Principal Perceptions of Self and Change:

A New Zealand Case Study

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Abstract

School principals develop various attitudes and attributes so as to manage complex change processes. As they implement change, they are themselves changed. This research explores how leadership of change management in schools influences transformation of professional identity. A qualitative methodology is used, underpinned by a constructivist theoretical framework with a multiple case study approach. Four school leaders, each with two significant others, were purposively selected from New Zealand primary schools. Drawing on identity theory and in particular symbolic interactionism, four aspects of self were identified that help explain how identity is transformed through enactment of various leadership roles. The four aspects of self, described as thinking, acting, feeling and believing, then inform a model to enhance understanding of the role of the self in educational leadership. This study is significant in that it explores a lesser-researched area of experienced principal development. Personal and professional practices perceived by principals to be important for their continuing development as leaders are identified. Insight is provided into both the transitory nature of identity and the more constant aspects of self. The findings have implications for leadership training, mentoring and support of school leaders, and may inform policy and practice in schools leading to improved change management processes.
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List of Abbreviations

ERØ  Education Review Office
NAPPP National Aspiring Principals’ Programme
FTPP  First-Time Principals’ Programme
IT    Information Technology
IQ    Intelligence Quotient
SSI   Structural Symbolic Interactionism
PLG   Professional Learning Group
BOT   Board of Trustees
CEO   Chief Executive Officer
IES   Investing in Educational Success
PE    Principal Elmton
PB    Principal Birchtyn
PH    Principal Hazelton
PO    Principal Oakton
BT    Board of Trustees Member
CT    Class Teacher
DP    Deputy Principal
P21   Partnership for 21st Century Learning
OFSTED Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (United Kingdom)
NAPLAN National Assessment Programme - Literacy and Numeracy (Australia)
OECD  Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
Chapter 1: Introduction

Setting the Scene

Leadership might be compared to a Celtic knot, a complex pattern where many strands are interwoven. The space between the strands is important. These spaces although seemingly empty, define the pattern.

![Celtic Knot](image)

**Figure 1: Celtic knot (unknown, n.d)**

In school leadership, it is perhaps easier to focus on that which is apparent. These ‘strands’ could be as diverse as curricula, outcomes and benchmarking, systems of management, property and environments, pastoral care of students, staff performance and development, and building relationships with Boards of Trustees and local communities. However, to pull these strands together and introduce coherence and meaning into an organisation requires leadership. Leadership might be thought of as the negative space between the strands. Leadership defines the pattern. While the focus of leadership research is more often on the successful (or otherwise) practices of leadership, this thesis explores the notion of the self in educational leadership. Of particular interest is the way that the self responds to change and challenge through transformation of identity. Change is endemic in education. Change can happen because of, or in spite of principals. Hence, it is important to understand how principal identity influences change in schools and in turn, how external forces influence change in principal identity and leadership practice.
Origin of the Study

My interest in educational research arose from my experience teaching and leading in schools in New Zealand, the United Kingdom and Australia. I taught in a variety of state schools including primary and intermediate schools in both high and low socio-economic areas. I also taught in independent schools both all-boys and all-girls, and an international bilingual school. Some of these schools were highly successful, others were meeting the status quo, and some were experiencing difficulties such as are recalled in this personal story:

The phone rang at 5:00 am on a Friday morning. It was my syndicate leader. His voice sounded gritty, weary and resigned. He told me not to come into school because there had been a fire. I set off anyway, with a bucket of cleaning materials, ready to get stuck in and salvage what I could. It was my fourth term of teaching and I didn’t know what to expect. Walking past the police tape, I came upon a scene of complete devastation. Six classrooms, of which one had been mine, were razed to the ground. Nothing remained but smouldering ash and a few twisted chair legs. I remember thinking that the beautiful artworks I had put up the previous night would never be seen. It took courage not to walk away at this point but the despair and lack of comprehension on the children’s faces kept me going. For many of them, school was their only safe place. With hindsight, I suspect the arson attack occurred because the school had become disengaged from the local community. When the school was rebuilt, a new principal arrived. What followed was a complete turnaround, as the new school became the vibrant hub of the community. It was a total transformation in school culture. I began to understand what a difference leadership could make.

My employment often coincided with times of growth or change within schools. I observed the strategies leaders put in place to bring about change. I was interested in the way leaders build and sustain the kinds of relationships that allow them to fulfil the vision held for the school. As a deputy principal, I completed some tertiary study that conveyed the complexity of leadership issues, and saw that there was much to discover through investigation of educational leadership. I was particularly interested in models of leadership but felt they did not adequately portray the leadership I had experienced. Something appeared to be missing. I was curious to explore why principals think and act the way they do and I wanted to understand why some principals embrace change, while others appear happy maintaining the
status quo, or some resist change while still others give up altogether. What follows is this study that investigates how principals adapt identity to sustain leadership in rapidly changing contexts.

A Note on the Title

The title of this study evolved from “Changing the changers: How leaders adapt to manage change processes in New Zealand primary schools” to “Changing the changers: How principals adapt to manage change in four New Zealand primary schools” and finally to the current title, “Principal perceptions of self and change: A New Zealand case study.” The first change was made to sharpen the focus to school principals rather than the more general term “leaders.” There was also desire to remove “change processes” to better reflect the study emphasis on the self rather than the processes of change. The final change was made after examination. At this point, the decision was made to refine the title to better represent the content, and to include significant key words such as perceptions, self, and change.

New Zealand Context

New Zealand has undergone major reforms in education since the Education Act of 1877. The 1877 Act sought to centralise education and provide equity of access through free (tax payer funded), secular, and compulsory education ( Openshaw, Adams, & Hamer, 2005). Over the next century many changes to education legislation and various reforms served to extend schooling to a wider range of the population thus consolidating what was begun in 1877. In 1989, the Tomorrow’s Schools policy was introduced marking a significant point of change. This policy was formed in response to the market-driven economy that was a product of the neoliberal reforms of the 1980s (Snook & O'Neill, 2014). Tomorrow’s Schools gave greater autonomy to schools to manage property, finance, and personnel, and to interpret curriculum to better reflect the needs of the local community. A decile system introduced in 1994 allocated schools a rating from 1-10 based on socio-economic factors. Competition between schools emerged as, for the first time, parents could choose where to send their child. The gap between rich and poor widened as the market-driven economy took hold. This resulted in increasing
economic segmentation of cities and ‘flight’ from low decile schools to high decile schools (Gordon, 2016). Other examples of changes since 1989 include the introduction of Professional Standards for principals (1997) and teachers (1998-1999), implementation of a new National Curriculum (2007), and National Standards (2010). The National Standards introduced benchmarks for children Years 1-8 in English medium schools for reading, writing and mathematics. At the time of field study, a new policy called ‘Investing in Educational Success’ (IES) sought to lift student achievement and increase career pathways for teachers and principals by creating Communities of Learning.

In addition to these changes, the role of the school principal increased in complexity as administration was devolved to individual schools and boards of trustees. As Wylie (2007) identifies “few, if any, other national systems have given the responsibility for the governance of each school to a largely parent-elected body on which parents of current students usually form the majority” (p. 1). While this may have had the effect of building closer relationships between schools and their communities, there is a high level of complexity involved in meeting government demands for accountability and compliance. Composition of boards of trustees varies according to the availability of requisite skills in the local community. It is likely inequity between boards exists. Lastly, it would seem that a positive relationship between board and school principal is key to this type of governance operating successfully (Wylie, 2007).

While this type of school governance is unique to New Zealand, many of the issues facing school principals are not. Alongside the United Kingdom, Australia, and the United States of America, principals in New Zealand are challenged to improve student outcomes while meeting demands for accountability and compliance, often with shrinking budgets. It could be argued that school leadership has never been more important. The body of literature to support thinking that school leadership has an effect on student outcomes is growing across the western world (Dinham, 2008; Leithwood, Patten, & Jantzi, 2010; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; Notman, 2011; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). However, there is little that reports the changing role of the school leader in this new era of complexity, especially in regard to development and transformation of professional identity. In particular, there is a
paucity of New Zealand research on this topic. Yet New Zealand is an interesting country to study due to the rapid and intense change in administration of education that has taken place. New Zealand principals who began leadership practice before Tomorrow’s Schools bear witness to this change. Their perceptions of personal and professional change provide insight into the development of professional identity that, while unique to New Zealand, can be identified in other nations where there is a similar emphasis on performance and performativity (Blackmore, 2004; Crow, 2006; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008). This study seeks to add to an existing small body of literature about educational leadership in New Zealand, while drawing on leadership studies and thinking about the development of professional identity from across the western world.

**Preparation of School Principals in New Zealand**

Preparation of school principals in New Zealand is subject to review. In 2017-2018 a new leadership package is to be trialled. Three areas of development are targeted: *Leadership Advisors* for beginning school principals, *Emerging Leaders* for aspiring or potential leaders, and *Expert Partners* for experienced principals. These replace the three previous programmes described below.

The National Aspiring Principals Programme (NAPP): This programme provided twelve months of professional learning with a focus on “developing adaptive, culturally responsive, digitally literate leaders through coaching and inquiry learning, and building their understanding of the research base around leadership” (Te Toi Tupu, n.d). Alongside four modules of work that focused on the role of the principal, the programme included peer coaching, shadowing another principal, and an online reflective journal.

The First Time Principals Programme (FTPP): This programme began in 2002 and since its inception more than 2000 newly appointed principals have taken part. The programme provided an 18-month induction for beginning school principals. There were four learning domains: teaching and learning, school management, self-efficacy, and relationships. In an evaluation of the programme, Patuawa, Robinson, Bendikson, Pope, and Meyer (2013) found the two learning domains that had the
greatest sustained impact for leadership development were self-efficacy and relationships.

The Experienced Principals Development Programme (EPDP): This programme also provided 18 months of professional learning. Despite a successful pilot of the programme, it was discontinued in favour of the new government initiative, Communities of Learning, which set out to create new career pathways for teachers and principals. Cardno and Youngs (2013) sought the perceptions of some 300 experienced school principals who took part in the EPDP and found that the programme was “highly relevant for the participants because it was responsive to individual needs and learning styles” (p. 257). However, one third of the respondents perceived the programme could be strengthened with a greater focus on human resource management and in particular, the skills required for conflict resolution. Mentoring was found to be valuable and this is perhaps acknowledged with the development of the new expert partners programme. However, it is yet to be seen whether the new initiatives provide enough support to encourage experienced principals to stay in the profession. Youngs and Cardno (2015) point to the need to protect the “human, social and cultural capital of experienced principals” in our education system (p. 64) at a time when recruitment and retention of principals is at risk. Although two of the study principals had accessed the NAP and FTP programmes, none had taken part in the EPD programme.

Development programmes for school principals should not be adopted without question. There is a danger of creating uniformity amongst school principals (Gunter & Thomson, 2009) or “designer employees” (Sachs, 2001). While setting standards is important, such employees might be used to pursue various societal or governmental agendas. The danger here is a loss of the diversity required to meet the needs of a wide-ranging population. “One size fits all” leadership may not be the best outcome to meet the needs of students from diverse backgrounds situated in diverse locations. It may limit the types of people attracted to school leadership making recruitment more difficult. Gunter and Thomson (2009) argue the homogenisation of the school principal places pressure on the self as “every head teacher comes to understand that they must be suitably tailored as part of the role” (p. 477). This thesis explores the pressures on the self of the school principal, and
provides some insights into the strategies used to resolve the personal and professional conflicts that arise.

**Significance of the Study**

The study is significant because it aims to increase understanding of the self in educational leadership. A number of groups may be interested in the findings. Those who devise professional learning programmes for experienced principals might consider these findings when identifying specific areas of need. Boards of trustees may find aspects of this work provide insight into the role of the principal, and how best to support principals in their goals for new learning. Principal practitioners may find the study findings resonate with their personal experience, and that the aspects of self could be used to guide reflective practice. The findings also invite a rethink about career planning and the role of experienced principals in communities of learning. This may be of use to policy makers. Lastly, the identification of the four aspects of self might be useful for those with a research interest in the role of the self in educational leadership. Points of significance are as follows:

1. In researching the professional identity of experienced principals, the study contributes to knowledge and understanding in the lesser-researched area of experienced principalship.

2. The study enhances understanding the self in educational leadership by identifying four aspects of self: the *thinking* self, the *feeling* self, the *believing* self, and the *acting* self.

3. The study contributes to the literature on the transitory nature of identity. It provides insight into transformation of identity, but also seeks out aspects of self that remain constant.

4. The study identifies personal and professional practices perceived by principals to be significant for their continuing development as leaders.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine principals’ insights into the changing nature of identity. A multiple case study approach was used to understand how change in professional identity influences the practice of four experienced principals situated in New Zealand primary schools. The topic was concerned with change management. The focus of the study was the perceptions of four experienced primary school principals, together with two significant others, who were observed managing significant change processes in their schools. The principals were asked if they perceived themselves changing personally and professionally as they led change processes that influenced others. The framework was constructivism and elements of identity theory were referenced. Four aspects of self were identified in the data that contribute to professional identity. These were the believing, thinking, acting and feeling aspects of self.

Leadership, Influence, and Identity

This thesis draws on identity theory and especially symbolic interactionism to explore educational leadership. While discussion of identity theory can be found in Chapter 2, it is useful at this point to define the key concepts explored in this thesis.

Leaders and Leadership

This study is located within an educational context. Although leadership of schools is frequently distributed among senior leadership teams and teacher leaders, it is still largely hierarchical in that it is most often one person who is the school principal. Hence, the school leader is the school principal for the purposes of this study. Likewise, the concept of leadership is located within an educational context, and it relates to principalship of a school. The concept of educational leadership is explored from a transformational rather than a technical perspective. While acknowledging the importance of managerial aspects of leadership, the focus is not on systems and practices but rather more on the relationships between those involved in the school context such as parents, students, staff and in this instance, boards of trustees. Thus, the aim is to investigate how the four principals are situated
within the context of their individual schools, and how this context and other external influences impact on each self as they attempt to make meaning of their individual roles.

**Influence**

Although this study focuses on the self of the school principal, each case is set within a unique school context. The principals are influenced by the relationships they have with others and the structures imposed on them by external influences such as societal changes, government policies and regulations, and the physical nature of the environments they work within. In this way, the principals are influenced by their practice just as they influence the practice of others.

**Identity**

In line with the thinking of symbolic interactionism, identity is negotiated through practice. Wenger (1998) refers to this as a “cascading interplay of participation and reification” (p. 151). Reflexivity of the self is evident in this process of reification, or bringing into being, as identity is negotiated or transformed. The self interprets the actions and responses of others, in order to inform or negotiate a personal response. Thus, the principals in the study can be said to act with some form of agency within their communities of practice.

A distinction is made between personal and professional identity that requires some explanation. Mead (1934) conceptualised humans as actors. In this he meant that a human may “perceive himself, have conceptions of himself, communicate with himself, and act towards himself” (Blumer, 1969, p. 62). In other words, humans can examine themselves, their relationships, and the societal structures within which they are situated. Humans do this to make meaning of their relationships and contexts. During this process identity is constructed and transformed. This thinking implies a notion of an inner self that is explored later in Chapter 2. Personal identity can be defined as those aspects of self that may or may not be shared with others such as feelings, memories, and beliefs. Professional identity is defined as those aspects of self that are specifically oriented to roles along a personal career trajectory. The two interrelate. Thus identity can be defined as that set of values,
beliefs, emotions, knowledge, experience, and understandings that inform response. Identity encompasses a narrative of successes and failures. Importantly, as Blumer (1969) notes, “Mead saw the self as a process and not as a structure” (p. 62). It follows then that identity is in a continual state of transformation.

**Research Questions**

The research questions sought to explore how the experience of leadership challenges and changes the self. The line of questioning developed in four directions. Firstly, insights were sought into the factors that influenced transformation of professional identity. These factors included external influences such as policy changes, and change in societal expectations. The participants were asked about formative influences and early leadership experiences and the impact of influential others such as role models. Secondly, the principal participants were asked about their personal educational philosophy, and how personal values and beliefs influenced their leadership practice. Next, perceptions were sought to provide insights into the particular aspects of self that were transformed. The aim was to understand how the self changes in response to the demands of leadership, what aspects remain constant, and what the impact of any change, or lack of change, is on professional identity. Lastly, the research questions sought insight into the way professional learning can influence transformation of professional identity.

**General Question**

In what ways do school leaders perceive themselves as changing or changed?

**Specific Questions**

How do primary principals perceive themselves changing professionally?

How do primary principals perceive themselves changing personally?

What factors are perceived to contribute to this change?

Is leadership learning a factor in change? If so, what types of experiences do primary school principals find significant for professional change?
How did the significant others perceive the professional change of principals influencing school leadership practice?

How did the significant others perceive a principal’s ability to change professionally as related to success in implementing and sustaining change in schools?

**Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter provides a general introduction to the thesis including the origin of the study, the purpose of the study, and the research questions. The significance of the study is considered and an outline of the chapters provided. Chapter 2 provides an overview of the literature within which the study is situated. There are six sections. The first three sections provide a context for the study by reviewing literature related to the impact of external influences on leadership practice. Next sustainable and adaptive leadership practices are discussed and three frameworks for educational leadership considered. The second part of the chapter is concerned with identity, the presence of the self in educational leadership, and learning as an influence on identity transformation.

Chapter 3, the Research Design, is divided into two parts. Part One considers issues of methodology including the theoretical framework and ethical provisions made, while Part Two is concerned with the procedures of the study. Chapter 4, the Research Findings, presents four case studies. The case studies are referenced by pseudonym as Hazelton, Elmton, Birchton and Oakton schools. In Chapter 5, the Discussion, the findings are discussed in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. The categories that emerged from the data, the thinking, believing, acting and feeling aspects of self, are discussed further in four sections: Leading with Thought, Leading with Heart, Leading with Conviction, and Leading in Response.

Chapter 6 presents a model for understanding the self in educational leadership. There are two parts to this chapter. In Part One, identity theory is revisited and the self is discussed further in terms of learning about self, identity work, motivation for change, reflexivity, flexibility, transitory identity, and sustainable leadership. In Part Two, some implementation principles are provided together with strategies for critical analysis. In the concluding chapter, a review of the findings is provided, the
research design is revisited, and possibilities for application of the research are offered.
Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This thesis investigates school principals who have held the same leadership role for four or more years, to provide insight into the way management of change processes affects professional identity. School leadership is a complex, multifaceted role that demands a diverse skill set. Principals juggle many plates but, unlike circus performers, the ground beneath their feet is constantly moving and shaking. This movement is due to the rapidly shifting world of educational change. Managing others through change processes is difficult. Managing oneself in this context can be most difficult of all. This chapter provides a review of conceptual papers and research studies that provide some understanding of the transformation of professional identity in successful school leadership.

The chapter begins by situating this research in the field of educational leadership. Next, there is a discussion of external influences brought to bear on school principals in today’s schools. Change management in education is explored through five conceptual frameworks that all reference a similar component of leadership. The importance of the person of the school leader emerges, as various personal qualities and attributes are identified as contributing to sustainable leadership. These qualities and attributes are integral to identity. The frameworks begin with a discussion of adaptable and sustainable leadership practices. Next, identity is explored within an educational context, and a discussion of identity construction and transformation is provided. The purpose is to show how identity is inextricably entwined in leadership and change management processes. Some challenges to the self in leadership are discussed and consideration is given as to how emotion and reason may influence leadership practice and identity construction. Lastly, types of learning that might best meet the needs of leaders managing change processes are addressed.
Researching Educational Leadership

Leadership studies in the field of education fall into three broad categories (Lingard, Hayes, Mills, & Christie, 2003). There are those that study principal attributes and traits, often in a bid to define excellence in leadership or successful leadership personalities. There are studies that focus on the school principal within various contexts and settings thus exploring the diversity and uniqueness of the principal role. Lastly, there are those studies that focus on the transformational nature of school leadership. This last category has spawned many adjectival types of leadership such as authentic, distributed, and servant leadership for example. However, it is perhaps more useful to locate educational leadership studies across and within six knowledge provinces (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003). These can be described as the conceptual, descriptive, humanistic, critical, evaluative, and instrumental provinces. Thus it is possible to differentiate studies that focus on factual reporting (descriptive) with those that provide analysis of issues such as social justice (critical) and others that are concerned with leadership or school effectiveness (evaluative). This study is located within the humanistic province in that it is concerned with the biographies and experiences of school leaders. However, the study is aligned with the conceptual province in that it makes links to identity theory so as to clarify (and reconceptualise) the concept of the self in educational leadership. In addition, there are links to the instrumental province or that which is “concerned with providing leaders and others with effective strategies and tactics to deliver organisational and system goals” (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003, p. 133). These links are evident in the discussion of leadership frameworks and models, and the various shortcomings of these as identified by the study principals in the findings.

External Influences

While the focus of this review is the school leader as an individual, leaders do not operate in a vacuum. This section considers some external influences that impact the role of the school principal.
Role Complexity

The school leader’s role is complex, in which “public school administration has become a gallery of many desirable portraits” (Hausman, Crow, & Sperry, 2000, p. 6). Advertisements for principals’ positions contain words like exceptional, visionary, strategic, enthusiastic, and experienced; together with references to positive school-community relationships, leaders of learning, outstanding communication skills, and sound business acumen. Above all, these attributes and skills must be honed to fit specific school contexts. Leadership success relies on the ability of leaders to continuously adapt identity to meet the changing demands of the role.

People work differently in post-industrial society (Crow, Hausman, & Scribner, 2002). From an emphasis on efficiency and productivity, clearly delineated hierarchical roles, and the likelihood one could remain in the same occupation for a lifetime, there is a shift to a more fluid workplace. Now, the emphasis is on creativity and innovation, collaborative practices, and skill flexibility. Addressing this shift in the workplace can be a challenge for school principals. Those who identify with traditional role models may find these lack relevance as contemporary roles have greater complexity and are subject to rapid change. Principals, while building professional learning communities, have to manage external complexities such as accountability, market forces, and acquisition of civic capacity (Crow et al., 2002). Hence, there can be “tension between change and continuity” (Crow et al., 2002, p. 190) in the reshaping of principals’ roles in a knowledge society.

School Leadership in a Knowledge Society

In the past, industrial societies placed emphasis on productivity rather than knowledge. This resulted in a demand for efficiency that still exists in schools today. Bottery (2012) argues that the current emphasis on efficiency is misplaced. Today’s schools are encouraged to be efficient with resources such as time, people and money. Instead, “Human resources should be regarded as resourceful humans, who should in true Kantian fashion, be realised as ends in themselves, and not as simply means to some organisational or policy objective” (Bottery, 2012, p. 458). Putting people first requires a number of attitudinal changes towards teaching and learning.
Today, there is increased emphasis on creativity and innovation. This is evident in various frameworks for twenty-first century learning such as those provided by the OECD who in a document reporting on the Innovative Learning Environments Project (Groff, 2012) identify seven principles of learning. These are: learners at the centre of learning; the social nature of learning; that emotions are integral to learning, recognition of individual differences, stretching all students, assessment for learning, and the importance of building horizontal connections. The Partnership for 21st Century Learning (P21) adds to basic curriculum subjects with the addition of global awareness, financial, business and entrepreneurial literacy, civic literacy, health literacy, and environmental literacy (Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2007). New skills are required in areas such as learning and innovation, information, media and technology, and for life and career. Skills include creativity, the ability to be able to innovate, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, and collaboration. Also important are flexibility, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, accountability, and responsibility. These frameworks target students but are reflective of the needs of all learners in the twenty-first century.

For school principals, in addition to learning new skills, hierarchical structures may become less relevant in a knowledge society. It may not be possible for one person to hold all the answers in a rapidly changing complex system. There is need for humility in thought and action (Bottery, 2012; Collins, 2001). Caution is required when managing complex systems. A quick fix mentality may be no longer appropriate and adequate time must be allocated to implementation of new policies. Contingency plans are needed to meet the rapid pace of change. Bottery (2012) refers to the need for “slack.” This is time for relaxation, reflection and creative capacities to manifest. Not only “time slack” but also “control slack” so as to provide “the degree of freedom required to effect change” (p. 460). Hargreaves and Fink (2003) argue that in a knowledge society the world and its problems have become more interdependent. They describe an information glut or “data smog” and an “ingenuity gap.” They argue that to overcome these issues, school leadership needs to be seen as a quality within an organisation or “a culture of integrated qualities” (p. 16). Thus leadership is distributed among the many rather than resting “on the shoulders of an heroic few” (p. 16). For school principals, this requires a
shift in thinking about leadership, change management, and acknowledgement of the dilemma between full distribution of leadership and accountability.

