding a lot of mamae you know of things that had been happening.*

Principals spoke of their perceived responsibility to set and manage the culture to enhance wellbeing:

*I guess so because pastoral care is always, not always but often after the fact, it's trying to fix a problem whereas if you think about wellbeing you then start to think about how to get that culture out there to start with and then also if there is a problem how to fix that problem so it becomes a bit bigger than just the triage of I have this problem at school, help me.*

Principals also considered culture in the broader context of their community of learning:

*Tomorrows Schools were very much in competition with each other, now that competition is gone with the communities of learning ... you end up with an ecosystem that we are part of, so everything that we do has a ripple effect, you know the butterfly effect, so that what we do, there are effects of it, and that's the same for us*

The statement “*How we are*” is also an indicator that while principals agreed with most of the tenets of the education system, they did not wholly subscribe to the system. There was a sense of two cultures, one being the culture that each school had developed over time, and the other being the culture associated with ongoing changes and new guidelines that could be a source of friction:

*We had questions around do we have a sexuality education programme that focuses on homosexuality, on gender issues, on transgender issues, and I kind of went no ... because that is not how we do things ... yeah we will talk about it and we will address those issues because that is the context that it is addressed in not “oh in case you meet somebody that is transgender we will just whip into a part of a conversation” ... we don't do that stuff and yet we are still being asked that from those up on high that should know better*

Some principals experienced friction associated with ambivalence for example, one principal approved of the self-managed school, yet on the other hand also lamented the ensuing loss of resources, which had been widely predicted by academics prior to self-managed schools being introduced (Smyth, 2011). The move to self-management involved schools previously governed by regional education boards, being expected to be competitive self-managing units (Codd, 2005). This shift has been described as a “cultural shift away from education to management and entrepreneurialism” (Smyth, 1993, p. 7):

*Today I think the whole self-managing schools thing is fine but what's happened is they have taken so much away from the Ministry as far as how they assisted schools and all that has happened is there have been more demands and more demands and more demands on principals.*

A sense of disconnection between policy and school context has also been found to be a source of frustration, as the state simultaneously withdraws and then continues to intervene (Gordon & Whitty, 1997). Principals described instances when state policies and external agencies' cultures rubbed up against the school's culture particularly when the issue of contention focused on students' wellbeing. Principals recounted their own small or significant acts of rebellion, and resistance in these instances, which has also been acknowledged by other authors when they have discovered “evidence of discontents, murmurings, indifferences and disengagements” in schools (Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 150). For example, the juxtaposition of principals' perceptions of the paucity of and limitations in accessing resources for children with special needs, and the MoE's increasing focus on wellbeing was frequently discussed as a source of friction during interviews. One principal described managing their frustration by using humour and passive resistance when providing data to the MoE:

*The ministry says to me “How many children with special needs do you have?” And I put [number of total students in school] and how many children with special abilities do you have, [puts same number of total students again].*

Stern (2012, p. 397) believes it is important to focus on these “concrete examples of agency and struggle” to engender hope to escape a neoliberal educative bind.

## **Summary**

Principals perceive values, spirituality and culture as elements of wellbeing and their personal beliefs and experiences are often interwoven with their professional conceptualisations. Principals expressed more synthesised, inter-connected and personalised perceptions of spirituality in contrast to the way *taha wairua* was superficially bound within the curriculum. Many principals not only associated spirituality with wellbeing but situated their own and others *wairua* within the school, in *karakia* and within nature and *whenua*.

Values were thought to contribute towards a sense of culture of the way a school was and the expectations the school had. Principals of special character *Kura Kaupapa Māori* or faith based schools described their values as integrated and unified belief systems of care and culture that were similarly shared at school and in the community and could potentially attract new families to the school. State school principals also expressed caring thoughts and emotions and thought their schools cared and valued care, however this was often an unofficial value, as official values took a more behavioural approach as they were more utilitarian and achievement orientated. Principals did not discuss how they developed values with their school communities which may be related to the externalised and top down NVC process for insertion in the curriculum by the MoE, where schools were confusingly advised they needed to evidence their adherence to this list of ready-made NVCs, yet also consult communities about the NVCs, and could also add their own values.

Principals thought that their own school culture was linked to wellbeing and was driven from the top down by principals and staff. They believed their school culture was different to other schools, yet contributed to the culture within their different CoLs, reflecting the self-managed nature of New Zealand schools and the recent reconfiguration of schools into CoLs. Culture was therefore discussed as a layered concept and subsequently had multiple points of tension particularly in relation to the interfaces between cultures of care and cultures perceived or experienced to be less caring. Principals were working with culture in many ways, at a macro level, repairing or building broader school culture, and also at a micro level responding to cultural diversity of individual students.