**Accountability**

The role of the school principal is changing in New Zealand and many other western nations. Increasingly, principals are middle managers. They lead up as they report to Local Education Authorities, Boards of Trustees, and various government agencies. They lead down as they build professional learning communities within their schools. Hierarchies are broken down, as principals are encouraged to distribute leadership practice, and develop new leaders. Many principals take on entrepreneurial roles as they fight for survival in an increasingly competitive market (Crow, 1992). Parents seek to make informed choices about their children’s education. Often these choices are informed by the media who position schools through extensive use of league tables, examples of which include the My Schools website in Australia, and tables extracted from OFSTED reports in the United Kingdom. While schools have always reported to their stakeholders, government initiatives have increased accountability by advancing and insisting on adherence to national curricula, standards, and assessment.

In New Zealand, the Education Review Office (ERO) conducts school reviews. Visits are on a needs basis but usually occur every three to four years. Reviews are reported publically. The reviews target all aspects of school performance with particular attention to the development of positive learning outcomes for children, although other matters such as those pertaining to legal requirements form part of the process. Primary school principals must follow certain professional standards that are set out in the Primary Principals’ Collective Agreement (New Zealand Educational Institute, 2016-18). The areas of practice for which standards are applied are culture, pedagogy, systems, and partnerships and networks. Where a school is deemed to be performing poorly or a major risk to students is identified, ERO may make recommendations to the Minister of Education to perform some sort of intervention. Occasionally, the principal may be stood down and a commissioner appointed to remediate the issues identified. Thus principals are accountable to the review office and their boards of trustees. The school board of trustees carries out an
annual performance review of the principal. Principals must provide evidence that they have met certain criteria depending on number of years of continuous service. The criteria include outcomes relating to professional learning and development plans, career and personal development, and leadership development.

Demands to comply with professional standards may create tension in principals and teachers who have other motivations for teaching and leadership. The concept of a “teacherly self” based on an ethic of care and the personal qualities of a “good” teacher or principal is challenged by the current emphasis on teacher competencies (Woods & Jeffery, 2002). This ethical dilemma is pointed out by N. Wright (2003) who argues principals are forced to compromise ideals in order to satisfy the demands of government agencies and an increasingly competitive market. Gold, Evans, Earley, Halpin, and Collarbone (2003) believe it is possible to balance these competing concerns and lead successfully. However, it is not known how this type of dilemma affects the identity of the principal, or even if such compromised leadership is sustainable. Leaders are forced to walk tightrope-like paths as they try to balance these competing demands.

**A Changing View of Schools as Organisations**

There is growing recognition of the complex nature of schools as organisations. Bloch (2005) describes organisations as complex adaptive entities best explained by theories of chaos, complexity and nonlinear dynamics. This view contradicts twentieth century models of organisations as rigid, fixed and machinelike. Schools are like complex adaptive entities in that they are open, dynamic, part of a network, nonlinear, and interdependent. Small change can bring about large effects (the butterfly effect) and limiting attractors can restrict growth and development. Mulford (2008) suggests schools are more like living organisms than machines. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) also argue human communities are like ecosystems that are not rational, linear or easily managed. They suggest schools are more like rich, biodiverse rainforests than regimented coniferous plantations (p. 4). Bottery (2012) agrees a more complex view of reality is needed. Organisations are failing to acknowledge the “meaning making” that humans bring to situations. This meaning
making perhaps explains why humans do not always conform or meet expectations. Resistance may be caused by a lack of coherence in organisations (Fullan, 2001).

If schools can be likened to complex ecosystems where interactions are all important then, Bottery (2012) argues this idea needs greater application to educational leadership. Interactions are important because they are the “how to” of implementation and change. However, there is little research that investigates how leaders interact with others to bring about change. Bottery (2012) suggests successful professionals are:

- aware of the ambiguities, dilemmas and ironies generated by the nature of organisations, and by legislative demands. They are leaders who appreciate the complexity with which they need to deal, and who develop attitudes and strategies which cope better with such realities (pp. 455-456).

Further research is needed to identify the attitudes and strategies successful leaders use to deal with these ambiguities, dilemmas and ironies. This argument implies a greater need for adaptive rather than technical skills in leadership practice. Gradually this idea is gaining traction as the managerialism of the past three decades is found to be inadequate in meeting the challenges of today’s schools.

**Conceptual Frameworks**

Five conceptual frameworks are used to guide the study: Sustainable and Adaptive Leadership Practices, Frameworks for Educational Leadership, Identity, The ‘Self’ in Educational Leadership, and Learning and Identity Transformation.

**Sustainable and Adaptive Leadership Practices**

Since the eighties, the language used to describe the role of a principal has changed. Tension has arisen between the use of the word “management” and the word “leadership.” While governments pursue educational managerialism, in schools and academic literature there is growing rejection of the role of principal as purely transactional. There is increasing focus on the use of “soft skills” in leadership such as interpersonal skills, and higher-order thinking skills. While management responsibilities remain an important component, especially in terms of creating the
pre-conditions conducive to successful teaching and learning as found by Leithwood et al. (2010), recent educational leadership models suggest there is another more personal side to school leadership. The self in educational leadership will be discussed later. Before this, some consideration of the phases of the change management process is required. As this thesis is concerned with the way principals perceive themselves in relation to change, sustainable and adaptive leadership practices are proposed as an alternative to transactional management.

Phases in Change Management

While this thesis is concerned with how the process of managing change influences the individual leading the change, it is helpful to consider how change occurs as a series of phases in organisations. Change management has been a focus of organisations for many decades. Lewin (1952) likens the process of change to a physical or chemical transformation. He uses an ice metaphor to explain how organisations must unfreeze, move and freeze again in order to consolidate change. In a discussion of group dynamics, he makes a distinction between actual change or lack of change, and resistance to change. Change is resisted or desired by a group that is situated in a particular setting or social field. Hence, it is important to study change in education within the school itself among the participants that inhabit that particular social field. Lewin (1952) argues that levels of conduct within a group can be changed by either “adding forces in the desired direction or by diminishing opposing forces” (p. 320) To create permanent change involves ‘freezing’ the change at the new level. As Bloch (2005) argues, this is often difficult to achieve as individuals, like the groups Lewin (1952) describes, frequently return to their previous state. Patterns can emerge as discussed in the section “Peaks and Valleys” later in this chapter.

Bullock and Batten (1985) provide a useful analysis of organisational development phases, identifying four phases in change in organisations. The phases are described as exploration, planning, action, and integration. Each phase is associated with various processes. They argue the advantage of their model is that it can be applied in wide-ranging situations from schools to factories. It enables consideration of
change at a case study level. Thus, like Lewin (1952), Bullock and Battern (1985) emphasise the importance of studying change in the field.

Initiating, implementing, and sustaining change in organisations is complex. Kotter (1996) is concerned that organisations enable the development of leaders who have the vision and the communication skills to bring about transformation in twenty-first century conditions. Like Lewin (1952) and Bullock and Batten (1985), he unpacks a series of stages that focus on unfreezing, moving, and consolidating permanent change. The stages listed below are useful as they relate to the phases of change the principals in this study identify. They are:

1. Establishing a sense of urgency.
2. Creating a powerful guiding coalition.
3. Developing a vision and strategy.
4. Communicating the change vision.
5. Empowering broad-based action.
7. Consolidating gains and producing more change.
8. Anchoring new approaches firmly in the school culture.

(Adapted from Kotter, 1996, p. 21)

Kotter (1996) emphasises the importance of life-long learning to enable skill flexibility and growth. How such learning relates to school principals is discussed later in this chapter.

**Strategic and Systems Thinking**

As Kotter (1996) suggests, the twenty-first century requires leadership that is not authoritative and is more than task-oriented. If, as O'Shannassy (2003) suggests, all individuals in an organisation are responsible for thinking strategically, then new
definitions of strategic thinking, strategic planning and strategic management must be developed. Strategic thinking can be defined as “a particular way of solving strategic problems at the individual and institutional level combining rational and generative thought processes” (O'Shannassy, 2003, p. 55). Generative thought processes might include intuition, hunches, and types of creative and innovative thinking not always associated with strategic thinking and planning.

O'Shannassy (2003) posits five key elements of strategic thinking. These are flexibility of people, structures, systems and processes; problem solving using both intuition and analysis; participation of all stakeholders; understanding by all of the organisation’s strategic intent; and lastly, consideration of the cultural legacy of the organisation through its past, present and future aspirations. It follows then, that strategic planning will emerge from strategic thinking. However, this is not a linear process. O'Shannassy (2003) suggests that thinking and planning can be “concurrent, sequential or something in between” (p. 59). This statement has implications for staff training and development so as to enable the high levels of communication and understanding required by everyone in an organisation. Strategic thinking and planning is no longer a top-down responsibility but becomes a collective responsibility that allows the organisation to flex and adapt in response to changing situations.

To follow such a mandate is a challenge for schools, especially in New Zealand where the Tomorrow’s Schools policy has influenced the way school leadership is enacted. Now, boards of trustees work with principals to develop and implement strategic thinking. For teachers, there is a shift to teaching and learning approaches that emphasise student agency. Lastly, the new government initiative of Communities of Learning seeks to distribute leadership among communities of practice that link schools together. These changes are combined with ever increasing demands for school improvement.

Peaks and Valleys

Sustaining school improvement is difficult (Fullan, 2005; Mulford & Moreno, 2006). School success often follows the sigmoid curve (Handy, 1994). The sigmoid curve charts the progress of individual career trajectories, sports teams, companies,
and global empires where a rise is followed by a fall. Upward phases in schools can be described as turnaround, taking ownership, developing creativity, and distributed leadership (Day et al., 2011). Stoll (1998) identifies plateau and downward phases as cruising, strolling and failing.

The importance of leadership in sustaining successful schools is well recognised in both meta-analyses and qualitative studies (Marzano et al., 2005; Notman, 2011; Robinson et al., 2009). To be sustainable, Handy (1994) proposes that change happens before the peak in attainment is reached. Although there might be a slight falling off as change takes place, eventually the curve starts to rise again. Unfortunately, most wait until sliding down into a valley before making change. At this point, it is too late and failure may be inevitable. Handy (1994) argues successful people make change before it is forced upon them. This is an interesting proposition for educational leadership as it suggests that mapping the career trajectories of successful principals might provide insights into the skills and attributes for sustainability.

Leading Change

Moral purpose, leadership distribution, and development of leadership are important for sustainable leadership (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 2007). Sustainable leadership is three-dimensional in that it has depth, length and breadth (Davies, 2007). Depth in that the core business of schools is teaching and learning, length as schools can sustain change over time, and breadth in that schools and the wider community as a whole are included. Dinham and Crowther (2011) outline three similar dimensions, students, staff and infrastructure, school culture and climate, and wider resourcing and support for schools.

To lead in these three dimensions, leaders must overcome managerial short-termism. Dinham and Crowther (2011) propose parallel leadership (a form of distributed leadership) as a way of balancing these aspects. Møller, Vedøy, Presthus, and Skedsmo (2009) agree that distributing power among teachers seems to contribute to sustainability. Hargreaves and Fink (2003) also make a case for distributed leadership rather than “training and developing a tiny leadership elite” (p. 17). While there is little empirical evidence to support the sustainability of distributed
leadership (Hallinger, 2011; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009), Davies (2007) suggests a number of strategies leaders can use to make change sustainable. These are well documented as shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Leadership strategies to make change sustainable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategies</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on deep rather than shallow learning</td>
<td>Davies (2007); West-Burnham (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance short term and long term objectives</td>
<td>Harris (2012); McCarthy, O’Connell, and Hall (2005)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on processes rather than plans</td>
<td>Bottery (2011); Davies (2002)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Think of schools as living systems</td>
<td>Hargreaves and Fink (2003); Mulford (2008)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model desired behaviours</td>
<td>Marzano et al. (2005); Southworth (2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Build in reflective practice</td>
<td>Barnett and O’Mahony (2006); Notman (2010); Scribner and Crow (2012)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use pedagogical dialogue</td>
<td>Robertson and Notman (2013)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create readiness</td>
<td>Dinham (2008); Fullan (1993)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sustainable leadership is enacted over time and adapts to meet the changing needs of the school. Leadership is inseparable from school context; it can be layered and several different types can be in place simultaneously (Hallinger, 2011). Leithwood et al. (2010) bring together school context and leadership types in a Canadian study that surveyed 1445 teachers to measure responses to distributed leadership practices and student outcomes. The roles and responsibilities of principals were identified as falling within rational, emotional, organisational and family pathways. Their study makes explicit the complexity of the role of the school leader who must be across all four pathways simultaneously, and able to engage with a diverse group of stakeholders. Leithwood et al. (2010) found organisational or rational aspects of leadership have little effect on student-learning outcomes. What emerged from the study is the suggestion that leaders should focus more on skills needed to work across all paths. These skills go beyond the managerial and transactional skills frequently taught in leadership training programmes. They are skills that contribute to successful change management. They are adaptive rather than technical skills and they may involve identity transformation.
First- and Second-Order Change

Two types of change process are identified in the literature. First-order change is bounded, focused, linear, incremental, and problem and solution orientated (Young, O’Doherty, Gooden, & Goodnow, 2011). Such change is also described as technical, practical, systematic or structural (Dempster, 2001; Kochan, Bredeson, & Riehl, 2002). In contrast, second-order change is emergent, unbounded, complex and non-linear (Young et al., 2011). Second-order change is also described as emancipatory (Kochan et al., 2002), and it can evoke transformation and sustenance (Dempster, 2001).

Adaptive leadership is concerned with second-order change. It creates “the conditions for individuals to confront existing values and norms” (Daly & Chrispeels, 2008, p. 33). This can be an uncomfortable, slow process. By contrast, technical leadership results in first-order change and is typified by attempts to refine or review existing practices. There is little challenge to existing norms. Trust, including aspects such as respect, competence and willingness to take risks, is an important factor in both. Daly and Chrispeels (2008) studied 292 teachers and administrators in four low socio-economic districts in California to investigate the importance of trust in school improvement. While they do not claim to have shown a causal link between trust and successful adaptive leadership, they found some evidence of trust as an important component. Their findings emphasise the importance of relationships, and support the increasing need for creativity and imagination in organisations.

In reality, leadership is often concerned with capacity to act rather than adaptive capacities such as thinking and imagination (Davies, 2002). Davies (2002) discerns between strategic intent (we know where to go but are not sure how to get there) and strategic planning (we know where to go and how to get there). Strategic intent uses creativity to build images, metaphors, shared understandings, and experiences over time. Davies (2002) cautions that strategic intent is slow but it results in sustainable change. All stakeholders have ownership of the process and become less resistant to change (Robertson & Notman, 2013; Zimmerman, 2006). In practice, the process of change often begins with strategic planning in a bid to reach required goals quickly. But, as Bottery (2012) argues, it is important to take time when instigating change.
Professional Responsibility

Time is not the only enemy of sustainability. In a turnaround situation, school leaders must deal with accountability (pressure) while also attempting to build capacity (support) (Fullan, 2005). Fullan (2005) argues the scales are weighted towards accountability, leading to short-term gains and the failure of sustainable leadership. Cranston (2013) disagrees, suggesting that school leaders be less concerned about the limitations of accountability and focus instead on professional responsibility. This proactive rather than reactive approach to leadership is based on four principles. The first two principles, that leadership is vision-driven and that leaders must be learners, have a sound base in the literature (Boyer, 1996; Fullan, 2001; Marzano et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2009).

The next two principles respond specifically to the demands of a knowledge society. Cranston (2013) argues leaders must take professional responsibility for their actions. This suggests a form of moral responsibility that relates directly to education and informs ethical decision-making. Professional responsibility may provide the balance sought between accountability and capacity building. Lastly, Cranston (2013) makes the point that leadership is “an on-going journey.” It requires creativity, flexibility, commitment and risk taking. This point acknowledges the complexity of leadership in a rapidly changing world. Cranston (2013) concludes that leaders need a sound grasp of organisational purpose and values (the what and why of their school) but also “how their own values and driving principles contribute to their understandings and enactment of leadership” (p. 139). This is a call for critical reflection in leadership practice. Leadership requires self-knowledge and self-belief. It requires understanding of identity transformation.

The conceptual papers and research studies referenced here call for adaptive, sustainable leadership practices so as to meet the challenges of a rapidly changing society. These practices are more than just another skill set for leaders to acquire and use with others. Adaptive and sustainable practices require second-order change. Such practice may require leaders to confront and change themselves.
Frameworks for Educational Leadership

This section begins with a review of literature related to the development stages of school leadership. Next, attention is focused on three educational leadership frameworks devised by governments to provide support and direction for school leaders.

Leadership Development Stages

The development of the school principal can be regarded as a process of professional and organisational socialisation (Crow, 2006; Normore, 2004; Reeves, Moos, & Forrest, 1998; Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Professional socialisation is a “dynamic developmental process through which values and norms of the profession are internalised and a professional identity is assumed” (Normore, 2004, p. 112). Organisational socialisation is specific to school context. It includes “the knowledge, skills, and dispositions necessary to conduct the role in a particular setting” (Crow, 2006, p. 311). Structured programmes such as the NAP and FTP programmes can enhance development in this area. However, when considering more experienced principals, Normore (2004) argues that re-socialisation of school principals is needed to meet the demands of rapid change in education. He stresses the importance of continuing professional development with a focus on student learning rather than administration.

Like organisational change, leadership development can be linked to a series of stages or phases. Several authors have variously identified and named these stages. As Day and Bakioglu (1996) suggest, there are “multiple pathways and trajectories through different phases of head teachers lives” (p. 206). In a study of 305 head teachers in England, they identified four developmental phases described as initiation, development, autonomy, and disenchantment. Setting aside the beginning phases of leadership development to focus on experienced principalship, two kinds of response were reported in the autonomy phase. The first response was criticism of externally imposed initiatives such as national testing but increased self-confidence was also reported. Importantly, the head teachers referred to the way their growing experience enabled them to met new challenges with confidence. However, some head teachers reported less energy, feelings of resistance to change, and a desire for
more autocratic leadership. During the final phase or *disenchantment*, intensification of these feelings occurred. Mulford et al. (2007) take issue with these findings, arguing that late career principals do have passion and energy for their work. Leaving this debate aside, like Normore (2004), Day and Bakioglu (1996) emphasise the need for continuing development and support beyond the eight-year mark if school improvement is to be sustained. However, there is a need to illuminate what is happening to professional identity in the later stages of school leadership so as to provide appropriate support and professional development.

Identity development is referenced in work that associates leadership development with stages. Lord and Hall (2005) argue that leadership development occurs in three stages described as *novice, intermediate,* and *expert.* Each stage involves the same skill domains, differentiated as the task, emotional, social, identity level, metemonitoring, and value orientation domains, but with increasing levels of sophistication. Importantly, they found that integration of leadership skills with leadership identity occurs as the leader moves towards the expert stage. Weindling and Dimmock (2006) outline six stages of leadership development. The first four stages are concerned with entry, preparation, reshaping, and refinement. Stage 5 is described as *consolidation* and takes place between the fifth and seventh year of principalship. Stage 6 or the *plateau* stage is attained from the eighth year onwards. The authors note the need for crisis management may affect the speed at which principals move through the stages. The last two stages are also subject to external influences such as changes in policy or appointment at a different school. Such changes may result in a shift back to Stage 1. Hence, this implies leadership development, like identity development, is not a continuous process.

Reeves et al. (1998) outline eight stages of leadership development. The final stage described as *time for a change* occurs at five to ten years of principalship. These eight stages provide clear differentiation and understanding of what occurs in the early phases of leadership. What is lacking is greater differentiation in the later stages. Perhaps as Crow (2006) suggests, there is a need to consider two further types of socialisation. He adds anticipatory and personal socialisation to organisational and professional socialisation. Anticipatory socialisation relates to the perceptions and expectations that arise in anticipation of leadership. Personal
socialisation involves change in self-identity as individuals learn new roles. It is investigation of personal socialisation that may illuminate the later stages of school leadership.

New Zealand Model of Educational Leadership

The New Zealand education system has distinctive features that differentiate it from other western systems. Firstly, the system is committed to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi. As a result, education in New Zealand seeks to ensure excellent education outcomes for Māori. Secondly, the New Zealand system is highly decentralised. Principals work closely with Boards of Trustees and local communities to make decisions “to better respond to the specific needs of their students and the expectations of the community” (Kiwi Leadership for Principals, p. 10). The New Zealand Curriculum allows schools to develop programmes that follow national guidelines while recognising the unique differences inherent in individual school contexts.

There are a number of challenges facing principals in this type of system as identified in the Kiwi Leadership for Principals’ document, and the complexity of the principal’s role is acknowledged. The need for professional learning to help principals manage this complexity is noted but the while the document is clear on what a principal needs to accomplish, it does not advance any strategies to implement these sometimes rather lofty goals. In 2007/2008 the focus of the Ministry of Education was on first time principals, support for introduction of the revised curriculum and principals at risk. Several initiatives were introduced. These were the National Aspiring Principals (NAP) and First-Time Principals (FTP) programmes and the Principal Development Planning Centre. A Professional Learning and Development Advisory Group was tasked by the Ministry of Education to provide advice on the design of future professional learning and development (PLD).

The New Zealand Model puts relationships at the centre of an orb that embraces leadership practices and qualities within individual school context. The leadership practices overlap and interlink. The practices are defined as culture (what we value), pedagogy (knowledge about teaching and learning), systems (how things work),
partnerships and networks (creating positive links to support learning). Four leadership qualities are described as ako (being a learner), manaakitanga (leading with moral purpose), pono (having self-belief), and awhinatanga (guiding and supporting). Two key leadership activities are described as problem solving and leading change. This model supports both the technical and adaptive aspects of the leader’s role. It sees leadership as dynamic rather than linear but most importantly, the model stresses the importance of relationships. In this way, the model conceives of the school as being more like an ecosystem than a machine. The focus on relationships, moral purpose and self-belief together with the emphasis on life-long learning and the ability to be able to guide and support others moves away from the purely managerial or technical aspects of leadership to something much less tangible. While it is appropriate to identify and acknowledge the importance of these qualities, now research must target how these qualities are formed and in what ways they are used in the school context. It is necessary to take a closer look at the way principals manage themselves as well as how they lead others. This is crucial for recruitment and retention of school leaders who can handle the complexities of the principal’s role today.

School Leadership Capability Framework (NSW, Australia)

The Australian system is complex as each state and territory operates an independent education system. Curriculum and school starting ages vary. A National Curriculum is being developed, and national testing or NAPLAN is carried out across all states and territories from Years 3-9. For New South Wales, the Department of Education and Training – Professional Learning and Leadership Development Directorate provides a School Leadership Capability Framework (Scott, 2003).

This framework is represented as a flower. Five leadership domains make up the petals and at the centre of the flower, three inner circles overlap. The five domains include the educational domain incorporating pedagogical knowledge, pedagogical application, building an environment that maximises student learning, and building learning communities. Secondly, the personal domain highlights professional values and ethics, personal strengths and commitment to personal and professional development, and decision-making and judgement. Thirdly, the strategic domain is
about building school vision and culture, strategic planning, building leadership and advocacy. Next, the organisational domain focuses on operating effectively within a regulatory and organisational framework, on management of resources to achieve goals, and managing systems and processes. Lastly, the interpersonal domain highlights effective communication, productive relationships, and inspiring others. The three inner circles represent higher-order thinking skills necessary for successful leadership in each of the five domains. These are emotional intelligence; ways of thinking such as prediction, evaluation, and assessment; and diagnostic maps that draw on collective intelligence and reflection on past practice.

Personal and interpersonal domains highlight the importance of relationships but they appear to share equal value with the other more technical aspects of leadership as described in the organisational and strategic domains. The focus on higher-order thinking skills is significant as an area that could be targeted in professional leadership training programmes. Although there is less emphasis on relational skills, there is a similarity with the New Zealand Model in identification of the importance of problem solving and leadership of change.

Standards for Leadership and Management (Scotland)

Standards for Leadership and Management developed by the General Teaching Council for Scotland (2012) differ again in that they were written for both middle managers and principal roles. Although this was designed to address those aspiring to leadership as well as those already in principal positions, it suggests that all educational leaders are in effect middle managers. Despite the devolution of schools, increased accountability has decreased autonomy and increased direct reporting lines.

The model is a sphere with a number of layers. The inner core is described as professional values and commitment and these are further broken down into social justice, integrity, trust and respect, and professional commitment. The next layer is entitled professional knowledge and understanding layered next by professional skills and abilities, then professional actions, and finally the outer layer is described as strategic vision. The framework goes on to provide standards and professional actions that exemplify these standards for both principals and middle leaders. The
standards emphasise professionalism and the following statement is significant for change in leadership identity:

Values, and the connections between values and practices, need to be regularly re-appraised over the course of teachers’ careers as society and the needs of learners change and as understanding develops. This is central to the adaptability, responsiveness and relevance of the profession (General Teaching Council of Scotland, 2012, p. 6).

Understanding the connections between values and practices requires critical self-reflection. Adaptability and responsiveness are qualities arising from professional identity. Re-appraisal implies on-going reflective practice and this thesis will argue that such practice is important for learning and development.

Although these frameworks have some differences, and they are designed to meet the needs of different countries, each emphasise the importance of the principal as a “leading learner” who has the ability to implement change, and develop and fulfil strategic vision. The frameworks emphasise the personal qualities, values and relationship skills required for successful leadership practice. To better understand the interpersonal nature of leadership, it may be helpful to consider how professional identity influences leadership practice.

Identity

Professional identity can be explored in terms of the self, identity construction and transformation. This section provides a brief discussion of identity theory, a rationale for investigating identity in educational settings, and a working definition of identity within an educational leadership context. Construction and transformation of identity are discussed in conjunction with recent studies in these areas. This thesis is concerned with how leaders change, in anticipation of what the implications of identity transformation might be for school leadership and leadership learning programmes.
Identity Theory

Identity theory emerged from symbolic interactionism. Symbolic interactionism stems from early seventeenth century theories of human nature. Since that time, as McCall (2006) describes, symbolic interactionism has been “much like a pearl, accreting successive layers of development” (p. 3). One such layer of development is influenced by the work of Mead (1934) who sought to explain the relationship between society, self, and social behaviour. Blumer (1969) in analysing the work of Mead concludes that symbolic interactionism has three premises:

1. “Human beings act toward things on the basis of the meanings things have for them” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Simply, we avoid touching a hot element on a stovetop because we understand that we will be burnt. This understanding may have been obtained through experience but more often through our interactions with others hence:

2. “The meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that ones has with one’s fellows” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). The development of language such as the use of pronouns is an example of this.

3. “Meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). Humans can objectify experience in order to interpret it and make meaning from it.

For symbolic interactionism, meaning is not simply inherent in something (as for realism) nor is it a product of an individual’s psychological processes (Blumer, 1969). Instead, meanings are formed and created as people interact with each other. Each individual interprets the meaning and then forms response. The response may influence actions, modify behaviour or beliefs, or lead to engagement in new interactions. Thus symbolic interactionism involves interpretation of meaning. It is not a reflex response.

Symbolic interactionism acknowledges that the human being has a self. This self can be objectified. The self emerges as an object from social interactions that involve expectations and perceptions of role. “We see ourselves though the way in which
others see or define us” (Blumer, 1969, p. 13). Roles might include mother, daughter, teacher or friend and so on. Each role is interpreted in a unique way by the human that makes meaning of the role through interactions with others. Hence the role of the school principal is interpreted differently by each of the principals in this study. Their actions are “built on the basis of what they note, how they assess and interpret what they note, and what kinds of projected lines of action they map out” (Blumer, 1969, p. 16). Thus, to understand what it means to be a principal requires gathering insights from principals that go beyond observations of what they do, to consider how they think and feel, and what they believe.

Central to symbolic interactionism is the view that human behaviour can be best understood “by focusing on individuals’ definitions and interpretations of themselves, others, and their situations” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 33). In this way “the self is both individual and social in its character” (Burke & Stets, 2009, p. 10). In trying to analyse both the individual and the social, Stryker and Burke (2000) identify two distinct strands of identity theory that have developed in response to the early work of Mead (1934). One strand focuses on how social structure affects self and social behaviours. This is known as structural symbolic interactionism (SSI). For SSI, identities have some stability and salience over time and in different situations (Stryker & Burke, 2000). The focus is on normative and conventional identities such as school principal or shopkeeper.

Aligned with this strand but with a different emphasis is the work of McCall and Simmons (1978). Here the focus is on the negotiation and construction of identities. Identity is fluid. Identities can be improvised and McCall and Simmons (1978) make a distinction between the situational self and the ideal self. These aspects of symbolic interactionism are mostly concerned with the social nature of the individual.

The second strand is more concerned with the individual nature of the self and how the internal processes of the self influence social behaviours (Burke & Stets, 2009). Thus identity can be shaped and reshaped by cognitive processes as the self seeks to “verify” or “repair” identity (Stryker & Burke, 2000, p. 288). In this perceptual control emphasis the individual has some agency. The self is reflexive. It can view
itself as an object and act accordingly. The two strands (sometimes distinguished as three emphases) come together when humans interact.

Burke and Stets (2009) suggest five key ideas that are pertinent to any consideration of human interaction. They can be briefly summarised as: the way humans interact through language (symbols and meaning); the ability of the self to be reflexive; interaction with others through body language (gesture); agentic behaviour that allows the individual to adapt to an environment or to change an environment to suit the individual; and the power of emotions to guide actions. These aspects of identity are explored in this study in an attempt to further understanding of the complexity of the self in educational leadership.

Rationale for Investigation of Identity

The educational leadership frameworks and practices discussed above recognise the importance of various personal attributes and qualities that contribute to sustainable leadership. However, the individual leadership style of school principals varies as much as the diverse contexts of the schools they head. Principals have unique identities that influence their capacity to manage change. Therefore, it is not possible to identify one perfect recipe for successful leadership (Mulford, 2008), just as transferring a successful skill set from one school to another cannot guarantee the same success (Fullan, 2005; Mulford & Moreno, 2006).

Identity can be used as a lens to explore personal attitudes and attributes (Gee, 2000-2001). This exploration is significant for educational leadership in four ways. Firstly, the shift from an industrial society to a knowledge society has changed the role of educational leaders. Leadership roles are in a continual state of flux and role change challenges identity. Secondly, although understanding and application of the principles of adaptive leadership may address the rapid pace of change facing school leaders, acting as an adaptive leader requires some understanding of identity transformation. How am I changing? Why am I changing? What do I need to change in order to become a more adaptive leader? Thirdly, an understanding of professional identity and the practices associated with adaptive leadership may contribute to understanding of sustainable educational leadership.
Lastly, there is a need to study identity in an educational leadership context because “elements of the innate self required for leadership to be successfully learned and for effective leaders to emerge remain largely unexplored in educational settings” (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009, p. 370). In particular, there is little that examines the experienced or longer-serving school leader (Scribner & Crow, 2012). Much of the work that explores identity in educational settings is concerned with teachers (Day, Elliot, & Kington, 2005; Kornives, Owen, Longerbeam, Mainella, & Osteen, 2005; Sachs, 2001) or beginning school leaders (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2006; Jones, 2008; Møller, 2012; Stevenson, 2006; Turner & Sykes, 2007). To understand identity transformation in those that lead change processes, research is needed that investigates longer-serving principals. This research could provide insights into the qualities or attributes that contribute to sustainable leadership and identify priorities for leadership training.

Identity, Self and Roles

It is important to clarify what is meant by identity, as distinct from self and roles. This thesis acknowledges the difficulty with defining these terms. Definitions vary within disciplines such as psychology, philosophy and sociology. Beginning with roles it is useful to refer to the work of Mead (1934) who conceptualised humans as actors. The inference is that actors play roles. Roles have functionality and context. Put simply, a role describes what a person does and where they do it. Roles are “scripted, deterministic and static” (Scribner & Crow, 2012, p. 246). Goffman (1959) also conceived of humans as actors playing roles in his description of performances that take place in front (public) and back (private) regions. The front performance is comprised of the setting in which a person is located such as the school office, and the appearance and manner of the person within that setting. Others expect “some coherence among setting, appearance and manner” (Goffman, 1959, p. 134). In other words, there is an expectation of a certain type of performance in the role of a school principal. In the back region “action occurs that is related to the performance but inconsistent with the appearance fostered by the performance” (p. 134). Here lie personal feelings and musings. Interestingly, Goffman (1959) comments “one can become so habituated to one’s front region activity (and front region character) that it may be necessary to handle one’s
relaxation from it as a performance” (p. 134). Here he hints at a potential conflict between actions and beliefs that could lead to psychological problems such as the emotional numbness Beatty (2000) describes later in this chapter. It should be noted that although roles are relatively easy to define and describe, role descriptions cannot be taken at face value as the lines between roles, identities, the self, and contexts are often blurred.

The notion of the self can be defined by returning to the work of Mead (1934). Mead (1934) believed that human interaction was only possible because of the existence of a self. The existence of a self makes humans capable of introspection or reflexive action. Thus, “a human being can be an object of his own action” (Blumer, 1969, p. 12). Reflexivity of the self is continuous and all pervasive (Giddens, 1991). Giddens (1991) argues “the self forms a trajectory of development from the past to the anticipated future” (p. 75). It is development along this trajectory that is the concern of this thesis. It is in the space between past development of the self (actual self) and the anticipated future of the self (ideal self) that transitory identities may occur in the process of transformation of the self.

This discussion implies a notion of “self” that is removed from “other.” Historically, there is conflict between conception of the self as a monad or unitary, discrete being and the self as a socially constructed being. This problem arises from Cartesian philosophy and Descartes’ maxim cogito ergo sum, “I think therefore I am” (Anscombe & Geach, 1970, p. 183). Buber (1937) distinguishes between the self and others using the pronouns I, Thou, and It. He proposes a unique relationship between I and Thou, that does not exist between I and It. These ideas imply the self is distinct from others, capable of independent thought and freewill. In more recent times, Collinson (2006) argues from a post-structuralist perspective that the lines between singular and multiple selves are blurred. He argues there is no absolute, and such dualities do not exist. Instead, multiple selves are “crafted through ambiguity, paradox and contradiction” (p. 182).

Identities are socially constructed (Burke & Stets, 2009; Møller, 2012; Wenger, 1998). Identities do not occur clearly, are not fully developed at once, and can change gradually or abruptly (Scribner & Crow, 2012). Identities are negotiated with various audiences and practised by people seeking to position themselves in certain
ways (Gunn, 2006). Identities can be multiple in that they are constructed by
different stakeholders and outside influences (Jones, 2008). This has significance for
exploration for professional identity, as identity cannot be separated from
relationships and contexts (Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Stryker & Burke, 2000).
Important, negotiation of identity is not always cognitive (Scribner & Crow,
2012). Negotiation involves issues of power and emotion (Beatty, 2000; Blackmore,
2004). Identities are “improvisational, emphasise human agency, and dynamic”
(Scribner & Crow, 2012, p. 246). As noted in Chapter 1, professional and personal
identities interrelate and overlap. Identities are difficult to understand, whether from
the inside looking out, or the outside looking in. Yet the leadership frameworks
discussed above recognise identity as linked to successful leadership and call for
some understanding of identity in leadership development training.

For the purposes of this thesis, the self is determined as complex and consisting of
multiple identities. The self, while retaining some uniqueness, is shaped by the
identities and roles it encapsulates. In this discussion, the self is best described using
a metaphor. This metaphor is adapted from the work of Day et al. (2005) who
describe actual, ideal, and transitional selves and Scribner and Crow (2012) who
make a distinction between role identity (professional), social identity (membership
of a group), and person identity (unique meanings that define an individual apart
from roles and groups).

The self can be likened to a biological cell. At the heart of the cell lies the nucleus or
personal identity. Core values, early experiences and interactions, different roles,
and genes influence personal identity. Professional identity can be likened to the cell
wall, a permeable membrane influenced by factors inside the cell (personal identity)
and external factors such as expectations of others. These external factors form an
ideal or possible identity. Thus, the self consists of actual or personal identity; an
ideal or possible identity; and a transitional or professional identity that mediates
between the actual and the ideal. Professional identity can be in a constant state of
flux as external factors compete with the beliefs and values inherent in personal
identity. Hence, identity is represented as shown in Figure 2.
In keeping with this model, professional identity is transitional and it mediates between the core values of personal identity and the values of the organisation it is associated with. The next section considers how professional identity is constructed.

Construction of Professional Identity

Identities are constantly negotiated, both inside and outside the school gate. Sachs (2001) argues negotiation results in the formation of entrepreneurial and activist identity types. Activist identity is emancipatory and it emerges in democratic schools characterised by openness and trust, collaboration, reflection, capacity to solve problems, and a concern for “the common good” as well as the rights of individuals and minorities. This type of identity is embedded in the ethics of care and justice as discussed later in this chapter. By contrast, entrepreneurial identity is “individualistic, competitive, controlling and regulative, and externally defined” (Sachs, 2001, p. 157).

The result of entrepreneurial identity type leadership is “designer employees.” These employees “demonstrate compliance to policy imperatives and perform at high
levels of efficiency and effectiveness” (Sachs, 2001, p. 156). They can exhibit a childlike “kindergarten mentality” in that they appear compliant and eager to please. However, it could be argued that designer employees are merely being seen to be demonstrating compliance. In effect, they could be balancing the paradox between what Blackmore (2004) describes as performativity and passion.

Blackmore (2004) explores the way schools mediate reform discourses as they try to balance managerial and market accountability with the “emotional and messy work of teaching and leading” (p. 441). She describes the notion of performativity as being seen to be doing something efficiently and effectively together with a heightened need for self-management. Her study draws on the results of four studies conducted in public schools in Victoria, Australia during the 1990s. Blackmore (2004) identifies tension between performativity (regulation and contractualism) and passion and motivation (service and obligation) and conflict between the notion of “doing good” and “being seen to be doing good.” Blackmore (2004) argues self-regulatory behaviours are increased as teachers and principals measure themselves against externally imposed standards that define what it is to be a “good” teacher or principal. “Performativity controls emotions, promoting and co-opting both fear and desire” (Blackmore, 2004, p. 455). When values are compromised, the result is increased levels of stress.

Day, Flores, and Viana (2007) investigated the effects of national policies on teacher professionalism in England and Portugal. They found that professionalism in both countries seemed to be marked by “ambivalence and conflict associated with the lack of (clear) direction and continuing challenge and contestation of existing identities” (p. 264). Often this lack of clear direction muddies motivation, reduces commitment, and leads to burnout and stress. This suggests a need to move away from entrepreneurial leadership styles to those that support the development of activist identities.

To develop activist identities, communities of practice must be built and professional self-narratives acknowledged. Communities of practice require engagement and imagination. For Sachs (2001), engagement involves activities such as collaborative planning, shared decision-making, pedagogical dialogue, and the “production of shareable artefacts” (p. 158). She makes a strong case for
professional development programmes that acknowledge identity and aim to
develop an activist identity, while acknowledging there will be times when a more
entrepreneurial identity is required. Like Fullan (2001), she argues shift between the
two is possible. Further research is needed with experienced school leaders to
provide insight into how these two different identities might co-exist.

Gee (2000-2001) refers to identity as being recognised as a certain kind of person in
a given context. He argues that all people have multiple identities connected to their
performances in society. Gee (2000-2001) notes that people can accept, contest and
negotiate their identities but “what is at issue, though, is always how and by whom a
particular identity is to be recognised” (p. 109). Without this recognition identities
would not exist. He argues, “some institution or set of institutions, or some group or
groups of people, must work across time and space to underwrite and uphold the
ways in which certain combinations get recognised in certain ways and not others”
(p. 110). An example of this is product placement in television programming and the
normalisation through high levels of exposure, of previously unacceptable
behaviours or identities. These somewhat subversive practices are internalised and
become motivations for a shift in identity. Who or what are the underwriters? For
education, Gunter and Thomson (2009) suggest that it is government policy and
practice that is driving a “makeover” of teacher professional identity in English
education (p. 369), thereby creating the designer employees Sachs (2001) describes.
However, both Gee (2000-2001) and Day et al. (2005) leave an opening for the
existence of an activist identity in that personal identity is never fully formed and is
constantly changing. While discourses are social and historical, a person’s career
trajectory and narrative are individual. No one else has followed that exact same
career path; no one else has that exact same story to tell.

For educational research, there is a need to focus on identity to understand how
societal shifts are affecting the professional identity of school leaders. If it is
acknowledged that, “school leaders in a knowledge society will need to recognise
the need for and develop professional identities that privilege values, beliefs,
creativity and complexity” (Scribner & Crow, 2012, p. 245), then leadership
development programmes based on sound research may support school leaders in
this change. To date, identity research has fallen into three main areas (Scribner &
Crow, 2012). Firstly, research that investigates social identity by exploring how social structure influences identity; secondly, research that explores personal identity by investigating how internal dynamics within the self influence behaviour; and thirdly, research that investigates how identities are maintained in face-to-face contact or interactional identity. This thesis seeks to explore the second of these while acknowledging that all three influence professional identity. This study investigates what happens to the professional identity of school principals as they lead others through change processes. How are the changers changed? This question is important as it may give some insight into the sustainability of school leadership.

Transformation of Identity

Professional identity is in a constant state of flux. Often there is tension between values and beliefs manifest in personal identity, and the expectations imposed from outside by the influence of others. The professional identity of a leader must flex and adapt constantly in order to sustain itself. Indeed, flexibility and adaptability are key qualities for sustainable leadership (Hallinger, 2011). The following studies demonstrate how changing roles can result in transformation of identity. However, due to a paucity of research in this area, it is not so clear how, or even if, identity continues to be transformed in the mid to late stages of principal roles.

In a study that investigated the transition of middle to senior leadership in secondary schools in South Wales, Turner and Sykes (2007) addressed an identified gap in the academic literature concerning middle leadership. Eight newly appointed senior leaders were interviewed and four themes emerged: political aspects of leadership concerning differentiation of function, power struggles, role conflict, differences in interpersonal styles, and stress; change of role including management of time, use of creativity, and coping emotionally; and professional development including role models, training courses, and ethics and values. The fourth theme to emerge from the study concerned professional identity although aspects of this theme ran through the other three. Here professional identity was categorised as aspects of socialisation with reference to values and expectations from others.

Turner and Sykes (2007) position questions about identity as being of great importance to new leaders. Their study found a number of issues to address. The
first relates to differences between the previous leader and the new person. The data included perceptions from others and suggests the possibility of a collaborative construction of new leader identity. This warrants further investigation at mid leadership and late leadership stages to see if the expectations of others alter the positioning of the leader. Secondly, Turner and Sykes (2007) suggest that there is a need to evaluate the worth of mentoring and coaching. If these practices are found worthy, further research could consider how they affect development of leadership identity.

Another issue related to leadership values is the possibility of clashes between a new leader’s personal values and the collective values and morality of the school. It is not clear how new leaders align themselves with organisations and cultures, or whether they attempt to change the organisations to align with *their* values and beliefs. Insights could be gained by investigating middle leadership where there is perhaps less opportunity to change an organisation but perhaps greater opportunity to demonstrate the skills required to work adaptively within the perceived limitations of an organisation. Other issues identified by Turner and Sykes (2007) included coping with older, more experienced staff or unsuccessful internal candidates, exercise of power, working with school boards and other stakeholders, and decision-making processes. The process of resolving these issues may affect the development of professional identity. Success or otherwise, may have wide-ranging consequences for the new leader.

Career trajectories of school leaders can provide insights into identity transformation. Stevenson (2006), in a discussion paper that suggests a framework for investigating career trajectories of school leaders, asks the question: “To what extent do professional identities change and how far are such changes consonant with past aspirations as an educator?” (p. 416). This question is also explored in New Zealand by Nicholson (2011) in her thesis: “The undoing of identity in leadership development.” The sense of loss involved in the transition from teacher to leader is researched by Browne-Ferrigno (2003) who reports how eighteen beginning principals felt as they went through a process of identity transformation in order to become a teacher leader. Her study set in a western state of America found the principals saw their transformations as occurring in different ways. Some shifted
quickly to viewing themselves as a leader, others felt as though they had a split image, and some felt no change, still viewing themselves primarily as teachers. These perspectives indicate that the transformational experience will be different for everyone and that it takes place over time. This is also the finding of Kornives et al. (2005) who used grounded theory to explore how college students at a large mid-Atlantic university developed relational leadership skills. The study identifies a gap in the academic literature regarding the development of leadership identity over time. Like Kochan et al. (2002), they found leadership development programmes focus on quick fix solutions such as retreats and training courses where emphasis is placed on acquisition of technical and practical skills. Instead, they suggest, a more gradual process is needed to develop self-knowledge needed to sustain leadership.

Importantly for the development of leadership identity as defined in this thesis, Kornives et al. (2005) found evidence of socially constructed identity. They cite Erikson (1968) saying, “people discover, more than create, their identities, and they do it within a social context” (p. 610). To develop as leaders, the students in Kornives et al. (2005) study were involved in creative and conscious rather than discovery-oriented tasks. This may have added some bias to the findings. Role models, mentors, and peers influenced the students as they took part in various activities including reflective learning. Reflective learning provided students with new language and ideas so they could relate to themselves as emerging leaders. The authors found it was important for the emerging leaders to have passion and commitment for their new role. By engaging in groups, they were able to create a sense of belonging and place. It was also important to experience continuity of membership as this resulted in development of relational skills such as conflict resolution and the ability to be able to sustain the growth of an organisation.

Kornives et al. (2005) concluded that development of leadership identity has six stages. Differentiation is a process between and among people where some are emerging and others are practicing leadership. Generativity occurs as the leader becomes actively committed and begins to accept responsibility for developing others and sustaining organisations. Integration/synthesis is reached when the leader has continual, active engagement with leadership as part of self-identity (Kornives et al., 2005, p. 606). The stages of identity are shown in the figure below.
Adapted from Kornives et al. (2005) in this way, the model echoes Maslow’s model for self-actualisation (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007). Like Maslow’s model, it may be possible to move backwards and forwards between the stages and leaders may inhabit more than one stage at a time. Further research is needed to investigate these possibilities and the factors that influence the transition between generativity and the integration/synthesis stages.

The studies discussed here are limited in that they explore leadership development in students and transitions from teacher or middle leader to positional leader. Research to explore the professional identity of school principals who have held the role for some years could determine whether identity is still being transformed and if so, the factors that contribute to this transformation. Understanding how and why we change may help school principals manage change in others while sustaining themselves through the change processes they lead:
The rites of leadership need to be open constantly to be altered and reshaped by reason so that learning leadership is a continuous struggle to create identity, to recognise and hold in productive tension the necessity for risk and security, continuity and discontinuity (Sugrue, 2005, p. 179).

Ultimately, the goal is sustainable leadership. Leadership learning must address the attitudes and attributes necessary for successful change management. These attitudes and attributes are closely aligned with personal and professional identity. It is important that a leader can address the call to “know thyself.”

**The ‘Self’ in Educational Leadership**

Identity is fluid and multi-faceted. Professional identity is in continual state of flux but the implications of this may not be recognised by the leader. Blackmore (2004) describes leadership as being about “managing one’s own and others’ emotions and about challenging identity through change” (p. 445). This section considers some of the challenges to the self that occur in a leadership role and some of the strategies used to address these challenges in order to manage change.

**Emotional Intelligence**

The three leadership frameworks discussed earlier emphasise the importance of relationships. The New Zealand framework puts relationships at the very centre of educational leadership. People matter. Emotional intelligence can be used to enhance relationships and leadership success (Goleman, 1996, 1998). Mayer and Salovey (1997) define emotional intelligence as:

> The abilities to accurately perceive emotions, to access and generate emotions so as to assist thought, to understand emotions and emotional knowledge, and to reflectively regulate emotions so as to promote emotional and intellectual growth (p. 10).

Based on this definition, emotional intelligence falls into five domains as described by Goleman (1996). These are: knowing one’s emotions (self-awareness), managing emotions, motivating oneself (including self-control), recognising emotions in others (empathy) and handling relationships. Although attempts have been made to score or measure emotional intelligence, it is not fixed (Cliffe, 2011). Use of
emotional intelligence may vary over time, and within different contexts and relationships. Goleman (1996) suggests, “all of us mix IQ and emotional intelligence in varying degrees” (p. 45). Importantly for educational leadership development, he suggests, “Each of these domains represents a body of habit and response that, with the right effort, can be improved on” (p. 44).