Educational development and processes of directing and inserting values, culture, and wellbeing, including *wairua*, were characterised in academic literature as being driven by economic agendas (Benade, 2011), exclusive (Hokowhitu, 2004), ad hoc (Tomlins-Jahnke, 2008) and hastily implemented with limited mechanisms for review (Fitzpatrick, 2007). As a result the ideology and lack of coherence and cohesion often did not integrate or collaborate with the contextually situated and organic nature of the development of these elements in schools that principals described.



## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to understand principals' perceptions of wellbeing in the context of their school environment. The background chapter outlined how Canterbury principals and their school communities could experience vulnerability in the face of political, pedagogical, and economic change, particularly after an earthquake, and that principals' roles were stressful. Although the results of this study confirm that the educational environment could challenge principals' wellbeing, it also found principals demonstrated resilience during change. This resilience was associated with principals retaining some intellectual independence, personal beliefs, and values in their professional roles. Principals described folding in their own beliefs about wellbeing, their roles, and pedagogy, with their interpretation of formal knowledge and their relational experiences. This chapter discusses further the ways that wellbeing is organically interwoven throughout principals' relationships with people and also how wellbeing is interconnected through temporal and spatial relationships.

#### **Wellbeing and relationships between people, space, place, and time**

Principals observed and experienced wellbeing as fleeting, in sunny natural settings, or hidden behind clouds, in brief exchanges with students in the office, or outside. Yet also described wellbeing as enduring, representing relational, personal connections, and journeys within layers of sentimental artefacts in memory laden places. Furthermore, many principals in secular state schools and special character schools expressed expansive ideas and beliefs about *wairua*. Principals connected *wairua* and wellbeing in many ways; within themselves, through their relationship with whenua, their appreciation of spiritual objects and their connections with students.

Principals also experienced wellbeing through their affective sensory appreciation of natural and quiet places, the feel of social spaces, music, and visual representations including art, photographs, and objects. In addition, material objects, like ovens and coffee machines, were found to represent values and culture. This study, therefore, found that principals' sense of spatial and place connectedness could be described as a "complex intermingling, and, ultimately, fusion of mind and landscape, so that neither is finally separable or meaningful without the other" (Ryden, 1993, p. 254). These findings may have partly reflected the ability of the mobile interview method to reveal the relationships with wellbeing that exist in space and place. This situated nature of wellbeing revealed in this study is in contrast with what is captured by ERO's wellbeing draft indicators (2013) or other survey methods described in the grey literature in the background chapter. These methods, which are those most often employed by educational stake holders, are unlikely to capture the breadth and depth that this study has.

Although wellbeing was found to be situated, principals thought their own wellbeing and the wellbeing of that of staff and students could be vulnerable to disruption by externally directed, incongruous, spatial prioritisations. Principals often experienced ambivalence as they led these type of changes that were sometimes unpopular with parents and staff; however, principals also demonstrated resilience to spatial change pressures, leading or joining their staff and students in the remaking of their space to modify something that did not work, or to push back against external change or policy as a result of their own personal beliefs and broader school culture. Space and wellbeing were interwoven and therefore both became modified and adjusted when people positioned and repositioned the material including furniture and blinds to better represent their needs within their social and environmental milieu. Although, the ongoing permanent or temporarily remediation of spatial issues that some principals described was not always possible for schools with less resources. These actions were also substantiated in the



literature discussed in the background chapter that found ILEs once built, underwent cyclical states of unofficial reinvention and also reflects the spatial theories of Massey (2005) and Lefebvre (1974) that space is socially created.

The conceptualisation of wellbeing was similarly found to undergo many iterations, as the government provides no integrated schema of wellbeing for principals, which itself creates a challenge in relation to how wellbeing might be coherently conceived of in schools. Principals' perceptions of wellbeing were informed by layers of overlapping personal and professional experiences, beliefs and influences which meant they often held co-existing divergent and ambivalent beliefs about how wellbeing might be achieved in the school setting. The government's own top down process for introducing wellbeing into education, where *wairua* and values have been incrementally inserted into curricula over many years, with limited consultation and evaluation of wellbeing in education, reflects Treasury's description of (2013b, p. 4) "set[ing] and forget[ing]."