There is some concern in the literature that emotional intelligence may not be the panacea it claims to be. Emotions can be used intelligently to manipulate and control (Blackmore, 2011; Blase & Blase, 2002). Although leaders may be able to learn emotional intelligence, practice of it cannot be separated from school context or other issues such as gender, race, religion, or market forces. Cliffe (2011) uses the five domains identified by Goleman (1998) to frame her study of the use of emotional intelligence by female head teachers of seven state secondary schools located across England. She found the head teachers reported labelling and masking emotions in order to identify and manage them, controlling emotions to achieve goals, and recognising emotions in others to build good working relationships and to guide behaviour. Not all behaviours were positive. Cliffe (2011) argues the possibility of a kind of Machiavellian manipulation but suggests such behaviour may not be related to emotional intelligence, as it does not involve empathy.

Cliffe (2011) acknowledges her study is limited in that it is gender specific. More research is needed that investigates a range of school leaders in a diversity of contexts to understand how emotional intelligence is used in schools. There is some guidance in the literature as to how principals use emotional intelligence to inspire, interact and empathise with others (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). However, there is little that explains how leaders use emotional intelligence to manage themselves.

Managing Emotions

Emotional management is important because “emotions lead to actions” (Goleman, 1996, p. 6). Such management is hard work and described as emotional labour. Hochschild (1983) defines emotional labour as “the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display” (p. 7). Møller (2005) describes emotional labour as “characterised by a situation when one is required or expected to feel or to seem to feel an emotion different from what one is experiencing” (p.
Beatty (2000) in a study involving principals from six different countries, argues that leaders who continually suppress dealing with difficult issues can become emotionally numb. The need to be in emotional control gradually suppresses the natural expression of emotions to a point where the leader is unable to express these emotions and authentic actions and relationships are impossible.

High levels of self-awareness may address issues of emotional labour and emotional numbness. Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005) suggest that as leaders become more self-aware, they achieve “self-concordant identities” as their decisions and actions align with their “internalised actions and goals” (p. 351). They argue, “authenticity is characterised by objectivity and acceptance of one’s strengths and weaknesses” (p. 356). There are issues here with the term objectivity as it indicates the leader is unbiased in terms of their personal experience and feelings. Also, acceptance is not always a straightforward process and may take considerable time. However, the authors acknowledge that humans are flawed and the process may involve balancing personal needs with those of the collective. Ford and Harding (2011) agree that humans are flawed. They argue that truly authentic leadership is unlikely because no one is that perfect. There is a dark side to leadership. Imbalance between personal and collective needs creates tension that works against authentic leadership. N. Wright (2003) illustrates this point, arguing that leaders who balance personal aspirations for education with government demands for accountability are in effect “bastard leaders.”

Not all authors agree that balance is impossible. In a study that explores the career trajectories of school principals, Stevenson (2006) proposes a conceptual framework that links and integrates individual career trajectories, personal socialisation processes and the development of professional identities with the pressures and tensions school leaders face. Stevenson (2006) refers to “spaces within” his conceptual framework where principals can assert individual agency and “promote the values that underpin their identities” (p. 417). This contradicts N. Wright (2003) and Ford and Harding (2011) in that it suggests principals can act authentically when faced with educational dilemmas. In suggesting these spaces within, Stevenson (2006) supports Fullan (2001), Gold et al. (2003), and McCarthy et al. (2005) by arguing successful leaders have the capacity to balance the paradoxes of
leadership. However, Stevenson (2006) does not identify where these spaces within might occur, what causes them to form, what values are accessed in order to take advantage of them, and how addressing them might strengthen or weaken leadership identity. Identification of such spaces within could provide valuable insight into the construction of professional identity.

Motivation and Commitment

Motivation and commitment are key factors in sustainability. Professional identity is inherent in commitment because it provides motivation to take on and enact a role (Scribner & Crow, 2012). Day et al. (2005) investigated commitment in a study of 20 experienced teachers across the United Kingdom and Australia. Like Stevenson (2006), they were interested in exploring why teachers “stay put, move up or move out” (Stevenson, 2006, p. 409). Day et al. (2005) argue that commitment involves a cluster of values that are at the core of professional identity. These values are linked with work and high standards, a willingness to reflect, and high engagement both intellectually and emotionally (p. 573).

During times of change, teachers can experience tension between personal core values and changes in the environment. Day et al. (2005) suggest teachers “mobilise ‘occasional identities’ in response to new challenge and change” (p. 567). Occasional identities allow teachers to explore new possibilities. Such identities mediate between the actual and ideal identities of professional identity. Day et al. (2005) suggest that core values do not change. They are a stable part of professional identity. However, considering the multiplicity and fluidity of identity, it seems likely there is possibility of change in core values. This may depend on how well the values proposed by the changes align with the core values of the individual. Change may take time and depend on the motivations of the individual. As with adult learning, new knowledge about practice will not occasion a change in belief about practice unless the knowledge has been successfully practised (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Further investigation is needed to determine whether occasional identities become part of actual identity. If established, it is likely the link established between identity and motivation in teachers may also apply to school principals.
Although Day et al. (2005) address teacher identity, much is still unknown about leadership identity, especially during times of change. They suggest that teachers need support to maintain motivation and commitment. Four factors are key to maintenance of motivation and commitment. These are regularly changing roles, a supportive culture, reflective practice, and participation in significant decision-making (p. 567). Others have identified these factors as important for leaders managing change in organisations (Barnett & O'Mahony, 2006; Blenkin, Edwards, & Kelly, 1997; Fullan, 2001; Rosenblatt, 2004; Sergiovanni, 2004). However, there is little research that identifies the influence these strategies have on transformation of professional identity. As with studies concerning teacher identity, this thesis will investigate if leadership identity is transformed during times of change.

Resilience

This section draws on studies that investigate resilience in teachers to set a context for investigation of leadership resilience.

Popular conceptions of resilience link it to the ability to ‘bounce back’ from adversity. However, literature reporting on teacher resilience indicates a broader definition is required. Rather than focusing solely on coping with adversity, resilience can be defined as “an adaptive and coping trait that forms and hones positive character skills” (Christman & McClellan, 2012, p. 650). Gu and Day (2013) argue resilience is not fixed or innate but can be learned and acquired. Importantly, they suggest resilience can be influenced by social environment. In a review of literature about resilience, Beltman, Mansfield, and Price (2011) considered fifty studies of resilience in educators across ten countries and concluded that resilience could be broadly defined as “a dynamic process or outcome that is the result of interaction over time between a person and the environment” (p. 188). Hence levels of resilience can be adjusted to different contexts.

The unique characteristics of resilience within individuals and their contexts make it difficult to develop sound measurement tools (Beltman et al., 2011). In research, resilience is often categorised according to the attributes or qualities exhibited (Hong, 2012; Mansfield, Beltman, Price, & McConney, 2012). In a longitudinal study of resilience in early career teachers, Peters and Pearce (2012) researched 59
school leaders and first year teachers across two states of Australia. They found five main conditions affecting resilience. These were “relationships, school culture, teacher identity, teachers’ work, and policies and practices” (p. 251). Gu and Day (2013), in a study of 300 early and mid-career primary and secondary teachers in England, simplify these to personal, relational and organisational conditions. Related to these, Beltman et al. (2011) emphasise the importance of personal factors such as motivation, commitment and self-efficacy; contextual factors such as professional development, induction and mentoring, and relationships with a variety of stakeholders; and factors relating to the specific contexts of teachers’ work such as career stage, school type and teaching role. Further research is needed to explore whether these conditions are relevant to school principals.

Like Harland, Harrison, Jones, and Reiter-Palmon (2005), Beltman et al. (2011) identify the difference between risk and protective factors for resilience in teachers and the relationship between them. Risk factors are described as either individual, such as lack of confidence or failure to ask for help; or contextual, such as classroom/school context challenges or professional work challenges. Protective factors were also defined within the limits of individual and contextual factors. Individual protective factors included personal attributes, self-efficacy, coping skills, teaching skills, professional reflection and growth and self-care. Contextual protective factors included school/administrative support, mentors, peers and colleagues, positive student interactions, characteristics of pre-service training, and support of family and friends. Christman and McClellan (2012) suggest that to develop resiliency individuals seek to balance risk factors and protective traits. Their study of academic administrators (seven women and eight men) explored resiliency and gender in leadership in higher education. They found the participants attempted to seek a middle ground in order to be resilient. This space between risk and protection is an important area to investigate as it may provide insight into the negotiation of resilience in identity construction or transformation.

Resilience is linked to teacher retention in a number of studies (Beltman et al., 2011; Gu & Day, 2013; Hong, 2012; Mansfield et al., 2012; Peters & Pearce, 2012). Most of these studies focus on beginning or pre-service teachers. Hong (2012) studied fourteen beginning teachers in rural and urban schools in southeast America. Seven
leavers and seven stayers were interviewed to avoid deficit models. The study found values, beliefs, self-efficacy, and management of emotions were important to teacher resiliency. Adding to this, Gu and Day (2013) found there was no significant connection between socio-economic status of schools and teacher resilience. To develop resilience, they argue teachers need to be “nurtured in context, through appropriate, timely in school support” (p. 40). They suggest this support could be provided by school leaders and professional development programmes. In an Australian study of pre-service and beginning teachers that sought perceptions about teacher resilience, Mansfield et al. (2012) suggest perceptions of resilience may change with career stage. They argue resilience is multi-faceted and propose a four dimensional framework to explore teacher resilience that includes emotional, professional, motivational and social aspects of teacher resilience.

While these studies provide useful data about teacher resiliency, especially at the pre-service or beginning stage of teaching, there is little that focuses on leadership resiliency (Christman & McClellan, 2012; Harland et al., 2005). Studying school leaders could provide valuable insights into the development of resiliency as they have successfully negotiated the beginning stages of teaching. These insights could be used to support both teachers and leaders to build resiliency and to better understand the coping mechanisms they use.

Leadership influence was found to be important for teacher resiliency. In particular, teachers acknowledged the importance of leadership recognition of their competence through career advancement. Support by leaders for beginning teachers was significant for development of resiliency (Gu & Day, 2013; Hong, 2012; Peters & Pearce, 2012). If this is such an important element for teacher resiliency then it is likely to be a factor in leadership resiliency. Research is needed that investigates the types of support leaders use to build resiliency and where leaders find this support. It cannot be assumed that leaders are already resilient people especially when they may be in the position of constructing or transforming identity in response to shifting contexts. Such research could provide insight into why some leaders remain ‘stayers’ in the profession.

Lastly, these studies suggest resilience cannot be separated from identity and transformation of identity. Christman and McClellan (2012) argue it is possible that
resilient people adapt their identities “to better persevere through future encounters with hardship” (p. 650). Day, Kington, Stobart, and Sammons (2006) refer to the fragmented and occasional identities that teachers use in response to a changing world. These identities provide stability when positively supported by personal life situations and school contexts. In this way, resilience is relevant to this study as it is inextricably linked to professional identity and may contribute to sustainable leadership.

Values

Core values can be defined as basic, general, professional and social and political (Scribner, Crow, Lopez, & Murtadha, 2011). Core values underpin our beliefs and actions. They can sustain leaders in their work (Steward, 2014). Leithwood, Harris, and Hopkins (2008) in an overview of international literature regarding successful educational leadership make several claims concerning successful leadership. They found that just a small number of personal traits explained “a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness” (p. 36). They state the importance of leaders being “flexible rather than dogmatic in their thinking within a system of core values” (p. 36). Flexibility enables leaders to balance the complexities of multiple values that present among school stakeholders especially where there are cultural differences in the school community (C. Watson, 2013). It is only through embracing and working with this complexity that a truly shared vision can be attained. In New Zealand, Robinson et al. (2009) found interpersonal skills and values as critical to leadership. Their meta-analysis shows that values contribute to the eight leadership dimensions that enhance student-learning outcomes. It is clear that values play an important role in the leadership of schools. However, it is only in recent years that attention has turned to the importance of values in leadership development.

Notman (2010) advocates a values-based model for principal development. This model has four facets that can inform development. Values interrogation emphasises the importance of self-reflection and introspection. Values connectedness is the extent to which core values match context. Values contestation teaches dilemma resolution, and lastly, the model emphasises the importance of school principals
developing a values-led philosophy of leadership. This is significant, as principals who are successful in their leadership are “comfortable in articulating their values and professional philosophies in public” (Notman & Henry, 2011, p. 379). Use of a model such as this in leadership training could contribute to sustainable leadership practice. It brings together critical reflection, decision-making, purpose, and vision within the all-important context of the school. If, as Busher (2005) suggests, values lie at the heart of professional identity, then an understanding of core values could help define professional identity for the individual, and it may clarify understanding of the impact of change management processes on leaders.

Ethical Decision-making

The authenticity and integrity of school leaders is often judged by the decisions they make. Successful principals “manifest strength of conviction in their decision making” (Notman, 2012, p. 472). Ethics and values provide a framework for decision-making. Every school is unique and comes with its own set of normative values that shape school culture. It is when ethical issues come into conflict with beliefs and values that tensions arise. Decision-making should align with the moral purpose of the school. It can be a complex process.

Problems of an ethical nature can be solved within a number of different paradigms. Starratt (1991) and Gorman and Pauken (2003) outline ethics of critique, care and justice. An ethic of critique requires a critical stance on the way things are. School leaders might review organisational structures, the language used, traditions and customs, and consider those members of the community that might be marginalised. This allows leaders to ‘sort the wheat from the chaff,’ prioritise, and make reasoned decisions (Mulford, Silins, & Leithwood, 2004). For an ethic of justice, morality is grounded in either the individual or society. Individual rights and freedoms are exchanged for the care or protection of society. Zero tolerance policies fall within this ethic, but often such policies may not be appropriate for all students. In an ethic of care, the overall aim is to treat everyone with dignity and compassion. An ethic of care focuses on the needs and relationships of every member of the school community. The leader “expects messes, but uses the messes as learning
opportunities rather than self righteous occasions for punishment” (Starratt, 2008, p. 130).

Starratt (1991) suggests these paradigms are complementary and can be used as a filter to make ethical decisions. However, the ethics may conflict, and it may not be ethical to be inconsistent in their application. For example, a leader who proposes zero tolerance on drugs in schools takes an ethical standpoint (ethic of justice). If seen to allow an individual student leniency by invoking an ethic of care, confusion may result leading to the possibility of organisational instability.

Seeking an ethic more suited to education, Stefkovich and O’Brien (2004) and Stefkovich and Begley (2007) add a further two paradigms. An ethic of community endorses decision-making within the context of the community. An example might be development of a curriculum that reflects the culture of the local community. An ethic of profession, considers personal and professional ethical principles that relate to teaching as a profession. This ethic considers the best interests of the students to inform ethical decisions. The ethic of profession originated in the legal system where family court decisions are based on the best interests of the child (Stefkovich & O’Brien, 2004). Stefkovich and Begley (2007) suggest this ethic can be reinterpreted for education by considering the impact of decision-making on students’ rights, responsibility, and level of respect. This model is an example of balancing an ethic of care with an ethic of justice.

These paradigms do not provide a quick fix solution to ethical dilemmas in the school. It may be necessary to take a multiple perspective to ethical decision-making, and consider aspects of all five paradigms in order to make careful ethical decisions. However, such deliberations may lead to paralysis by analysis where there are so many conflicting choices it is impossible to make a decision. Added to this, school leaders must consider the possible implications of any decision made and the level at which the dilemmas occur. Stefkovich and Begley (2007) suggest these levels range from the micro-ethical (individual) to the mega-ethical (cross-cultural). School leaders are required to approach ethical decision-making with due consideration of the implications at all levels. They must also reflect on where they stand as individuals in regard to the question at issue. The challenge for school leaders is to be able to move within and between these arenas handling the conflicts
that inevitably arise. A leader who operates at the “individual” or “self” level in terms of decision-making is unlikely to be successful. Yet the values that shape this self are vitally important as they influence decision-making in the school community. Knowledge of core values may inform leaders decision-making processes.

Balancing Paradox

Like Collinson (2006), Møller (2012) refers to the paradoxical demand for exceptional leaders who are also loyal bureaucrats. Ford and Harding (2011) suggest such tension makes it impossible to be an authentic leader. Yet Fullan (2001) argues this kind of pluralism is possible. In a case study of Norwegian shipping firm thrown into turmoil by tragedy, McCarthy et al. (2005) explore a leadership style that thrives on paradox. In the study, the leader took both courses of action as each dilemma presented. The leader moved flexibly, making choices about when to move quickly or slowly, when to dictate and when to use dialogue, or when to wield power and when to empower. McCarthy et al. (2005) argue paradoxical processes can happen simultaneously. However, they stress that the stability of a “core sense of self” (p. 472) is needed to manage paradoxes and adapt to changes. Evidence of leaders balancing paradox can be found in organisations undergoing transformations that seek to distribute power and be sustainable. Although not well researched, it is perhaps most evident in middle leadership where leaders balance tensions and express multiple and occasional identities. This thesis aims to illuminate how professional identity influences the resolution of paradox.

Addressing Limitations

Associated with the need to address paradox in the leadership role, is the ability to manage limitations. These are not limitations that are imposed and non-negotiable such as National Standards (New Zealand) or A-E reporting (Australia). Non-negotiable issues are more easily incorporated into the change process as there is no alternative but to find a way to do it. Staff resistance is less likely when the motivation for change is external (Zimmerman, 2006). More interesting than externally imposed limitations, in that they require potentially different ways of
thinking and relating, are personal limitations that are reflected both consciously and subconsciously through identity. These might include gender, ethnicity, age, wellness, expectations and aspirations, beliefs and values, ability and disability, and the life experiences that shape professionals. Exploration of identity can provide insight into how leaders manage limitations, and how they perhaps borrow from others in order to support what they perceive as personal weakness when compared to their ideal or possible identities. Further research in this area may provide insight into the powerful but humble and unassuming leaders Collins (2001) describes. These leaders may connect with others in a symbiotic relationship that is empowering to both.

The self is ever-present in leadership. The abilities of leaders to manage emotions, maintain commitment, be resilient, understand personal values, make ethical decisions, and address limitations are inherent in identity. This thesis aims to show how understanding identity can help leaders manage change and provide opportunities for personal growth.

Learning and Identity Transformation

A recurring theme in this chapter is the possibility of identity transformation. It is suggested that emotional intelligence can be learned, that resilience is flexible and adaptive, core values may shift, and leaders may mobilise occasional identities to help balance paradox and manage limitations. Success in doing these things is dependent on a leader’s ability to learn. Learning involves a conscious decision to consider change, increase readiness for change, or make change outright. Knowingly or unknowingly, these changes will affect professional identity.

Incremental Versus Entity Theory

To be flexible, adaptive and open to new learning may require a growth mind-set as opposed to a fixed mind-set. Dweck, Chiu, and Hong (1995) refer to these two different views with respect to the malleability of personal attributes. Entity theorists believe attributes such as intelligence or morality are fixed and cannot be changed. Incremental theorists, on the other hand, believe personal attributes can change and develop. Ascribing to one or other of these theories may affect a person’s worldview.
and contribute to feelings of mastery or helplessness. Dweck et al. (1995) argue that “implicit beliefs influence people’s inferences, judgements, and reactions, particularly in the face of negative events” (p. 267). If this is so, then implicit beliefs may affect attitudes to growth and change. Mind-set becomes an important factor when managing change in others or oneself. Understanding personal implicit beliefs, and why they are held, may be important when faced with resolving ethical dilemmas or moral decision-making. Implicit beliefs may underpin successful learning and teaching experiences and determine to what extent an individual can adapt successfully to changing situations.

Modes of Learning

The leadership frameworks call for the use of higher-order thinking skills in leadership practice. Modes of learning can be described as shallow, deep or profound (West-Burnham, 2002). These different types of learning are set out in a table by Davies (2002, p. 200). In summary, shallow learning is extrinsic; it involves replication, information, experience, compliance, and dependence. Deep learning is intrinsic; it involves understanding, knowledge, reflection, application and independence. Profound learning involves meaning, wisdom, intuition, moral, challenge and interdependence. Thinking about learning in this way is a valuable extension of Bloom’s Taxonomy (Anderson & Krathwohl, 2001). To engage in a knowledge society, higher-order thinking skills and critical and creative capacities must be developed. For leadership learning, this goes beyond the technical aspects of practice that require largely shallow learning skills, and it is learning that may challenge identity.

A mix of problem-based learning and success-based learning is desirable for leadership development. Problem-based learning enhances decision-making skills or strategies, while success-based learning can develop soft skills and professional identity. Schechter (2011) describes success-based learning as single-loop or shallow learning. It can serve as a base for double-loop learning or deep learning. Success-based learning may “reinforce learning competence” and increase the self-esteem and confidence of leaders (Schechter, 2011, p. 156). Leaders who reflect on successful experience can experience change in belief about practice (Barnett &
O'Mahony, 2006; Guskey & Yoon, 2009). By inquiring into personal practice that is successful, success-based learning may act as a source of comfort and motivation rather than focusing on disappointments, frustrations and failures. O'Connor and Yballe (2007) agree with the importance of revisiting successful experience saying, “there is a story or pattern that underlies most of our best performances” (p. 746). It is important to clarify this story and compare it with stories of less successful performance so as to make tacit knowledge explicit, deepen understanding, and create meaning. Ultimately, deep learning can facilitate second-order change.

Patterns of Growth

To move beyond shallow modes of learning it is necessary to overcome what Bloch (2005) describes as limiting attractors that restrict movement and growth. Although Bloch (2005) uses these in relation to career planning, they can explain some of the cycles of management evident in schools. Bloch (2005) identifies point, pendulum and torus attractors. Although movement and growth may be felt, in effect the organisation or individual returns to the same state, swings between two easily identifiable states, or merely goes round and round in circles. Only shallow learning is taking place. These attractors may help leaders learn about their professional identity and why they are where they are. It may help leaders look for different patterns of growth that can help them move forward.

The nautilus provides an easily recognisable pattern for development. It grows outwards and onwards in a spiral fashion, retaining and building on the old as it goes. A spiral pattern of growth and development is identified as useful in learning as it involves deep learning. Young et al. (2011) describe this as a helix model of development where each return leads to a deeper understanding of previously addressed concepts. This approach may contribute to profound learning, and self-actualisation as described by Maslow (1943).

Self-Actualisation

O'Connor and Yballe (2007) revisit Maslow’s hierarchy of needs arguing it has been misinterpreted as a rigid hierarchy where one level must be satisfied before it is possible to move to the next. They cite Maslow who said “most members of society
who are normal are partially satisfied in all their basic needs and partially dissatisfied in all their basic needs at the same time” (pp. 739-740). Therefore, self-actualisation is not an endpoint, it is an on-going process that involves “dozens of little growth choices that entail risk and require courage” (p. 742). Maslow suggests we need to focus both inwardly and outwardly to foster growth. This sounds like authentic leadership. The leader is a person with needs, not a needy person. O'Connor and Yballe (2007) argue that sustainable leadership requires reflection, self-confrontation, and learning. Self-actualisation, while not a permanent state or an endpoint, can help build resilience. Moving towards self-actualisation requires reflection.

**Reflection**

Reflection can be defined as “continuous reinterpretation of that which we perceive as already understanding” (L. Wright, 2009, p. 266). L. Wright (2009) infers that reflection is on going; it is not necessarily invoked to consciously make change. Edwards and Thomas (2010) agree, expressing concern that reflective practice is increasingly thought of as a set of tools or technical skills or attributes. They argue reflection is “already necessarily embedded in practice; it does not need to be taught, encouraged or developed” (p. 407). Instead reflection is context specific and influenced by interaction with others. However, the pressure to be accountable is driving a desire to measure the success of reflective practice by its translation into action. This is not always a straightforward process.

Reflective practice is often at odds with the reactive nature of school organisations (White, 2004). Lack of time, absence of role models, and a failure to nurture a reflective culture are barriers to action. He suggests many do not understand the true nature of reflective practice and jump too quickly from problem naming to solutions. In response to this a number of models have been developed to guide reflective practice. White (2004) uses the analogy of an onion to describe how reflective thinking should use probing “why” questions to get to the heart of the matter in order to avoid treating the symptoms rather than the cause. Barnett and O'Mahony (2006) suggest a three-step model that asks the questions: “What? So What? And Now What?” (p. 501) These questions endeavour to turn reflection into action.
However, reflection can do more than inspire measurable actions, it is possible it may influence change in identity.

It is not clear to what extent reflection influences the individual self. Studies report a certain level of discomfort with reflective practice. L. Wright (2009) talks about reflective practice being paralysing in the frequent dilemmas it uncovers. She argues that the work of the principal is “hard, messy, abstract, emotional and undeniably risky” (p. 264). This riskiness may be associated with the threat to identity that reflective practice can bring. This is the dark side that Brookfield (1994) alludes to in a study of 311 adult educators undertaking further academic study at a large private American university. He describes how critical reflection is at once “troubling and enticing” (p. 204). In his study, five themes emerged that contrast the more inspirational rhetoric of critical reflection (Brookfield, 1994). These are worth considering in that they may shed some light on the discomfort associated with identity transformation.

The first theme is “impostership” or that sense of not really belonging or not being worthy that can occur during times of change in a role. The second is feelings of cultural suicide caused by recognition that challenging the status quo is likely to cause dislocation from people and contexts that are familiar and supportive. The third theme is one of lost innocence. Brookfield (1994) cites More (1974) who refers to “the agonising grief of colluding in the death of someone who he knows was himself” (p. 210). This sense of loss is referred to in studies investigating development and transformation of teacher identity (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Nicholson, 2011). The fourth theme is road-running, which has to do with the rhythm of learning that steps forward and back although the overall movement is forward. It also alludes to the exciting possibilities of “new modes of thought and being” (Brookfield, 1994, p. 203). These modes can be likened to the occasional or temporary identities that are taken on during identity transformation (Day et al., 2005). Finally, a theme emerged around the importance of community whereby participants emphasised the importance of a supportive community during times of reflection. They found it was important not to have to deal with difficult issues in isolation. Avoiding isolation may also be important as too much emphasis on
personal reflection may draw attention away from the needs of others (Collinson, 2006).

Despite these concerns about reflective practice, it is important for school leaders. Critical self-reflection can enhance understanding of change and its impact on personal and professional identity. This understanding is important for those seeking to manage others through a change process but also so they can understand what is happening personally as they undergo this process. Reflective practice can enhance self-awareness and this may contribute to sustainable ethical change (Rosenberg, 2010; L. Wright, 2009). However, as White (2004) and Mälkki and Lindblom-Ylänne (2012) argue, making reflective practice part of school culture is not straightforward, and it is not always easy to convert reflection into action. As L. Wright (2009) points out, further investigation of the relationship between reflective practice, leadership identity and educational reform is needed.

**Summary of Emerging Themes in the Literature**

Arising from this review are several themes of significance. Firstly, from a constructivist perspective, identity is socially constructed. However, each individual identity is unique and each career trajectory will map a different path. Secondly, identity is fluid and constantly changing. Each individual has multiple identities and may mobilise occasional identities in times of change. Thirdly, identity can be adapted to meet challenges to the self in educational leadership. It is possible to learn skills associated with emotional intelligence, to improve resilience, practise reflection, accept limitations, and boost motivation. Lastly, and perhaps most significantly, it may be possible to balance paradox. Several authors refer to spaces between or within where leaders can operate with autonomy. Further investigation is needed to determine how leaders move in these spaces and if utilisation of these spaces changes professional identity.

This review identifies a gap in the literature relating to studies of leadership identity in experienced school principals. Self-knowledge and an understanding of professional identity, especially transformation of identity, in longer-serving leaders may provide insight into how these principals improve and sustain practice. This
thesis, by investigating leaders who have been in the same leadership role for four or more years, provides insight into how management of change processes has affected their professional identity. The research question asks: In what ways do leaders perceive themselves as changing or changed? In the next chapter, the research methods used to investigate this question are outlined.
Chapter 3: Research Design

Introduction

This chapter begins with a rationale for the qualitative research design. The theoretical framework is outlined followed by roles of respective participants, case study approach, and discussion of ethical considerations. Next, the research method is outlined. There are three subsections that cover procedures, data collection and data analysis. Procedures include sampling, access, setting, field issues, and the pilot study. The data collection section explains how data were collected and managed. The final subsection, data analysis, describes the strategies used to summarise, interrogate and interpret data, including constant comparative analysis and inductive cross-case analysis. The chapter concludes with a section on issues of trustworthiness and a summary of the overall research design.

PART ONE: Research Methodology

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology is distinguished by its naturalistic design, emergent design flexibility, and use of purposive sampling (Flick, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2002). Naturalistic design refers to the study of human beings in place and time. Humans are distinct from other physical or natural phenomena, because they attempt to understand their world. This understanding is sometimes referred to as verstehen (Flick, 2002; Harper, 1992; Patton, 2002) and the existence of it implies that humans should be investigated differently to other physical or natural phenomena. By employing naturalistic design, qualitative research allows in-depth, detailed description of human behaviour as it occurs within its natural environment or context (Patton, 2002). This “thick” description is concerned with words rather than numerical analysis. The aim is to understand what the participants are thinking and why they think the way they do (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

When undertaking qualitative research, participants are selected purposefully to best illuminate understanding rather than to generalise results to a whole population. The
nature of the design is emergent and flexible. It allows for multiple perspectives to be considered.

**Theoretical Framework**

**Constructivism**

This study is constructivist in its theoretical framework. The aim of the findings is to express perceptions of reality rather than discover actual truths. The research questions explore the concepts of identity and change through the perceptions of school leaders. Each perspective is unique and equally valid. By comparing and contrasting these views, the researcher aims to increase understanding about the way change processes influence the professional identity of school leaders. Constructivism is best described by considering matters of ontology, epistemology and methodology (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). However, in more recent times, Creswell (2013) has added axiology to this framework.

Ontologically, the constructivist believes there are multiple constructions of reality that are formed through social consensus, as people interact and attempt to make meanings about the world. These constructs are not absolute truths. The quality of the constructs is dependent upon the competence of those making them and the degree of consensus between them.

Epistemologically, constructivists believe it is impossible to separate the inquirer from the inquiry (Guba & Lincoln, 1989). There will always be elements of subjectivity, researcher bias, or influence. The inquirer and the respondent work together to create a new understanding or meaning about reality. Each may be influenced by the other. Maykut and Morehouse (1994) refer to this as “indwelling” where the researcher attempts to understand the participant’s perspective.

Closely allied to epistemological beliefs are matters of axiology, or the role of values in the research process. The constructivist acknowledges that any research will be value-laden (Creswell, 2013). Constructivist researchers position themselves within their studies, respecting participants’ values, while making clear any personal values and motives for conducting the study.
Methodologically, constructivists seek participants’ views and rely on these to extract the meanings they have made about the world (Creswell, 2007). This is an inductive process whereby the researcher moves back and forth from the field to the data. The aim is not to predict what might happen or to discover causal relationships, although a high level of consensus of understanding might indicate a degree of transferability. Multiple perspectives are sought and data are interpreted in relation to the setting in which it is discovered. All perspectives are equally valid (Patton, 2002). The aim is not to achieve generalisability as the perspectives of each individual within each setting are unique. However, themes may emerge that suggest some commonality of perspectives.

Guba and Lincoln (1989) suggest four criteria for constructivist inquiry that inform the design of this study. Firstly, the inquiry was carried out in a natural setting. Research was undertaken in four different school settings and the participants were observed carrying out their normal workday activities. Secondly, the key research instrument for the study was a human. As a human, the researcher could adapt to conditions in the field and follow up additional or unexpected lines of inquiry. Thirdly, the human-as-research instrument employed sensory methods. Data were collected directly using sound and vision. Lastly, research was begun from a base of “tacit knowledge” that relates to our constructions of reality. Both the researcher and the participants brought knowledge and understanding to the study. These criteria formed the basis of the inquiry from which new understandings might be reached.

In summary, this study falls within a constructivist framework because the researcher is situated within the research. The researcher aims to understand how humans make meaning by listening to the views of participants. The purpose is to illuminate the reader’s perceptions of reality by attempting to understand the perceptions of others. The research methods that follow expand on the four criteria for inquiry suggested by Guba and Lincoln (1989) discussed above.

**Case Study Approach**

A multiple case study approach was chosen for this design because “case studies are the preferred strategy when ‘how’ or ‘why’ questions are being posed, when the investigator has little control over events, and when the focus is on a contemporary
phenomenon within some real-life context” (Yin, 1994, p. 1). In this study, “how” questions are posed. The research problem is concerned with how leaders are affected by their management of change processes in schools. The research question asks “How do school leaders perceive themselves as changing or changed?” This question necessitates inquiry into events beyond the researcher’s control. While some events are observed directly by the researcher, the participants recall others. The researcher seeks to understand the participants’ perceptions of events. It is the participants’ voices, as they attempt to make meaning of the phenomenon of change within the real-life context of schools, which are to be heard.

Ragin (1992) describes “casing” as a methodological step. Cases can be used to solve a research problem in the same way a mathematical formula might be used to solve a mathematical problem. Cases provide the link between the question to be answered and any interpretations that further understanding of a problem. Ragin (1992) suggests the “continuous web of human social life must be sliced and diced” in such a way as to place some boundaries around what is to be studied (p. 219). It is not possible to study everything. Cases help narrow empirical focus and provide an opportunity to seek in-depth analysis of specific participants within a particular setting (Creswell, 2007; Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009).

Cases may be as diverse as an individual, an organisation, or a setting. Three main types of case study are identified in the literature (Creswell, 2007; Hancock & Algozzine, 2011; Punch, 2005; Stake, 2003). The first, or intrinsic case study is conducted where “the case itself is of interest” (Stake, 2003, p. 136). The second, or instrumental case, is chosen “to provide insight into a particular issue or to refine a theory” (Punch, 2005, p. 144). The cases are chosen purposively but ordinary, accessible or unusual cases may also be chosen (Creswell, 2007). The third type, used in this study, is the multiple or collective case study. This approach seeks to compare a number of instrumental cases to enable better understanding of a particular issue or theoretical question. Each case is selected to address a single issue or concern (Creswell, 2007). Multiple case studies allow linkage of ideas and evidence in different ways (Ragin, 1992). As Punch (2005) suggests, the focus of a multiple case study is both within and across cases. The cases in this thesis were analysed individually before any cross-case comparisons were made. Single-case
analysis sought to provide rich description of each participant and setting thus allowing greater opportunity for similarities and differences to emerge in cross-case analysis.

Cases aim to be “richly descriptive” (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011, p. 16). This thick description of participants, their environment and their perceptions creates a snapshot in time that provides a detailed response to the research question. The reader’s understanding of the question or situation being investigated is enhanced because the case builds on the reader’s knowledge and experience of the world as they see it, rather than in some abstract form (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Hence, the reader is better able to make judgements about transferability. As Stake (2003) suggests, “case study researchers assist readers in the construction of knowledge” (p. 146). For the purposes of this study, the investigation aimed to interpret the descriptive data collected for a specific audience. In the first instance, the audience comprised participants, examiners, and those with access to the University of Otago Library. Publication beyond this audience would target educational practitioners and policy makers likely to identify with the context of the study.

In summary, there are four major characteristics of case studies as follows: Firstly, the case is a bounded system as it occurs within a fixed place and time (Creswell, 2007). Secondly, the case provides a specific unit of analysis. “It is a case of something” (Punch, 2005, p. 145). Thirdly, the case is studied holistically, as “more than the sum of its parts” (Patton, 2002, p. 41). Lastly, the researcher seeks multiple sources of data and employs multiple methods of data collection within a naturalistic setting. In these ways, cases contribute to knowledge of the world and its unique inhabitants.

**Ethical Considerations**

As cases are conducted with real participants in real settings, any ethical implications must be considered carefully. Ethical implications are “the concerns, dilemmas, and conflicts that arise over the proper way to conduct research” (Neuman, 2000, p. 90). These concerns, dilemmas and conflicts can occur at any or all of the stages of research from planning to publication. For case study research, it must be acknowledged that participation in a study may have a harmful effect for the
participants. Participants may “face (and question?) aspects of themselves when they may not wish to do so” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999, p. 71). This may be an issue when researching identity and perceptions of change. The researcher requires sensitivity when questioning participants, and must be respectful of any desire on the part of the participant to withdraw or withhold information.

Tolich and Davidson (1999) suggest five principles to determine ethical conduct. These are to ensure participation is voluntary, to gain informed consent, to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants, to do no harm, and to avoid deceit. These principles guided the following steps taken to ensure the study was conducted in an ethical manner.

Voluntary Participation

Participation in the study was voluntary and no monetary incentive was provided.

Informed Consent

To gain informed consent, participants were briefed about the study. They were given an information sheet that included information about the study, data being sought, use of data, and their rights as a participant (See Appendices 2 and 3). Participants were given the opportunity to ask further questions about the study. Consent for the use of direct quotations with pseudonyms was gained, and participants made aware results of the study could be published. Each participant was asked to sign a consent form.

Anonymity and Confidentiality

Every attempt was made to protect the anonymity and confidentiality of the participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect participant confidentiality, and schools (case study sites) were not identified by name. All personal information relating to participants was destroyed. Participants were advised that due to the small population of New Zealand, it might not be possible to fully protect anonymity. For the researcher it is important “to think of New Zealand as though it is a small town” (Tolich & Davidson, 1999).
Avoidance of Deceit and Harm

To avoid risk of deceit and/or harm, all potential participants were fully briefed as to the purpose of the study. Interviewees were given a copy of the interview questions prior to interview so they were aware of the nature of the line of inquiry. They were informed that further lines of questioning could be used but they could withdraw if not comfortable with the questioning. This is important as semi-structured interviewing using probes and follow-up questions can mean accessing areas not covered in the information sheet. Participants were invited to view their data once it was transcribed to ensure they felt data collected reflected their intent. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time at no disadvantage to themselves.

Permissions

Permission was gained from the University of Otago Ethics Committee to conduct the study. This included an ethics approval process called Consultation with Māori to ensure the research is in line with the guidelines of the Treaty of Waitangi. For the researcher to act ethically in New Zealand, attention must be paid to Kaupapa Māori. This term refers to “traditional Māori ways of doing, being, and thinking, encapsulated in a Māori world view or cosmology” (Henry & Pene, 2001, p. 8). This means the researcher must be aware of possible imbalances in power relationships, and be accepting of alternative ways of “doing, being, and knowing.”

Respective Roles

Role of the Participants

This study relies on the diverse voices of participants to make meaning and acknowledges these meanings can be socially constructed. The way the participants interact with each other and the environment within which they are situated will influence the meaning they make of their world and colour their perceptions. During the study, the relationship between the participants and the researcher also influence this meaning.
For this study, four primary school principals were purposively selected (see sampling section in Part Two). The principals were chosen to provide their perspectives about change. Each principal was asked to provide several significant others from which the researcher selected two for each principal. The significant others were chosen to provide insights into the way they perceived the principals managing change. Using significant others illuminates the issue in that they may confirm or contrast the perspectives of the principals.

Role of the Researcher

As the main research instrument for the study, I acknowledge my experience in the field of education as a teacher, a school leader, and in staff development. While this experience provides me with some insider knowledge in education (Wellington, 2000), I did not have any prior knowledge or experience of the cases to be investigated. Data collection and any interpretations drawn from the data cannot be free entirely from my influence as a researcher. My prior knowledge and experience, gender and ethnicity must be acknowledged as factors that may introduce bias (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). The steps taken to reduce the possibility of bias and increase the trustworthiness of the study are outlined later in this chapter.

For this study, it is acknowledged that my educational experience as a primary practitioner and school leader in three countries over a period of some thirty years has contributed to the interpretations. During this time, I taught in a variety of settings where my appointments often coincided with the arrival of a new school principal, or a need for change driven by increasing rolls or government initiatives. I was aware of the role of the principal in managing change and noticed a wide range of leadership styles. I became concerned about issues of sustainability of school improvement, and the quality of leadership-training programmes. More recently, in my leadership roles, I valued professional learning and collaborative practice as strategies to address change. I became curious about how the often externally imposed role of change agent impacts a principal’s professional identity. In my role as researcher, I hope to bring empathy, curiosity, and experience in the field to the research process.
PART TWO: Research Methods

Part Two explains the research methods utilised in the study. There are four sections. The first section explains procedures for sampling and gaining access, the setting, and field issues are described. The data collection methods are explained in the second section. These include collection of documentary evidence, observations, and interviews. An overview of the pilot study and explanation of the organisation and storage of data can also be found in this section. The third section outlines the process of data analysis. The section begins with a discussion of the position of constructivism in relation to data analysis. Next, the process of constant comparative analysis is explored detailing the three stages of open coding, axial coding and selective coding. Inductive cross-case analysis is explained and the use of memos and jottings explored. The last section describes the provisions for trustworthiness in the study. In qualitative research, trustworthiness is described in terms of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Using these terms, this section explains the steps taken to enhance trustworthiness including triangulation, member checks, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, reflexivity, the investigator’s position, and the creation of an audit trail.

Procedures

Sampling

Sampling was purposive, as opposed to random probability sampling that aims to select a sample that is representative of an entire population. In purposive sampling, the cases are selected to illuminate understanding and provide rich, in-depth insights into the phenomenon under investigation. Selection of cases was people-focused rather than structure or activity-focused, although elements of these factors were influential. Cases were not chosen to emphasise a particular physical location or time-span, although these factors provided some boundaries to the study.

Types of purposive samples are varied, including deviant case sampling, typical case sampling, and snowball sampling. In this instance, sampling occurred before data collection. Maximum variation sampling was chosen because it “aims at capturing
and describing the central themes that cut across a great deal of variation” (Patton, 2002, pp. 234-235). Maykut and Morehouse (1994) suggest the researcher should seek out participants that represent the greatest difference in the phenomenon being studied. Although this may enhance transferability, this approach is primarily to enrich understanding of the phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon, change, is ubiquitous so variation in cases is important. The maximum variation sampling used in this study meets the six criteria for successful sampling as suggested by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). In short, the sample aims to provide different perspectives about the phenomenon (change) within a variety of natural settings; provide a detailed description of each case while revealing important shared patterns between cases; enhance appeal to a wider audience through variation in cases; use in-depth description to enhance the credibility of the study; be feasible in size, especially in New Zealand where there is a small but diverse population; and lastly, to follow ethical procedures. In these ways, the sampling was relevant to the constructivist framework and the research question investigated in this study. Table 2 sourced from Silverman (2005) is a typology table designed to demonstrate maximum variation in case selection.

**Table 2: Selection of cases based on leadership demographics**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Years of service in current school</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decile 1-5</td>
<td>Decile 1-5</td>
<td>Decile 1-5</td>
<td>Decile 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4-6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Elmton</td>
<td>Principal Oakton</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7-9</td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Birchton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12+</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years of service in current school</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Decile 6-10</td>
<td>Decile 6-10</td>
<td>Decile 6-10</td>
<td>Decile 6-10</td>
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<td>1-3</td>
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<td>7-9</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-12+</td>
<td></td>
<td>Principal Hazelton</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The four cases represent variation in gender, years of experience, school deciles and geographical setting of the schools. In New Zealand, school deciles are used to calculate levels of funding. There are ten deciles with around 10% of schools falling into each decile. Decile 1 schools have the highest proportion of students from low
socio-economic communities and attract the highest level of funding. The deciles do not measure standard of education (Ministry of Education, 2014).

A range of participants was chosen in anticipation of diverse perspectives regarding change and leadership practice. Intensity sampling was employed to narrow the selection of participants. The final selection specifically targeted principals who had been in their current role for at least four years. The aim was to avoid those who were beginning or new principals so as to consider the effects of change management on an individual over time, rather than those beginning principalship for the first time, or those attempting a quick school turnaround. The principals were selected on the basis of the criteria established in the demographic table above but also depending on who was available and willing to take part in the study. There were few refusals. Once the principals were selected, they were asked to provide the names of several significant others who had worked with the principal through a change process. The researcher selected two participants from those provided by each principal. The participants were selected based on the length of time they had worked with the principals, the types of change processes they had witnessed, and their willingness to participate. Apart from one class teacher who stepped in when a Board of Trustee member had to withdraw suddenly due to work commitments, teachers were not selected. It was felt that members of the school leadership teams and Boards of Trustees observed the principals in a wider range of contexts. They were also less likely to be influenced by power relationships and hierarchical structures. This brought the total number of participants in the study to twelve across the four cases.

**Access**

Access to participants was achieved by asking for expressions of interest from principals of primary schools that met the criteria suggested in Table 1 above. A cover letter and information sheet was sent out describing the following:

- A brief overview of the purpose of the research.
- Why the site (school) was chosen.
• What the researcher hoped to accomplish and the time and resources set aside to do this.
• Anticipated researcher time at the site.
• Anticipated amount of time to be invested by the participants.
• Any potential for disruption.
• Use and reporting of the results.
• Benefits (non-monetary) of taking part in the research.


A sample of the letter is included in Appendix 1. The information sheet can be found in Appendix 2.

Follow-up phone calls were made and four to eight principals contacted to describe the project and answer questions. The final four participants were selected. Participation was confirmed and informed consent forms signed (see Appendix 3). These participants were invited to suggest the names of two significant others who were interviewed after the initial principal interviews.

The participants were observed and interviewed at their schools at times convenient to them. A description of the participants can be found in the section Case Study Settings.

**Setting**

Investigating principals’ perceptions of change within school settings increased the authenticity of the findings as the data were already grounded in the context of its particular setting (Wellington, 2000). A variety of primary settings in both rural and urban locations were targeted. These settings included: intermediate schools, area schools, contributing primary schools, and state or independent schools. The catchment area was Otago and Southland. A description of each case study setting can be found in Chapter 4.
Field Issues

Data collection started in August 2014 and was completed in May 2015. Further visits were made to return transcripts and case study findings for member checking. Careful planning and good communication ensured that field issues were kept to a minimum.

It was anticipated that attrition of participants due to retirement, change in schools or position, illness, or other types of leave might occur. However, the four principal participants continued to participate in this study until all data were collected and member checking completed. There were some delays in data collection due to participants taking sick leave or sabbatical leave but this did not present an issue for the study. One significant other participant, a Board of Trustees member, had to withdraw due to personal work commitments. Data collection for this participant was due to take place prior to Christmas, which was a peak time for his business. He was replaced with a class teacher. The teacher was selected from the list of significant others because she had worked with the principal for a longer time than the others.

One principal participant requested that some data be withdrawn so as to protect anonymity. These data were removed immediately and this had little impact on the overall findings of the study.

It was anticipated that access to schools might be limited during busy times during the school year. However, the principals were happy for visits to take place at busy times such as preparation for Education Review Office (ERO) visits, in the last weeks of Term 4, during preparation of reports for National Standards, student report writing, professional development focused staff meetings, and during planning meetings for the following year.

Finding a quiet place to hold interviews was not usually a problem. Interviews took place in the principals’ and deputy principals’ offices, in classrooms, in school interview rooms, and at the place of work of the Board of Trustees members (although one participant preferred to come to my office on campus). Most participants were adept at preventing interruptions so these were kept to a minimum.
Where an interruption took place, the recorder was stopped and restarted once the interview resumed.

**Data Collection**

During the study, data were collected using a variety of methods. While the main method was interviewing key participants and their significant others, data collection also included observations, and collection of relevant documentation. Initially, a short survey was planned (see reference to this in Appendix 2). The survey was to be conducted after the first interview. The purpose of the survey was to collect data to provide stimulus for questions that might be asked in subsequent interviews. However, the principals provided rich data from the beginning and as a result, the survey was abandoned. It was felt that introducing a survey might detract from the rapport already established, and that it would add little to the findings.

**Documentary Sources**

Documentation provides a stable source of information that contributes to the thick description of the case study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Documentation is derived from the contextual setting and has the advantage of being written in the natural language of the participants within the setting. Relevant documentation was collected during the study. Samples included staff and board meeting agendas, minutes and materials, school prospectus, local media articles, and strategic management plans.

The documentary sources contributed to the responses of the participants and provided further triangulation of data. The documentation helped to inform the context. Documentation such as meeting agendas provided a support to memory when writing up field notes. Although the documentation was analysed in the same way as the interview transcripts and field notes (see data analysis), there is little reference to it in the findings. While the documentary sources provided detail of the change processes planned or underway in the school, they revealed little of the effects of change on the self as experienced by the study principals or their significant others.
Observations

In case study research, observations are important. They provide the researcher with opportunity to gain detailed, descriptive data about the setting and the participants. The main purpose of these observations is to take the reader into the setting so that they might observe the participants engaged in the activity the research seeks to explore (Patton, 2002). In this study, principals were observed at work in a variety of settings within the school. These included: the principal’s office, the staffroom, and formal and informal meetings with various school stakeholders. At least five days were spent observing at each school.