However, whilst principals experience predominantly top down relationships with government that are influenced by global and national economic agendas, this study also found principals can exert their own influence from the bottom up, in response to change. Principals' influence was found to be linked to their reliance on their own beliefs and the beliefs they shared within their leadership teams. Their beliefs could be in opposition or partial agreeance with the beliefs and ideas of the educational agencies and stakeholders who were redefining educational space and wellbeing. For this reason, principals were not passive handmaidens of neoliberally informed educational and political change as their beliefs and actions were found to focus not only on children's potential states of being, but their actual states of being, particularly when they perceived social injustices affecting culture, disability, basic needs, and play.

Moreover, principals' discourses were encoded with their beliefs about care and their intense, intimate, and intricate understandings of the effects of broader social and economic policies and pedagogy on wellbeing, that were situated within what Milligan and Wiles (2010) describe as the "landscape of care". The landscape was often uneven, as it was continuously reshaped by social, political, and economic discourse that could reframe care as dependence (Lawson, 2007). Principals saw themselves as wellbeing navigators across complex interfaces between students, families, staff, and policies, and they attempted to counter the varied capacities of people, deleterious aspects of systems and waves of change. Yet while principals could be a bridge between school and the government's wellbeing policy and legislation, they also find themselves in a no man's land, without support to provide practical basic care essentials.

Despite the political reshaping and reframing of care, principals persistently held care for staff, students and families both past and present as a personal value, believing this value was shared by their leadership team, and that their school culture was characterised by caring. The principals' persistence in caring suggested a relationship between values, care, responsibility, and resilience, these unofficial values remained embedded in reciprocally caring relationships with students, families alongside the MoE's conception of values that were often achievement orientated and used to responsabilise, modify, and shape students. In this way familial, spiritual, personal, collegial, and MoE created values co-existed dynamically within school ecosystems. Principals in this study, therefore, were found to have significant roles of advocacy for care within complex geographies, and were engaged in reciprocal and interwoven connections with people, nature, and the material environment.

The complexity of the relationship between wellbeing and the principal role was highlighted by the presence of multiple simultaneous and sometimes contradictory thoughts and feelings, as although principals valued and sought out the face to face interactions, and relationships with students, families and staff, they could also find this stressful. Principals could experience

internal dismay and incomprehension about the student welfare issues that they addressed and ameliorated and attempted to make sense by contrasting families' situations against their own upbringing or parenting. Yet notably, they countered their own beliefs and experiences by considering families' actual capacity and the current societal pressures, to avoid judging or blaming families. Similarly, professionally, while principals could espouse the benefits of being a self-managed school, they could also criticise the lack of support associated with diminishing state responsibility and the negative effect this could have on their own wellbeing. It is concerning that principals thought they had a significant personal and professional responsibility to care, yet also experienced discomfort due to increasing parental and governmental expectations and beliefs that schools can ameliorate all societal ills, and support the growth of the future economy.

Yet, it is critical that principals keep caring, as although the OECD seeks schools as agents in a knowledge economy that aims for inclusivity (Mowat, 2015), the OECD discourse about wellbeing and resilience can inadvertently exclude and marginalise many in society as it trickles down through national government, the MoE and educational agencies. Societal problems become reinterpreted as the problems of individuals, obscuring the underlying inflexible and inappropriate systems and structures that create the gaps and barriers which perpetuate some of the challenging behaviours principals are concerned about (Mowat, 2015), including internalised emotions, externalised behaviours, and low self-regulation (Flouri, Midouhas, & Joshi, 2014; Van der Kolk, 2017).

In conclusion, principals described the relational nature of the school environment through people, spirituality, history and personal, professional ways of being and knowing over time, which is similar to Allen's (1990) description of a "genealogical landscape," as the affections and care principals hold for students and colleagues could endure over decades. As a consequence, principals were found to be well placed as valuable sources of knowledge and

experience, having unique yet profoundly temporally coherent understandings of wellbeing in school space and place. In other words, principals are natural historians of wellbeing in schools, including of changes that can be subtle, nuanced, and gradual, abrupt and related to crisis, part of cyclical educational trends, or the cumulative effects of changing government policies over time.

It is hoped this study contributes to the existing knowledge about wellbeing in schools by demonstrating that walking interviews can support and enrich understandings of perspectives of wellbeing. Mobile methods can illuminate the many official and unofficial influences that enhance or challenge wellbeing in the particular context of the school environment. This study also recommends collaboration with school principals to create a wellbeing framework from the bottom up, that values space, place, *wairua*, and caring and reduces the likelihood of disjointed and dislocated wellbeing interventions. A framework that connects the MoE's 2025 vision of "Life Long Learners in a Connected World" (MoE, 2015a) with principals' wisdom and experience may enhance the current government's proposed intergenerational wellbeing approach.

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