Principals were observed managing change processes within their schools. The change processes varied and included managing or mentoring staff, staff professional development, development and implementation of strategic management plans, implementation of new government policies, and/or management of school building projects. Occasionally, interviews took place after an observation. This was for convenience rather than to discuss the observation that had just taken place. Field notes were recorded at various points during the observations. Where possible these were recorded immediately after the observations to ensure staff members were relaxed and comfortable and not distracted by the presence of a note taker. This also gave the researcher opportunity to observe without the distraction of note taking. In this way, the researcher was a non-participant observer. An example of a field study observation sheet can be found in Appendix 6.

The role of the researcher in the observations was made clear to the participants. My primary role was observer but my experience in education meant I could be viewed as an outsider with some insider knowledge (Nairn, Munro, & Smith, 2005; Ormond, 2004). In this capacity, researchers may make certain assumptions about what they see or hear that are incorrect. They may not be able to see the wood for the trees. Observations require the researcher to acknowledge any personal assumptions or bias and look and listen carefully. Gender and experience must be acknowledged as factors that could influence the presentation of public and private faces. A researcher’s experience in the field can be intimidating for participants but it can also lead to assumptions about the observer’s knowledge that may or may not
be correct (Nairn et al., 2005). Female gender may be an issue for male participants who feel more comfortable in the presence of a male researcher (Tolich & Davidson, 1999). Again, spending time in the field can help overcome these issues. However, there will be occasions where it is difficult to gain access for observations. In some situations not all participants are comfortable with the presence of a researcher. Respect and sensitivity is needed at all times to fulfil the guidelines of ethical practice outlined earlier in this chapter.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Interviews are “a conversation with a purpose” (David & Sutton, 2004, p. 88). The purpose is “to enter into the other person’s perspective” (Patton, 2002, p. 341). This is a privileged position. Bishop and Glynn (1999) argue the interview should be a process of developing a collaborative story through which the participants talk to the reader directly. The role of the researcher is to be the facilitator that allows this process to take place. Guba and Lincoln (1981) suggest the role of the interviewee is the teacher and the interviewer is the learner. Rubin and Rubin (2005) describe interviews as conversational partnerships. These views suggest that during an interview knowledge is co-constructed between the interviewer and the interviewee. Co-construction of knowledge complements the constructivist thinking that informs this study.

For this study, prior consideration was given to the structure of the interviews and to what extent the questions would be determined beforehand.

**Interview Structure**

Interviews were semi-structured in that the main questions were formulated beforehand to guide the interview. In this way, they followed the format of the standardised open-ended interview as suggested by Patton (2002). Before the interviews, the questions and possible probes were carefully worded. This approach kept the interviews tightly focused, it aided cross-case analysis by making responses easy to compare, and it facilitated the keeping of an audit trail thus adding to the trustworthiness of the study. However, the questions were open-ended and it was expected that further probes and follow-up questions would be used to follow lines
of inquiry. Slightly different questions were pitched at the principals and their *significant others* because multiple perspectives were sought. However, some questions were the same for all participants for ease in comparison of data.

The participants were given the main questions prior to the interviews. The participants were not expected to engage in any prior preparation but as the study consulted “experts” in the field, providing information about the interview content beforehand, helped to exclude discussion of “unproductive topics” (Flick, 2002, p. 89).

Interview structure followed a format that began with a few minutes of general chat to build rapport and help the participant feel at ease. Questions were ordered so as to begin with more comfortable, familiar topics. The interview ended with the opportunity for the interviewer to clarify points and ask the interviewee if there was anything more they would like to add. Finally, the interviewee was thanked and the opportunity for follow-up requested.

Interviews were conducted during field study at each school. These included three interviews with each principal, and one interview with each of the significant others. However, it was necessary to return to the field to gather further information as the analysis began. The interviews were recorded on site at the schools using a Sony Dictaphone. The duration was forty-five minutes to one hour. Approximately twenty-two hours were spent interviewing. Notes were made during the interviews and debriefing questionnaires completed after the interviews (see Appendix 4). These notes contributed to the memos written during the study. Guba and Lincoln (1981) encourage these types of reflexive practice, suggesting that such notes should include consideration of the participant’s personal context, the possibility of participant bias, the credibility of what has been said, and the way the participant interacted with the interviewer.

**Formation of Interview Questions**

For this study, interview questions were designed to gather responses with “depth and detail, vivid and nuanced answer, [and] rich with thematic material” (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 129). The questions sought deep insights and sound understandings
of the perspectives of the interviewees. The questions were designed to explore the research questions in the field. The interviews began with experience and behaviour questions, some general demographic questions and knowledge questions. Opinions and values questions were asked later, once some rapport had been attained, and interpretive questions were used in the follow-up interviews.

For the purposes of this study, the main questions were open-ended. “The truly open-ended question permits those being interviewed to take whatever direction and use whatever words they want to express what they have to say” (Patton, 2002, p. 354). For this to happen, some general principles for developing questions were followed (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). These included keeping questions broad, and avoidance of pitfalls such as imposing personal views on the interviewee, asking questions that elicit yes/no responses, asking multiple questions, and using academic jargon. Probes were used to gather further information. Essentially, probes are used to keep the interviewee talking. They may be verbal or nonverbal. Sometimes a nod of the head or a smile of encouragement is all that is required. At other times it may be necessary to probe to seek clarification, completion of an idea, or to ask for an example (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). The aim is to maintain the focus of the interview. Probes were used judiciously to avoid interrupting the speaker.

Formation of questions was reviewed after the pilot study and again after the initial contact and early observations of the principals. The flexible and emergent nature of qualitative research allows lines of inquiry to be adapted to best answer the research question once out in the field. The questions used in the interviews can be found in Appendix 5. There are four samples provided. The first is the set of questions used for all four principals in the initial interview. Next, the questions used for all eight significant-other interviews are included. The questions used in the follow-up interviews varied among the principals, although some questions were asked of all four to facilitate cross-case analysis. A sample of the questions used in the second interview with one principal is included in this appendix. Lastly, the questions used for all principals in the third interviews are included.
Organisation and Storage of Data

Data were organised and stored securely at the University of Otago. Computer files were backed up until completion of the study. All names were removed to preserve confidentiality of the data. An overall case study record was kept to track access to each individual case (see Appendix 7). This record included site visits, a brief overview of data collected, and location of hard and soft copies.

Observations consisting of comprehensive field notes, and documentary sources were dated, scanned, and the originals filed securely for each school as per University of Otago policy. Interviews were recorded using a Sony Dictaphone. Data were copied to the computer as audio files (mp3) and transcribed. Transcripts, observation notes, memos and documentation were then uploaded to the software programme NVivo for data management and analysis. All data were deleted from the audio recording device once data were uploaded as audio files and transcribed.

Pilot Study

A pilot study was carried out during the process of recruiting participants. The purpose of the pilot was to test the feasibility of the project and make any adjustments before beginning. The pilot study provided opportunity to obtain feedback from participants as to the clarity of the interview questions, and any written documentation they were given. It was possible to check the relevance of the questions, and that appropriate data were being collected to answer the research question. The pilot study enabled procedures to be checked such as timing the interviews to check for appropriate length. It was possible to check the suitability of the data recording and storage procedures and practise using the Sony Dictaphone. During the pilot study, memos and jottings were written to support implementation of the study in the field. However, it was not thought necessary to conduct observations or collect documentation during the pilot study, as the data collected was not going to be analysed.

Two primary advisors at the University of Otago College of Education were contacted to suggest possible principals for the pilot study. Several principals were contacted by letter asking if they would participate in the pilot study. One
volunteered and the researcher proceeded to test the interview questions. The pilot study confirmed the questions planned were relevant to the research question, and that a suitable amount of time was allocated for the interview. Feedback was positive and it was decided not to pilot the study any further.

The principal interviewed for the pilot expressed interest in the study and offered the names of four others who might be interested. Of these, two principals met the requirements of the typography table, and they were approached as possible participants.

**Data Analysis**

This section outlines the methods used to analyse data. The section begins by discussing how the constructivist framework informed data analysis. This is followed by description of the process of constant comparative analysis. In this section, data analysis is represented as a series of stages. However, it should be noted that data analysis is not a linear process. At all stages of analysis, it is necessary to move back and forth from the field to the desk, in the same way the analyst moves back and forth between categories and codes. Next, the process of inductive cross-case analysis is discussed, and the section concludes with provisions for trustworthiness.

**Constructivism and Data Analysis**

When writing about objectivist and constructivist methods of data analysis, Charmaz (2003) contrasts the more objectivist methods of Strauss and Corbin (1990) with those of Glaser (1992). She argues that Strauss and Corbin (1990) are more concerned with verification of data than generation of theory while Glaser (1992) favours a fully constructivist analysis of data where categories are not pre-determined and data emerges as the study progresses. For this study, the perceptions of the participants were of primary importance and, after Glaser (1992), the categories were not pre-determined by the researcher but emerged from data collected in the field.
Data collected were a result of the interaction between the participants in the study and the researcher as the instrument for the research. Interview data were influenced by the researcher in the first instance, as the formulator of the questions, and secondly by influence of the researcher as the interview is conducted, and again as responses are coded and analysed. To an extent, the researcher and the participants co-constructed the data. Charmaz (2003) argues that care must be taken not to fracture data by focusing too much on creating codes and categories as this may result in loss of “portrayal of the subjects’ experience in its fullness” (p. 269). In this study, the analysis aimed to be rigorous without losing the voices of the participants in a jumble of diagrams and numerical analyses. To this end, presentation of findings focus on narrative display, although uncomplicated tables and diagrams are used to show how the interpretations were reached.

The process of data analysis involves reconstruction of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). While some researcher influence is inevitable during reconstruction, the aim is to arrive at categories for interpretation that have arisen from the participants’ responses rather than determined by the researcher prior to analysis. This inductive strategy is described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as subjective, and it complements the method of constant comparative analysis used to analyse data in this study. During constant comparative analysis, the researcher moves back and forth between categories and units of data checking for anomalies, adding new data, revising categories and, as was the case for this study, returning to the participants for collection of further data.

During analysis of interview data, reflexive practices were used to avoid making personal assumptions about the data. After Bishop and Glynn (1999), care was taken to let the categories emerge from the data rather than be predetermined by the researcher. To this end, interview quotations were selected that supported the participants’ views rather than those of the researcher. Data were examined carefully, as the words transcribed may not convey the participants’ actual meaning, and important non-verbal cues may be left out. For this study, the interview debriefing notes (see Appendix 4) were useful reference during data transcription. Data analysis is a subjective process for the qualitative analyst, therefore, it is
important to be rigorous and systematic in analysis and as objective as possible in interpretations to ensure trustworthiness and reliability in the study.

**Constant Comparative Analysis**

In this study, constant comparative analysis informed data analysis. The process involved three interwoven stages, often associated with building grounded theory (Flick, 2002; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). These stages use “explicit coding and analytic procedures” to generate theory systematically (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 102). This is a process of abstraction, from initial data to first and eventually, second-order concepts (Punch, 1998). Although the purpose of this study was not to generate theory, this systematic process was used to enhance credibility and transferability of the findings. The three stages are described as open, axial and selective coding.

**Stage 1: Open Coding**

Although usually described as a process of data reduction, Miles et al. (2014) suggest the term *data condensation* as this term implies a strengthening rather than weakening of data. During this stage data are reduced or condensed to small units using coding. These units are relevant to the line of inquiry and the smallest unit of information that can remain meaningful. Coding enables easy identification of the units and quick reference back to the original source. Coding allows organisation and interpretation of data while allowing the researcher to maintain an objective distance from it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

There are a variety of ways data may be coded. For the purposes of this study, three methods were used. These methods are described as elemental, affective and grammatical (Miles et al., 2014). Elemental coding is either descriptive, as in using a noun to describe a topic, or in vivo, where the code is selected from a participant’s actual term or phrase or lastly, the coding may reflect a process by using gerunds (-ing words) to indicate participant action or interaction. To best explore the phenomenon of change, affective coding was also used. Affective codes describe participants’ emotions, values, or evaluative comments. Finally, grammatical coding provides straightforward access to participant information by attribute coding. Attribute codes identify data as from a particular source e.g. observation (O),
interview transcript (T), and documentation (DOC). Attribute codes also identify the
*type* of participant e.g. principal (P), significant other such as DP (deputy principal),
BT (Board of Trustees member) and CT (class teacher). These codes were expanded
to include pseudonyms (E for Elmton School, B for Birchton School, H for Hazelton
School, and O for Oakton School).

All coding began as soon as data were collected. The transcripts, observations, and
documentation were read carefully, and small chunks or units of meaning assigned
an open code as described above, using the software NVivo to manage the codes.
Open codes were selected after careful comparison of the units of data.

Each code was then extracted from NVivo and printed (see example in Appendix 8).
This stage of the analysis is likened to “pulling apart the folds of an accordion” in
that the data is broken up in to many small units (Maykut & Morehouse, 1994, p.
138). Some codes were changed or adapted as the study proceeded. Memos were
written to record these changes. See Table 3 for an example of some of the open
codes grouped to form axial codes that later informed the selective code or major
category of *thinking* self for Elmton School.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Elmon School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sample of Open Coding</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Being prepared</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Big picture thinking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Different hats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everyone a leader</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eyes above the parapet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hierarchy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leadership learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraisal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprenticeship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role identification</td>
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<tr>
<td>Role change</td>
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</table>
The next two stages reconstruct the data to create meaning and understanding of the phenomena being investigated.

Stage 2: Axial Coding

During this process, coded units were assigned to categories. Categories were determined by careful comparison of open codes to look for clusters or patterns that could form around a category like spokes around a hub on a bicycle wheel, hence the term axial coding. To do this, several copies were made of the data. The open codes were assigned to the categories on a “looks right, feels right” basis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Codes that did not seem to “fit” a category were assigned a new category. Careful comparison of units of data led to the naming of minor categories (axial codes).

Axial codes are concepts that connect units of data together (Punch, 1998). At times, it was necessary to rename categories or add new categories or sub-categories. This critical process led to the integration of minor categories into major categories. Analytic memos were used to inform propositional statements that clarified and supported the inclusion of minor categories (axial codes) into each major category (selective codes).

Stage 3: Selective Coding

During this stage, the aim was to develop an “abstract, condensed, integrated and grounded picture of the data” (Punch, 1998, p. 217). The major categories were further refined and integrated. Relationships between the categories were sought at a higher level of abstraction. Central categories (selective codes) were selected and these became the focus of the study (Punch, 1998). These categories were named: influence, thinking self, feeling self, believing self and acting self. The researcher returned to the data to seek evidence to further support these central categories. Eventually, the categories were so well defined they were “saturated.” There was no benefit to be gained by adding more units or making further comparisons.

The aim of this process was to discover relationships and “patterns in the data as well as the conditions under which these apply” (Flick, 2002, p. 183). Comparison
of these patterns and relationships enabled the researcher to make interpretations based on the data as shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Axial codes group to form selective codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Axial Codes</th>
<th>Selective Codes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influential others</td>
<td>Influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External influences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role identification</td>
<td>Leadership quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Role change</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic thinking</td>
<td>Reflective practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult learning</td>
<td>Fortune and fate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becoming hardened</td>
<td>Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loneliness</td>
<td>Humility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staying calm</td>
<td>Commitment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adapting relationships</td>
<td>Passion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child centred</td>
<td>Believing Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Values</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moral purpose</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Delegation</td>
<td>Acting Self</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaboration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflict resolution</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Measured response</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leadership behaviour</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Autonomy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Problem solving</td>
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<tr>
<td>Decision-making</td>
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Finally, it was necessary to determine when to stop collecting and analysing data. Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggest four criteria to inform this decision. The source may be exhausted, the categories may be saturated, regularities may have emerged and there is a sense of integration, or the study has been over extended and any new information is no longer deemed relevant. Once this decision was made it was possible to generate propositions from the categories that informed the interpretations of the study.

The same procedure of constant comparative analysis was followed for each case to facilitate the process of inductive cross-case analysis.

Inductive Cross-Case Analysis

During cross-case analysis, the in-depth description, knowledge and understanding of each case within its specific setting can be compared with other cases to seek similarities and differences. Cross-case analysis can be used to enhance transferability. By exploring a number of cases, it may be possible to establish that
the findings are applicable to more than one case. Using a golf analogy, by playing the same holes on different days, players develop sophisticated knowledge and understanding of a particular course. This knowledge can then be transferred to other courses where it may help the player but by no means guarantee success. A case-oriented approach does not aim for generalisability. Instead the interpretations are strengthened by comparison of the similarities and differences emerging from each case. Overarching themes may become evident. More powerful explanations are possible.

Cross-case analysis began once the individual cases were analysed. This was an inductive process that searched for “patterns and themes that cut across individual experiences” (Patton, 2002, p. 57). The same process of constant comparative analysis was used to determine the overarching themes and patterns that emerged across cases. An example of this study’s cross-analysis can be found in Table 6 (Discussion Chapter).

**Memos and Jottings**

Memos and jottings were written at all stages of the study. These notes formed an important part of the audit trail in terms of monitoring bias, but were also vital to the interpretations arising from the study. Memos were used for analytic purposes as the analysis proceeded. As Miles et al. (2014) suggest, “they [memos] don’t just report data; they tie together different pieces of data into a recognisable cluster, often to show that those data are instances of a general concept” (p. 96). In their seminal work, Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed writing memos to help clarify the properties of categories. They suggested once properties are established, it becomes straightforward to assign units of data. The properties act as rules for classification. These rules clarify and support the inclusion of the minor categories in each major category. In this way, memos form the basis of propositions leading to the interpretations of the study’s findings.

Memos and jottings were stored in purposely-allocated notebooks but were also written directly onto transcriptions and field observation sheets. Immediacy was seen to be important. An example of a memo can be found in Appendix 9.
Provisions for Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, issues of internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity are discussed in terms of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The extent to which these issues are addressed informs the trustworthiness of the study. As Glaser and Strauss (1967) argue, “one canon for judging the usefulness of a theory is how it was generated” (p. 5). This places the onus on the researcher to be explicit and rigorous in terms of procedures and processes used to develop understandings from the data collected. For this study, the following sections explain these procedures and processes within the contexts of credibility, dependability and confirmability, and transferability.

Credibility

Merriam (2009) argues that credibility is a definite strength of qualitative research. Because qualitative research is based on direct observations and perspectives of humans in their natural setting, it may be closer to what humans conceive of as “reality.” However, researcher bias and inaccuracies exist and there is a need to take steps to enhance credibility. In this study, various techniques or processes were used including triangulation, member checking, prolonged engagement, peer debriefing, negative case analysis, and reflexivity (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Triangulation

The term triangulation is used in land surveying to determine convergence on a single point. In research, it refers to the use of different types of data to illuminate understanding. Richardson and St. Pierre (2005) describe this approach as crystallisation. The research problem can be likened to a crystal. The researcher seeks to illuminate the facets of the crystal from as many different perspectives as possible. In this study, the variety of data collected provides some degree of triangulation in that it contributes to the depth and detail of the study. The use of interviews, field observations, and documents add credibility to the findings by providing a range of perspectives to illuminate understanding and guard against bias.
Multiple perspectives were also obtained by including the views of *significant others*. These perspectives added credibility to the data by confirming or contrasting the statements made by the main participants (Springer, 2010). In practice, this meant interview questions were developed to check the perspectives of the interviewees (principals and *significant others*) on similar topics. The same questions were repeated for each interview at the different sites to provide consistency and facilitate cross-case analysis.

**Member Checks**

Interviewees were asked to check their transcripts. This ensured the interviewer recorded the participants’ perspectives accurately and the transcript provided an accurate representation of the interview. Member checking provided participants with opportunity to check the transcript recorded what they intended to say, and it gave the researcher opportunity to clarify meaning. In this way, member checking added credibility to the study. It is also an ethical practice that protects participants from deceit and harm.

**Prolonged Engagement**

By spending considerable time in the field, the researcher can enhance credibility by achieving greater depth and detail. In this study, the researcher spent time observing and talking to the participants over a period of eleven months. During this time, rapport was built up with the participants leading to deeper insights and reducing the risk of formulaic responses.

**Peer Debriefing**

Working within a team or under the guidance of a supervisor can enhance credibility. In this study, academic supervision added another level of checks and balances to the research process. Results were shared, interpretations discussed, new perspectives added, and audit trail procedures confirmed.
Negative Case Analysis

The integrity of the researcher is open to challenge when results appear “too good to be true.” To enhance credibility, inconsistencies in results, contradictions to expectations, and challenges to emerging interpretations, were sought. Examples of this emerged in the case analysis when the significant others offered perspectives that either challenged or corroborated the perspectives of the principals. Likewise, in cross-case analysis, there were both variations and similarities in the perspectives offered by the principals and their significant others.

Reflexivity

At all stages of the research design, reflexive practices were employed to guard against researcher bias. While attempting to ensure the participants voices remain the dominant voices in the study, it must be acknowledged that the researcher, as the instrument for the research and situated within the research, brings a degree of influence to collection and interpretation of texts. Possible sources of bias include the previous experience of the researcher, gender, and researcher perceptions about the topic. Reflexive practices in this study included: completion of debriefing sheets after each interview (see Appendix 4), written reflections on field notes taken during and after observations (see Appendix 6), and logging of detailed memos and jottings (see Appendix 9).

Dependability and Confirmability

When proving external validity in quantitative research, it is important to be able to replicate a study and achieve the same results. However, in qualitative research, there are difficulties with replication in practice, as many studies are emergent in nature (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). It is more important to be able to show “the results are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, 2009, p. 221). There are a number of ways to do this. Triangulation and peer debriefing are described above. Two further measures can be described as the investigator’s position and the audit trail.
Investigator's Position

The role of the researcher was covered earlier in this paper. To add to the dependability of a study, researchers should disclose how they are situated in the research. Researchers might reveal their experience, the extent of any insider knowledge they may have, and any assumptions about the research they have undertaken.

Audit Trail

Audit trails add to the dependability and confirmability of studies by tracking and detailing all procedures undertaken and decisions made. This involves examination of both the process and products of the study to determine the process was internally coherent and data supports the findings. To do this all data collected is dated, copied, coded, filed, and organised in such a way that the study could be independently audited to check for trustworthiness (Ary, Jacobs, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006). Audit trails also provide information to facilitate replication of the study design. The audit trail for this study includes:

- Detailed memos.
- Unitising and coding of data to check for researcher bias and to monitor the integrity of the data.
- Follow up of inconsistencies or deviations from the data.
- Member checking to ensure the reliability of data transcriptions.
- Comprehensive appendices that provide information about the research process employed. These include examples of interview questions, a field study record, a memo, and an open coding sample from NVivo.

Transferability

In this study, the researcher seeks to reconstruct meaning rather than to make generalisations from a small sample to a large population. The researcher aims to establish connections between the study and the reader’s world. Rather than
statistical analysis, thick description provides the material from which the reader can make his or her own judgments about transferability. Maximum variation sampling and a multiple case study approach increase the likelihood of the reader transferring meaning from the study to their personal context.

**Summary of the Research Method**

The research process described in this chapter is summarised in Table 5.

*Table 5: Summary of the research process*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Qualitative Methodology</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theoretical Framework</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Approach</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Respective Roles</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Research Question</strong></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Research Methods</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 1</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sampling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Case study settings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Phase 2</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pilot Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interview of a principal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phase 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Documentary sources** | • Staff meeting agendas and materials  
• Principal diary entries  
• BOT minutes  
• Strategic management plans  
• School prospectus  
• Local media articles |
| **Observations** | • Field study notes |
| **Semi-structured interviews** | • Interview transcripts |
| **Memos** | • Researcher notes |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase 4</th>
<th>Data Analysis</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Constant comparative analysis** | • To organise, reduce, and reconstruct data  
• To inform interrogation of the data  
• To guide interpretations |
| **Inductive cross-case analysis** | • To identify similarities and differences between cases, and overarching themes |
| **Provisions for trustworthiness** | • Triangulation  
• Member checking  
• Prolonged engagement  
• Negative case analysis  
• Reflexivity  
• Peer review (academic supervision)  
• Audit trail. |
Chapter 4: Findings

Introduction

The chapter is divided into the case studies of Elmton, Birchtown, Hazelton and Oakton Schools. Each case begins with a description of the school setting and participants. Five major categories emerged from the case study analyses and were named as follows: influence, the thinking self, the acting self, the feeling self, and the believing self. The category names for the aspects of self were chosen to represent the thoughts, feelings, beliefs and experiences the participants described. These five categories form the subheadings within each case and they relate to the study’s research questions.

The first category, influence, considers how the self responds to external influences. It addresses the research question ‘What factors or influences are perceived to contribute to change?’ The next two categories, the thinking self and the acting self, respond to the research question ‘How do leaders perceive themselves changing professionally?’ Here the thinking self uses adult learning and reflective practice to consciously transform behaviours and practices. The acting self makes decisions, sets priorities and takes action.

The last two categories, the feeling self and the believing self respond to the question ‘How do leaders perceive themselves changing personally?’ As a feeling self, each individual has personal qualities that influence the attitudes and behaviours exhibited. As a believing self, the self has beliefs and values that set moral purpose and are personal to the individual.

The case studies that follow provide insight into how each principal brought together four aspects of self, thinking, acting, feeling and believing in order to respond to their situational context and the influence of others.
Elmton School

Setting and Participants

Elmton School is a mid-sized contributing primary school (Years 1-6) in an urban setting. The neighbourhood has a high number of rental properties contributing to the transitory nature of the school population. The school is typical of New Zealand schools built in the mid-twentieth century with low-rise buildings facing the playground area. Outside the school office, a whiteboard welcomes visitors and alerts all-comers to major events scheduled that day. On entry, there is a small reception area with the principal’s office off to one side. Reception is colourful and inviting with messages, certificates, photographs and children’s artworks. The principal’s office is a small space but business-like and designed for working with little clutter or personal items. The staffroom features a large table in the centre of the room and displays of curriculum and staff learning on the walls. There is a positive, energised feel to the room with a strong professional focus. The assembly hall is a multi-purpose space used for a variety of curriculum and community-based activities. The school values are displayed prominently across the proscenium arch.

Elmton’s principal, Cara, began teaching prior to Tomorrow’s Schools in 1989. Her career spans more than twenty-five years. She left school, attended Teacher’s Training College, graduated, and taught in a variety of small to mid-sized schools in rural and urban areas. Cara’s passion was junior school teaching but further learning was also of interest. Cara completed her Bachelor of Education, a certificate in educational management, and attended the NAP and the FTP programmes. During her early career, she had numerous opportunities to mentor and tutor others as she worked alongside the Rural Advisory Team. Elmton is Cara’s first principal’s position. She was deputy principal of Elmton before becoming principal and has led the school for six years.

Cara selected her deputy principal from outside the school. Caitlin had a varied teaching background including some consultancy and overseas experience. She is a highly experienced, passionate practitioner but has no inclination to lead a school herself. Caitlin describes Cara as a person with a real heart, kind, caring and selfless.
She respects Cara’s excellence as a classroom practitioner and says Cara is a highly visible principal who models and reinforces desired behaviours.

Henry was the Board of Trustees Chair at the time of the study. He had worked with Cara for a number of years and was on the Board during the transition from the previous principal. Henry is a highly experienced professional drawn from the tertiary education sector. He values education and is passionate about the school. He describes Cara as a very good Chief Executive Officer, someone who keeps everyone focused on the “why” of the school, forward looking, and “not afraid to tackle things” (BTE T3). Henry believes Cara is trustworthy, honest, fair, and organised. Like Caitlin, he stressed visibility saying that Cara was significant to the school culture.

Influence

Influential Others

Mentors, advisors and other principals influenced Cara’s early leadership. She valued their knowledge, common sense, the systems they had in place, and their experience and wisdom. Of great importance was a principal group that “didn’t make me feel like I was a newbie on the block. They valued what I had to contribute” (PE T2). Cara draws on the perspectives of others especially when seeking innovative solutions or problem solving. Henry comments on the early stages of Cara’s principalship: “I think she was really observing other principals, other schools, how they functioned, and brought a lot of that back. I think that was definitely a part of what made her grow as a principal, as a leader” (BTE T3). Cara valued her mentors saying inexperienced principals need people to talk with. Personally, she gravitates towards people of like minds and, although acknowledging it is possible to do things differently and have different ideas, shared values are really important. However, she noted that, within her principal group, differences of opinion were “okay too.”

Although Cara draws on the skills of her Board and staff within her school, people from outside her school such as advisors and principals in various networks have the greatest influence. Her connections through NAP and the FTP programmes are still
important. Various advocates of positive psychology programmes for schools have influenced Cara and, today, this philosophy underpins the school culture and curriculum. Cara introduced a positive psychology programme in response to need she saw in students but also for her staff coping in challenging circumstances.

External Influences

Societal change resulting in increasing poverty and child abuse concerns Cara, who spoke of her sadness at having little or no power to improve the vulnerability of some children. She talked about the increasing complexity of her role due to the changes in her community:

The things we have to manage are beyond our control. It’s societal changes, huge changes within our community. A lot of our community especially, we’ve got a lot of beneficiaries in our community. The poverty is getting worse and with that comes all sorts of issues around violence and abuse and you know, it’s pretty tough out there for some of these wee people (PE T1).

She seeks creative solutions to these problems by addressing the health and wellbeing of children through camps, sporting activities, and specific teaching of values. The values programme was introduced for students because “When we said you’re not being respectful, they had no idea what that actually looked like or sounded like” (PE T5). Today, school values are displayed and taught specifically. Respect, responsibility, kindness and learning are the cornerstone of the school culture. Cara believes it is important to have positive relationships between staff, students and whānau (family). Key to this is a culture of respect and trust where everyone models school values.

Cara spoke passionately about her students and the hardships they faced both socially and educationally saying, “I fight for my wee people but it’s how you do it. There’s no sense in being aggressive but you just have to be persistent” (PE T1). Persistency is needed to find money to fund special programs. It is an on-going balancing act but Cara is not prepared to compromise the value of these programmes. She is an astute manager of budgets, despite professing feelings of inadequacy around her financial abilities.
A major concern for Cara was identification of low achievers under the National Standards recently introduced. During an Education Review Office (ERO) visit Cara recalls saying to the chief reviewer: “It won’t matter how much the government pushes me into making these decisions, my philosophical belief is that this is wrong. And I’ll never, never, ever be able to tell you anything different” (PE T1). Her frustration was evident in her description of a non-verbal child who had made tremendous progress in beginning to speak but was still to be labelled as not meeting any sort of standard. She was also concerned for those children whose talents lay in other areas not measured in terms of literacy and numeracy. However, Cara said she was pleased that National Standards enabled teachers to examine their practice and develop a shared language of pedagogy. Observation of staff meetings showed Cara putting this thinking into practice as she encouraged staff to reflect positively on results and progress of students, together with developing a pedagogical language that enabled teachers to voice this thinking. This behaviour reflects a change in Cara’s attitude from being totally opposed to the Standards to seeing some benefit in the policy.

**Thinking Self**

**Roles Identification and Change**

Cara has a variety of roles. Some are easily identifiable although complex, such as principal; others are less obvious such as peacemaker or “spin agent.” Cara identifies her role as provider of optimum conditions for teaching and learning. She said facilitating different types of meetings such as staff, Special Needs, Board of Trustees, and with the Ministry of Education requires enacting the principal role in a slightly different way and switching roles within minutes during the day. Holding multiple roles can be difficult when they conflict. Cara cites an example of acting as a mentor for teachers but also having to take a tough line on staff performance. She identifies herself as a peacemaker saying that she finds confrontation very difficult. She would prefer things to be very peaceful and calm but the reality is different. Cara also admits that confidence in her role fluctuates:
At times I feel like I know what I’m doing in this role, and the next minute I’m feeling completely challenged and don’t know a thing. It’s a bit of a seesaw roller-coaster ride. The job is just so vastly huge. It’s just massive (PE T5).

Changing roles involves negotiation between the existing role and the new role. As a principal moves from beginning to mid and finally late career, a number of shifts in role take place. Cara identifies one significant change with regret: “I’m now no longer a teaching expert because I’ve been out of the classroom for six years. I might have been a teaching expert when I came in here but certainly not now” (PE T5). She is still negotiating this role and keeps her finger on the pulse by participating in staff professional development.

Another role change is a shift from being mentored to mentoring others. This is something Cara recognises, “Once upon a time, that was never my role but it is now” (PE T5). To mentor in this way required acquisition of new skills. There was evidence these skills were recognised beyond the school in various presentations Cara gave during fieldwork. Her Board Chair acknowledged this change in Cara and identified a similar shift in his workplace. Initially, new teachers “soak up” information and then eventually begin to contribute to management of the school. This shift in thinking from beneficiary of learning and practice to a benefactor of these things is an example of identity transformation.

**Strategic Thinking**

Cara has learned to think more strategically. When asked about this she says, “I’m probably more specific and explicit in where I want to go” (PE T2). In the early days of her leadership, she was sometimes railroaded into making decisions but this does not happen now. She listens to the views of many and talks about the importance of being open and aware of what is going on in the school. Cara says sometimes conflict arises between her and the teachers because, “I see the whole and they don’t know all of the things that are happening” (PE T5). Cara identifies that she thinks more globally and has become a big picture thinker. From focusing on one class as a teacher and implementing change handed down from above, she now focuses on the needs of the whole school and has become an initiator of change, as she develops and implements programmes to meet the needs of her students and staff.
Adult Learning

Cara identifies herself as a life-long learner, saying that she likes to learn new things every day. She says this will never change but what she is learning now is different. Cara regrets that now she is classed as an experienced principal, the support programmes are gone and she believes more is needed:

I only now know that I don’t know a lot… And I think this is quite an interesting time for me because you were pushed and you had research being put in front of you to read all the time. Now, it’s entirely up to you what you do (PE T1).

Henry identifies a change in the amount of professional development available to Cara: “Once you’re through that early principals’ training, you’re sort of in this limbo between early principal and well established principal. There aren’t perhaps as many opportunities for that sort of thing and I think perhaps she’s missed that” (BTE T3).

There is some evidence that Cara has perhaps shifted the focus from herself to her staff, in that she seeks opportunities for professional development for them. Cara sees professional development as useful for developing teachers in areas where they might feel reluctant or uncertain but she sees potential. She describes a young teacher who had the potential to lead positive education in the school but had not recognised that in herself. By taking her through an exercise designed to reveal strengths and areas of potential strength, Cara was able to increase self-awareness in the young teacher. The teacher is now taking an active role in the positive education programme. Cara talks about the importance of knowing and understanding her team. She has led and attended several sessions on identifying strengths and working with different personalities. Cara values self-awareness for herself, staff and students. She believes a lack of self-awareness in people can be hugely detrimental.

Knowledge

When asked why certain principals and mentors have been influential, Cara talks about them being knowledgeable and wise. For her, a priority is knowledge of children, curriculum and teaching. Caitlin admires Cara’s depth of knowledge and expertise as a junior schoolteacher. Henry emphasises that “even though she’s not in
the classroom teaching day to day, she knows every child and every family really well” (BTE T3). He believes this applies to her staff too. However, Cara is concerned that her principal role draws her away from this more than it should. She feels her knowledge has shifted to managing money, managing property, and a number of less significant things. Despite this, Cara says building relationships with a myriad of people has given her new knowledge and skills, especially around behaviour management and special needs: “You don’t realise how much knowledge you have really, until you start talking to people” (PE T1). Here, Cara implies she has developed considerable knowledge. However, at a later interview, she pointed out that her learning is incomplete. She perceives areas for her development are mentoring teachers, holding difficult conversations, and using systems. Cara says at this stage of her principalship, “You don’t know what you don’t know until you need to know it” (PE T1). From being encouraged to think about leadership as a beginning principal, now she must be self-motivated. Cara refers to this as a danger time, a time when people leave the profession because the support and the opportunities for professional learning are withdrawn.

Reflective Practice

Cara has always been a reflective person. In her early years, Cara spoke of losing a job on appeal and consequently spending a term relieving at a variety of different schools. Although disappointing at the time, this was something that she thought in hindsight was quite good, as it gave her varied experience. Cara took this potentially negative experience and reshaped it as something more positive. When she left teaching to study, she said, “It was really interesting to step out and see how crazy teaching is” (PE T1). Reflecting on the busyness and complexity of the role at that time was not enough to stop her re-joining the profession and it may have strengthened her resolve to be an effective teacher. Cara learned that reflection could help her grow as a principal when she was doing the NAP and FTP programmes. She became aware of personal knowledge gaps, and valued the opportunities provided to “think and reflect about what kind of teacher and person and leader I was” (PE T1). The programmes enabled her to identify strengths and weaknesses. Cara does not believe her level of self-awareness has changed but says she has become more aware of how she works with other people. The programmes were
valuable as they provided time and guidance for personal reflection and increased self-awareness.

**Fortune and Fate**

The self is often expressed through the attitudes people take to their personal situations. Cara shares her attitude to change:

I think change is important and I think it is inevitable and I think for you to continue living the best kind of life that you can, you do need to change to new opportunities, new challenges, and new goals (PE T1).

However, Cara does not always feel in control of change. She talks about how she was pushed into the NAP and FTP programmes. She never wanted to be a principal and “really just fell into principalship” (PE T1). Cara makes several references to luck. She was lucky that she had such good mentors and advisors in the early days of her principalship, lucky that she had a supportive board during the turbulent times when National Standards were being introduced, and lucky that an outcome of Tomorrow’s Schools was the autonomy granted to schools in conjunction with their boards. Cara refers directly to fate: “Whatever happens, you make the most of the opportunities that are given to you. If it works, it works; if it doesn’t then it wasn’t meant to be. So I’m quite a believer in fate” (PE T1).

Despite this attitude to fate, Cara will take a stance based on personal beliefs and defend it. She is not averse to risk-taking where she can see benefit to her school. When things do not go to plan, she takes a positive attitude to the event and moves forward. For example, when National Standards were brought in, despite her fervent opposition, she reflected there was a silver lining: National Standards made her staff look at teaching and learning practices and reconsider benchmarks and expectations.
Acting self

Delegation and Collaboration

Cara has changed in that she realises her limitations:

You can’t rescue everybody much in all, as you want to. And I think I’ve probably become more of a realist than what I was, because I was out to save the world. And that is a preservation for me because it’s just - you just get sucked dry so you’ve got to be very careful (PE T1).

She spoke candidly about a time in her third year of principalship where she felt she was running on a treadmill. She remembers reflecting that it was not productive to take worries about work home. As a result, she learned to delegate some responsibility. Cara now seeks out people who can help. She sees this as an important coping strategy but also to cover the skills and interests she perceives she lacks. One example is the implementation of Information Technology throughout the school: “We’ve got some really good IT going on in the school but it’s not through me” (PE T2). However, it was Cara’s decision to employ a support person and release two teachers to ensure the success of the programme.

Henry recognises the importance of delegation, saying that although Cara does not do it all herself, she is certainly behind all organisation. Delegation is not always easy though and Cara says, although she does more now than when she first began, it is dependent on a relationship of trust and respect. She comments, “I’ve relinquished some of the control, although I’m finding that really hard” (PE T5). She finds it is hard because you have to trust that what you delegate will be done.

Cara emphasises her belief in teamwork and collaboration:
I believe in teamwork and that everybody has a role within the school and everybody is valued for what that role is. And so I don’t see any difference between me, and the school, and my value, as the teacher aides. They’re all – I mean I know there is a hierarchy but the teacher aides are doing an amazing job, especially my teacher aides, they are fantastic. So I believe they are as valuable in our team as I am. So collaboration is really important, that we all have an opportunity to be able to say what we are thinking and to suggest ideas, because I haven’t got them all (PE T5).

Caitlin affirmed Cara’s view saying that everyone in the school was perceived as being a leader or “leading from every seat or every place you are” (DPE T4). Henry agreed that Cara has a team focus and added that she usually manages to achieve consensus. He did not see much dictatorial leadership in Cara and believed this to be a positive aspect of her leadership style. He felt this quality was sometimes lacking in principals but that collaboration and teamwork seemed to come naturally to Cara.

**Conflict Resolution**

Cara admires the ability of other principals to listen carefully, speak succinctly, and get their message across. She describes a difficult meeting with another principal and a family in crisis saying she loved watching the principal saying exactly what he needed to say but in a very calm, succinct, and respectful way. She felt she would have avoided the actual issue by trying not to be confrontational. However, Henry and Caitlin find her more direct than this. Henry says Cara is someone who is not afraid to tackle things and Caitlin describes her as occasionally being stern but in a nice, pleasant way and certainly getting the message across. Cara acknowledges she has got better at the “tricky conversations” learning to put the needs of the school in front of the needs of the individual at times. This was not always easy and she talks of having to change hats in De Bono’s sense (De Bono, 1985), taking off the emotional hat and replacing it with the factual hat. She says, “I will look at the big picture stuff now, rather than just the immediate solution. That has been a big change” (PE T5). Cara has also learned to deal with dilemmas or challenges immediately, before they become a major issue resulting in loss of respect of the staff. She has witnessed how loss of respect has affected other principals. Both the respect of others and self-respect are highly important to Cara.
Measured Response

Cara has become more measured in her responses: “I’ve learned to respond rather than react and I used to react” (PE T1). She describes an incident with an irate father. She took him into her office and offered a cup of tea, which he refused. She said she would make one anyway and went to the kitchen recalling:

I just calmed down and came back and my heart was going like this (gestures a thumping heart) but [I] calmed down and just quietly spoken, softly spoken. Whereas once upon a time I would have been so uptight that I wouldn’t have removed myself first and then you say these inane things (PE T1).

Cara has learned to take more time to think about things before making a decision. She is less reactive. For example, she resists pressure from teachers who want quick decisions. Cara says she will ask for time, not as a negative response but so as to consider all factors and consequences of a decision.

Systems

The documentation collected reveals Cara’s ability to organise what is happening in the school. Timetables, planning proformas, various reports, and meeting agendas are all evidence of Cara’s organisational skills and her ability to communicate what is happening in the school to all relevant stakeholders, and meet requirements for compliance. Cara differentiates between principals who are people-people and those who are systems-focused. She identifies with the former but believes a balance is crucial. She has learned the systems, often becoming expert, so as to carry out her role. She uses systems knowledge to help her instigate changes. Cara does not believe she has changed personally: “It’s just a different way of thinking, not so much changing of philosophies and rationales. It’s a thing about changing systems and procedures to make that happen” (PE T2). Here, she resolves a perceived tension between systems and people-oriented thinking by using systems as tools to achieve more altruistic goals.
Autonomy

Cara talks wistfully about her early days of teaching where there was less structure and compliance. Although she recalled greater freedom then, she mentions gains in autonomy since Tomorrow’s Schools, especially in terms of funding for school programmes and professional development. Some of these things Cara does not believe would have been achievable under the old model. Her Board of Trustees is supportive of the special programmes run within the school, and Cara acknowledges the value of a board wanting what they see their children needing. An example is extra funding for the special needs students in the school. These students are a special passion of Cara’s. She developed a life skills programme that met with disapproval from the special school that supplied the itinerant teacher. They were against the students leaving school to access the community for the programmes. In the end, Cara employed her own staff. At times when Cara felt bombarded with large numbers of policy changes that did not align with what she believed, she took solace in the fact that, because the school was self-governing and she had a supportive board, they could be compliant but “we can also work within the system” (PE T5).

Problem Solving and Decision-making

When asked about her strengths, Cara puts problem solving first: “There’s no such thing as a problem, there’s always a solution” (PE T2). However, the way she solves problems and makes decisions has changed. She reflected that a former principal encouraged her to consider all factors before making a decision: “That was something I never used to do. I used to just solve the problem” (PE T5). Now, if there is a problem, Cara looks at the “big picture” rather than the immediate solution. This has been a significant change in thinking.

Although a keen problem solver, Cara sometimes finds decision-making difficult. She recalled the dilemma she faced as a deputy principal faced with her principal’s imminent retirement:
I had to make the decision. Well, do I apply or do I have the status quo? What happens if I don’t like the person who comes in? What if their philosophy is different to mine? And [if] I didn’t apply, it would mean that I couldn’t complain or grump or whatever. So I applied knowing full well that if I didn’t get the job, I’d probably be leaving because (a) they obviously didn’t think that I was what they wanted, and (b) the person coming in, I may or may not like. So I had to make that decision. It was a pretty big decision, actually (PE T1).

Here Cara emphasises the importance of a shared philosophy and being able to get on with people. While she acknowledges the freedom she had to make the decision, she also references the personal responsibility that goes with making decisions when she says she would not be able to complain at the outcome.

Cara refers to the difficult task of making unpopular decisions. She says while individuals may feel disgruntled, “I’ve got better at looking at the big picture rather than specific cases” (PE T2). This shift in thinking is driven by her beliefs that children are at the centre of all decisions and her own self-respect is really important. Not everyone can be privy to all sides or aspects of a decision. She aims for consensus but acknowledges that, in the end, she must make the decision and it is not always possible to please everybody.

**Feeling Self**

**Becoming Hardened**

When asked about personal aspects that had changed, Cara identified particular attitudes and practices but felt that personally she was unchanged. However, she was a little tentative saying that she hopes she is the same person but conceding she has built a bit of a shell around herself: “I’ve become a bit hardened probably. That would be the word. I’ve got a shell. It’s like a shell that they can’t quite get in [or] penetrate as much as they used to” (PE T2).

Cara believes she has become a little more cynical. She does not like this aspect of herself, commenting that it is not a good thing but it allows her to survive. She has become tougher and stronger so as to deal with issues like staff performance and student behaviour management but she maintains she has not become nasty or
horrible, just more forceful. It is not a side of the job she likes. This hardening is perhaps a complex defence mechanism. It protects her from being manipulated or pushed into things. It buys the time she needs to make measured responses to complex issues. It stops her feeling swamped, and it may protect her inner sense of self.

Loneliness

Cara describes feeling lonely and worried at times commenting that if she did not have her Professional Learning Group (PLG) or the cluster, she would feel very alone. She uses other metaphors that imply isolation or isolating behaviours such as “you can only keep your head in the sand for so long” (PE T5) and “you can’t see the wood for the trees” (PE T1). Cara shared an example of isolation:

We had staffing issues, like we lost 0.4 [of a teaching position], which was significant. I worried myself sick over that but didn’t let them [the staff] worry about it until such time I knew that this is what has happened, and this is what we’re going to do about it (PE T2).

To overcome feelings of isolation, Cara seeks the perspectives of others such as mentors and advisors. She also describes how without input from outside experts schools can end up siloed or “in a wee bubble” (PE T1). She employs professional advisors to avoid becoming too inward looking as a school, but also for her own learning and development.

Staying Calm

Cara used to be quite volatile but she has learned to stay calm: “Underneath it all your stomach’s in a knot and your heart’s racing but you just have to have that exterior calmness. So I’ve learned how to do that” (PE T1). She has learned to put aside her personal life to focus exclusively on work while at school noting, “You can’t come in with your worries and your woes and be miserable when you’ve got little five year olds” (PE T1). Cara says she has also learned how to take the emotion out of difficult situations in order to change how she manages these events. Her board chair thinks Cara has transferred this inner calm to the school culture and that
her organisational skills have impacted the school in that it is now a well-organised, tidy and calm environment.

Adapting Relationships

Cara acknowledges, “The actual relationships side of stuff I’ve always been relatively good at. People skills I’m relatively good at” (PE T2). However, she references a challenging time when she began to lead the school. When she became principal, her relationships had to change. Cara recalls a difficult conversation with one staff member where she had to put her friendship to one side: “You had to take that emotional hat off and put on your white hat and your problem solving hat” (PE T5). Cara felt she maintained the respect of her colleagues but they were perhaps no longer “best buddies.” When asked how long this took she said, “I think it happened over time. I think they started thinking I was removing myself but I had to” (PE T5). Although Cara acknowledges some feelings of loss at this point, she acknowledges that her colleague base changed to principals and she made some good friends there. Today her relationship with her leadership team is strong but socially they “are not in each other’s pockets” (PE T5).

Support

Cara talks about the importance of critical friends for herself and for the development of her staff. She has worked to build these relationships both with and between her staff. Now teachers welcome each other into their classrooms so they can ask questions about practice. Cara thinks that this is an important part of professionalism. However, she notes that it takes time to actually develop that trust. Critical friends have been important to Cara on a personal level too. During her third year of leadership when she felt she was on a treadmill, several colleagues outside of school gave her “gentle nudges” saying, “Look, you know you can only do the best you can do” (PE T1). This reassurance allowed Cara to reflect on her role from a different perspective and to begin to pace herself. She notes her board chair is a very skilled critical friend saying that he often sees reason that other people just never see. Her principal group is valuable for shared wisdom and experience. Cara finds
she can compare her thinking and actions with the ways others have navigated similar issues. Here Cara shows she values the perspectives and insights of others.

Cara promotes programmes that build resilience and positive wellbeing. She says these strategies help a lot when working with “some of those really stressed wee people. And it helps with the big people too” (PE T5). From a leadership perspective and for her staff and students Cara thinks in terms of replenishing and renewing her staff. She is worried that young teachers do not have the fun she had in her early career. When she began teaching, it was a career and a passion but she notes, “I don’t think it’s like that anymore. I think the job’s too hard” (PE T1). For Cara, it is important to be aware of the wells that are depleted whether it is for herself, her staff or her students. She encourages that self-awareness and gives staff the strategies they need to replenish themselves.

Humility

Cara has a sense of humility that underscores everything she does. She was happy to share that she is organised and a creative problem solver but was more reticent about her personal qualities. She shared feedback from a troubled little girl who described Cara’s strength as being very understanding. Cara felt this was interesting and insightful. However, when asked to comment further about her strengths, she suggested that it would be best to ask others. Cara mentioned the importance of the NAP and FTP programmes for helping her recognise and take pride in her skills. She realised for the first time that “it’s okay to say you’re good at something. I’d always been brought up that you don’t” (PE T1). As noted earlier, Cara can be quite self-depreciating and clearly is highly respected in her community for skills she does not perceive as strengths. It is possible she has taken these personally perceived weaknesses, such as financial management, and worked hard to turn them into strengths without identifying the change in herself.

Commitment and Passion

Cara has a strong work ethic and a desire to do better. She accepts this as “just a personality trait” (PE T5). Cara says people contemplating leadership need to understand the work, be committed, and passionate. She refers frequently to passion.
In the early days, her degree was left unfinished because her passion was to get out into the classroom. Now she feels her work is eroded by the administrative tasks that constantly loom on the horizon: “It’s harder and harder to get out of this office into the classroom and that’s where my passion is” (PE T2). For Cara, passion equates with sustainability. She says her PLG is sustainable because the members are so passionate about it. This relates to her role too: “This job is hugely complex but I love it! Or I wouldn’t be here. You don’t do it for the money” (PE T5).

**Believing Self**

**Social Justice**

Cara has a strong sense of social justice. As a young child, she describes getting into trouble for leading a protest when her school failed to make good on a promise to move her class into a newly renovated building. Later, at Teachers’ College she “dabbled” in political action as secretary of the Student Political Association. Today, Cara’s passion for social justice permeates her educational philosophy and her actions as a leader but it sometimes conflicts with changes in government policy.

Cara has devised programmes to take social action. An example is the Outdoor Education programme. Cara believes that, while the programme’s skills are transferable to the classroom, outdoor education gives children “experiences that they would never, ever have as well. So it’s sort of like social action” (PE T2). Cara is driven by her belief that all children should have the very best opportunities. This belief applies to all schools regardless of socio-economic status. She believes a system that penalises funding for professional development on the basis of strong academic results of students is inequitable. She also feels that there is a lack of equity in the skill base of boards of trustees across the country. Cara notes:

> I think probably the thing that is most hard for me is that education is political and it shouldn’t be. We’re here to make the best - do the best job for our children and the politics sometimes gets in the way of that. That’s the thing that is most frustrating for me (PE T5).

Although government policies may conflict with Cara’s values, she says she can work through this, as she feels supported by people with similar values and ways of
thinking. Many of these people are on her staff but also in her wider networks. She says while her school is compliant, if it got to a stage where “things got too bad, I’d leave. I’d just leave because I won’t compromise my values” (PE T5). Cara seeks some space between requirements for compliance such as National Standards benchmarking and her goals for social justice. Within this space, she can act with autonomy. Ironically, it is the government policy of Tomorrow’s Schools that has allowed this freedom.

**Child Centred Philosophy**

At the heart of Cara’s philosophy is a desire to put children first but she finds this desire sometimes conflicts with her leadership role. She finds it harder to balance the needs of children and staff with the increased administrative load of budgets, property, and compliance. As a result, she sees deputy principals taking over a lot of the principals’ work. When asked what she meant by “principals’ work” Cara replied, “It’s more hands on with kids. It’s more working with teachers round curriculum. It’s more managing behaviours and special needs” (PE T2). She talks about keeping the focus on this type of work, even when feeling overwhelmed by other demands. She says it is not easy. You have to think that “this is not about you; it’s about the children” (PE T2).

This conflict was evident when Cara spoke about her desire to be accessible even when busy with administration:

> I manage to shut the door and get on with it. That’s something I still have to learn, to shut that door, because if the door is open, they just walk in. But I don’t want parents to feel that they can’t come and see me. And when they’ve got an issue they want it there and then and if I can, I will deal with it there and then for them but, yes, I don’t want that door closed (PE T1).

Cara’s board chair reflects on her selfless behaviour and the way she drives all board decisions on the basis of this. He says Cara’s desire to put the children first is the foremost thing in all their board meetings. He says it is passed onto everybody that the children are the reason why they are there. The importance of setting this expectation was evident at the observed board meeting where a potential member
had other agendas. A belief in children before self provides Cara with moral purpose, allowing her to enact her role as a principal, even in trying circumstances.

Values

Values are taught explicitly at Elmton. Cara recalls the values programme came about in response to a difficult year:

We had changes in staff; we had staff with some major personal issues. We had this huge influx of these transient children who were just out of control. It was just the most awful year. And so we brought in the cornerstone values programme because when we said, ‘You’re not being respectful’, they had no idea what that actually looked like or sounded like. So the values and strengths programme is very important at Elmton (PE T1).

Cara uses values teaching and school assemblies to discuss and model values but she believes it is incidental modelling that is of greatest value: “I think it’s so important that teachers and children see you walking the talk especially around our values” (PE T1). Cara models being respectful, responsible, kind, and a learner. Both deputy principal and board chair endorse this. They say her personal value system passes down to the staff and students. Cara believes that building trusting and respectful relationships between staff, children, and parents is vital. These beliefs are evident in the words of the school motto that was introduced by the previous principal. Despite its origin, Henry points out that the motto is almost more reflective of Cara’s attitude than the previous principal.

Moral Purpose

Cara talks about the need to compromise. It becomes a coping strategy. She manages the stress of compliance, and policies that conflict with her values, by getting back into the classrooms and working with children. By doing this, Cara reconnects with the moral purpose that motivates her leadership. Alongside this, her board chair and deputy principal have noticed an increase in confidence. Cara says she used to second-guess herself all the time, but now has increased confidence arising from a belief in what she is doing. Cara refers to the confidence that comes
from experience but also from moral purpose, the deep-seated beliefs that motivate practice.

Cara’s story is one of servant leadership. She is humble and self-deprecating. Her actions are firmly grounded in her philosophical beliefs. She adopts an activist identity for her students. Despite sometimes feeling helpless in the face of the societal changes in her community, Cara is driven by a desire for social justice. She has fought for funding for programmes in the school to provide her students with activities, teaching and resources they otherwise would not have. In this way, she aims to improve more than just the academic outcomes for her students but also their overall health and wellbeing.
Birchton School

Setting and Participants

Birchton School is a full primary school (Years 1-8). It is located in an urban setting on a busy arterial road. There are a mixture of housing types, nearby parks, and some light industry. The school is low-rise with older buildings that are newly painted. The gardens are attractive and recently landscaped. Approaching reception, there is a sense of history and tradition with war memorials honouring ex-pupils. The front foyer is large and welcoming with children’s artworks, notices and display of the new school uniform. There is an assembly hall located adjacent to the foyer and reception area. It is a multi-purpose space with spectacular artworks reflecting the multicultural nature of the school. The staffroom is a light, attractive space with chairs arranged around the walls and several low coffee tables in the centre. Behind the office area is the principal’s office. This is a large space with a meeting table at one end and a standing desk located close to a door that accesses the secretarial space. Next-door is a smaller space the deputy principal uses.

Liam is a mid-career principal. He has been principal on the current site for eleven years although the school merged with another primary school during this time. Liam has been involved in education for more than twenty years, sixteen of these years in leadership roles. He was appointed principal in his fourth year of teaching but left this role after three years to take up a deputy principal position in a much larger school. Birchton School is his fourth principalship.

Deputy principal, Jodi, has worked with Liam for more than eight years, before and during the merger. Liam sought her appointment initially as a class teacher but later promoted her to one of three associate principals and more recently to non-teaching deputy principal. Jodi is passionate about teaching Years 7-8. She describes Liam as child-centred and a people-person. She says he is very aware of staff dynamics, staff capability, and knowing how to pace change.

Board of Trustees member, Maeve, has an accounting background. She has a long relationship with the school as a parent and now as a grandparent. Maeve served on the Board of Trustees before the merger but was not on the Foundation Board. She
has since re-joined. Maeve describes Liam as a highly visible principal who embraces change. She admires his skills as a communicator, describing him as articulate and astute.

**Influence**

**Influential Others**

When talking about his formative experiences, Liam is grateful for teachers who saw potential in him and helped him achieve. He says, “I was probably just one of those average students that sat in the corner and didn’t say much and worked hard” (PB T1). Liam notes that his pākehā father and Māori mother were influential too. His father modelled a strong work ethic, taking two jobs to provide for the family. His mother valued education and oversaw nightly homework. Liam says of his family influence that he learned from a young age to share, “I was in a family where you did share. It wasn’t all about me” (PB T5). At secondary school, Liam wanted to become a teacher but was advised against this by a guidance counsellor. Instead, he left school to work in the judicial system as a law clerk. After some time overseas, Liam enrolled at Teachers’ College as a mature student, still determined to teach.

While at Teachers’ College, Liam remembers spending ten weeks with an associate teacher in a new entrant class where he observed that it was possible to have order within chaos. He noted that the teacher gave him important skills for the work he is doing now. Also influential were several university lecturers who gave him specific feedback. The way they encouraged him has helped him to be specific in his encouragement of others. Moving into the workplace, Liam stresses the importance of respectful relationships and relationships built on sharing and trust. His relationship with his first principal as a young teacher was built on respect and encouragement. He recalls how another principal encouraged him to apply for a two-teacher principal role in his third year of teaching. He applied because of her belief in him. However, some relationships in this first principalship were difficult:
I think there were moments there when I thought I can’t do this. Relationships with just one other teacher were difficult, just two of us in the school every day, and I would go home and just dwell on all these issues (PB T1).

Eventually after growing the school to more than double its original size, Liam moved on to take a position as a deputy principal in a larger school. This brought new challenges but he describes his relationship with staff saying they got on very well. He led the school for three terms while the principal took sick leave and staff were disappointed he was not appointed to the position when it became available. He explains how being the “meat in the sandwich” of a middle leadership position was a worthwhile and pleasurable learning experience. His role involved supporting a principal who was unwell and often meant that “I would be having those difficult conversations with them, with the staff, but because it wasn’t my neck on the chopping block, it was easy enough to do” (PB T5). Liam was able to practise the skills he needed for leadership from a non-threatening position.

Liam’s principal group provides influence because they support and acknowledge him. He believes that having trusting relationships with people who understand the stresses of the job is important: “Nobody actually understands until you’re in a leadership position what it’s like; the difficulties that you have with kids, parents and staff” (PB T1). The more formal relationship with his mentor is also important as it allows him to reframe what he is doing currently and to set future goals.

External Influences

All three Birchton participants acknowledge that the biggest source of tension for the school was the merger. They are still feeling the flow-on effects as the roll continues to grow. Liam comments:

The school has changed completely from being an intermediate school with a very specific culture and curriculum of course, to a full primary school where we’ve had to create a whole new culture, and a whole new curriculum to meet the needs of five year olds all the way through to Year 8 (PB T1).

The biggest challenge was bringing together two groups of people from two different schools. Liam describes the feelings of grief, loss, and anger he faced from
the school communities as the schools merged. Despite the negativity, he felt that there was a need to celebrate the passing of both schools and acknowledge the value they had contributed to the community over the years. There were also feelings of sadness associated with the redundancies faced by some of his colleagues. It was difficult to celebrate his new position.

**Thinking Self**

**Motivation**

Liam combines personal desire for self-improvement with desire to do what is right for the school. He is highly motivated, someone who can set goals and achieve them. His deputy principal confirms this aspect of Liam’s nature saying, “I would describe Liam as very logical thinking and driven, so that ideas come and there’s quite a fast moving process to start putting things in place” (DPB T4). Board member Maeve thinks Liam is driven by a desire to have “the best teachers he can have, doing the best job; and in the public eye, to be a really good school” (B TB T3).

Money as motivation for teaching is rarely acknowledged. Liam has honest views. In his early leadership days, a motivation for taking a rural principalship was the availability of a schoolhouse as he was struggling to support a young family. Later in his career, when the schools were merging, Liam recalled being tempted by the offer of redundancy. However, he wanted to work and felt he was in some way called to the job. For Liam, money is important so he can support his family but also as an acknowledgement of the effort he puts in. He says of the ERO report that celebrated the merged schools’ progress: “That was the acknowledgement, that was enough. Hmm. And to get paid every fortnight, I suppose. That helps [laughs]” (PB T1).

**Strategic Thinking**

In terms of vision Liam talks about the need to consolidate what has been achieved in the school, and then start a review process that will enable the school to grow for the next five to ten years. He says it is important to be able to see the bigger picture.
Liam talks about planning with ERO to get all the implementation plans completed. He sees these plans as an important part of implementation but also so the school can be sustainable. He wants the next principal to have “some guiding documents and a culture they can feel when they enter, when they take over” (PB T1).

Liam’s capacity for big picture thinking means he can create readiness in his staff for change. His deputy principal says Liam’s careful planning means they achieve the goals set. This was affirmed by his Board member who referred to Liam’s capacity for strategic planning: “He’s very much a planner so everything’s done in advance, planned in advance” (BTB T3). In this way, change becomes an on-going process. There are few surprises or unexpected changes in the school.

**Reflective Practice**

Liam is highly self-aware. Although he says that he does not care that people might be observing, judging and thinking, the perceptions of others have been influential over time. Liam values feedback:

> The negative feedback is probably more important than the positive feedback because we’re just being patted on the back and reassured. We already know that aspect there but it’s the stuff that we’re not so good at that we really need to work on (PB T1).

Despite this view, Liam values positive feedback. He received feedback from an advisor who was helping at the school: “The teachers are remarkably calm, the classrooms are orderly, and the school is humming” (PB T1). He also shared the comments made by some junior school children when asked to describe their principal. The children said, “He is kind, gentle, he shakes hands at assembly, he wears suits, he’s got a little bit of no hair” (PB T2). Although he laughed at the time, these special comments obviously meant a great deal. He also shared comments from his Senior Leadership Team who told him that staff feel that they are listened to because they are given opportunity to share their views.

Personally, Liam tries to focus on improving perceived areas of weakness. However, he acknowledges it can be hard to change. He says about a 360 appraisal, “I try so hard [but] it never seems to work because the same feedback keeps coming through” (PB T5). In this instance, Liam is talking about communication skills, and yet his
board member and deputy principal describe him as the consummate communicator. His deputy principal thinks Liam’s appraisal has been beneficial. She says it was sometimes difficult to get him to consider staff ideas but now Liam listens and responds.

Liam looks for positive outcomes. He uses reflection to put a positive spin on difficult times. He talks about coming back to New Zealand to train as a teacher and being challenged by his limited Te Reo Māori experience but then having a positive experience in a bilingual unit. After a dispute with his board, he looked to the positive, saying such disagreements strengthen the board, and his relationship with them. The dispute meant they reflected on school policies and practices, and they gave thought to how they would react in future.

**Leadership Learning**

Liam is uncertain about the role of leadership development programmes in principal learning and development:

> You can have all the colleges and all the post-grad study… well, I’m sure they do enhance your work, but do they really support that whole idea of what does quality leadership look like, or effective leadership, in a school? I don’t know (PB T1).

Liam is unsure about the best path to leadership. He wonders who is the most effective, those who begin when they are young and energetic but are perhaps less able to deal with stress, or those who come to principalship in their late forties or fifties with many years’ teaching experience. Either way, Liam says it is important to gain experience, and experience can ameliorate stress: “You are dealing with so many situations. You learn from each one and then you put it into some sort of perspective” (PB T2). Putting it into perspective means seeing the relevance of it in terms of the bigger picture. It enables the experience or memory to be managed rather than becoming overwhelming. It becomes possible to take action and move forward. Liam concludes that it takes time to be a successful leader, to serve one’s “apprenticeship”.
Personal Change

Having the capacity to move on is important to Liam. Part of this is being able to accept change, acknowledge the behaviour of others or things that may have not gone well, and apologise when needed. When parents started to return to the school after the merger, his board member recalled, “He welcomed them with open arms you know. No grudges held because he knows that change is very hurtful to some people” (BTB T3). From her position on the board, she could see how Liam worked through some of the changes and policy decisions that were mandated. Although some changes were difficult or the policy decisions almost untenable, Liam was able to accept them in order to do what was best for the school.

Liam sees himself as personally changed in that he is less reactive and more measured in his responses. He has learned to listen. He says these changes took place over the last 15 years but he is unsure how they happened. He did realise that making the changes would be of personal benefit. The personal benefits were developing an ability to move on and not dwell on issues, and not being overly concerned with the perceptions of others. Both his deputy principal and board member have noticed these changes. His board member thinks Liam has become a more dynamic principal. Although she saw him responding to the demands of the new position where he had to “step up a mark because he’s got a bigger school, different aged children, more teachers” (BTB T3), Maeve believes he also had to prove to everyone that he was the right choice for the position, and that the school was going to turn out to be a good school.

His deputy principal refers to a change of pace in Liam’s leadership style. She says he gives people more time to adjust to change but still has firm timelines in place. He delegates more freely. He has a large number of commitments off site and she notes, “He just can’t have a finger in every pie. There has to be that handover” (DPB T4). She says he is more approachable and willing to listen to staff perspectives. At the same time, staff are more confident to share their ideas with him. Jodie says that, at the time of the merger, she saw him deal with stress better:
I saw him go through probably a little bit more releasing of the stress involved in change. Like I said, he internalises and he holds things and he feels things very deeply so he worked really hard not to take things personally (DPB T4).

Liam thinks the amount of change he has been through has forced him to adapt his style. While his leadership style may have changed, he does not feel personally changed. His values and his beliefs about education remain the same: “I always believed that parents and community should be involved in how we shape the learning programme and how we shape the school to support the learner” (PB T5). Also important are positive relationships with other people, sharing ideas, and sharing what you have with others. Some things are non-negotiable. Liam says he is never afraid to say sorry and he would never give up owning his actions, being honest and telling the truth. Liam sees that his time of apprenticeship is done. Although still a learner, he is ready to share his craft with others.

**Acting Self**

**Relationships**

Liam talks about how he built relationships with the new staff when the two schools first merged:

> We ended up having about four days of just talking about what our pastoral care and behaviour management values were going to be, and there was lots of debate. It was really wonderful because we got to know one another (PB T1).

He stresses that he knew the only way to make the school successful was to develop those relationships: “If I had just thrust documents at them and said, we’re doing this, doing that, this is what I’ve created; it would never have worked because they didn’t have buy-in” (PB T1). The idea of buy-in was important during the merger and it continues to be a priority. Liam talks about the difficulty of managing resistance to change. He now realises people need time to understand what change entails and they need opportunity to contribute to it. He uses an analogy of growing plants saying you need to “involve them, plant the seed and then help them, or water the plant if you like, to grow it” (PB T1).
Liam stresses the importance of respect in every relationship. His days in the courtroom were excellent preparation for the difficult times of the merger where he had to face people behaving in disrespectful, undisciplined ways. He asked staff to behave with dignity and not engage with the high emotions that were running. Even although some negative comments were personal, he recognised it was really the change that was the target. Today he says, “I’m really big on making sure the behaviour is respectful and dignified” (PB T2).

Visibility

Liam is a highly visible leader. He is very aware of being in the public eye and having a visible presence in his school. Liam talks of teaching as a performance, “You’re on a stage. People are watching you but you’ve got to be yourself. You can’t make out you are somebody else. You have to be who you are” (PB T5). This is an example of authentic leadership where personal and professional identities are aligned. When asked if he feels he has a number of different identities, Liam replies that there probably are different faces but “Liam is here [gesturing to his heart]” (PB T5). He says he is not putting a completely different face on at every forum, “but you have to temper the way you behave depending on who you are with at the time” (PB T5).

Visibility enables Liam to see and be seen but he is also an active listener. When faced with challenge, he listens and tries not to get defensive. Challenges come in many forms. In staff meetings, if an issue arises he writes it down and addresses it later at assembly. The public follow-up is important. He makes it clear to everyone that the person has been listened to and the issue addressed, not left to fester. Maeve appreciates that Liam takes action in this way saying, “He is very much a note taker and he’s very much a doer” (BTB T3). For Liam, careful listening, note taking to support memory, and taking action that confirms the listening, are skills he has developed over the years. Early in his career, he took a different approach: “I had it already sewn up, what’s going to happen. And I probably just would have launched in, and then got defensive, argumentative with people” (PB T2). This is an example of a leadership behaviour that changed in response to situational context. However, it also resulted in better outcomes for the self as conflict was reduced.
Managing Response

Liam talks about the importance of being internally and externally organised at all times. He says he has learned to measure his responses and, although frustrated by interruptions that he would like to attend to, he has learned to prioritise: “Whether it be people or paper or children, everyone’s got to take their place” (PB T5). This change in leadership behaviour enables him to remain fully focused on the issue at hand.

His deputy principal says Liam has learned to moderate response in terms of expectations of his staff. However, the change has been a two-way process in that as Liam becomes more accommodating or less impatient, his leadership team have become more confident to express their concerns. His deputy principal says that growth has happened for both Liam and his team. She says the change process influenced Liam: “He realised that things have to work at a particular pace. He’s very aware of staff dynamics, staff capability, and knowing when to put the accelerator down and when to put the brakes on” (PB T4).

Liam describes a change in behaviour depending on the situation and audience. He acknowledges that you have to be mindful of the audience that is receiving your response. He describes diverse audiences such as his students, colleagues in the local area, staff, parents, and board. Although there is a different dynamic in each of the situations, he hopes that “generally I’m the same person everywhere [but] the conversations that we have from one forum to the next, the tone is going to be different” (PB T5).

Liam stresses the importance of consistent behaviour when working with a number of different people. He reflects on the difficulty of maintaining consistency:

I guess you’ve got to kind of put on a bit of a performance if you’re not feeling your best. You’ve still got to breathe and be calm and listen all the time, even if that person is quite frustrating or you’re tired, hungry or whatever (PB T5).

Liam talks about using a firm touch or a soft touch in his relationships with staff, parents and children: “I think I’m quite good at observing the teacher or person who gets defensive and the one who is more open to having a conversation” (PB T2). For
the more defensive person, he will use the soft touch but he never gives up challenging those that need it. An example was the integration of technology into classroom practice. Staff had different levels of expertise and enthusiasm about the new technology. To manage this required a difference in approach for some staff but there was consistency in the expectations of outcomes or goals for everyone.

Collaboration and Control

Collaboration is important to Liam. He says if everyone in the school community are “interacting, interfacing, talking and listening to one another, then you can only have positive outcomes for the learner” (PB T5). He believes that collaboration leads to a sense of ownership, and staff become more empowered in their teaching. His deputy principal sees a change in leadership style as Liam increases delegation of responsibilities. She values this for encouraging independence and acknowledging strengths. However, Liam reflects that the purpose is more about sustainability of culture, programmes, and practices. He is proud that the school continued to run smoothly while he was on sabbatical leave.

Liam acknowledges there are times when control is needed. Although he encourages others to develop ideas and projects, when a project is developed enough, he takes control and moves the project into the implementation phase. Liam says of school development, “I’m not holding it close” (PB T5). Here, he implies that although he is driven to complete a project, he delegates and shares the responsibility of implementation. He stresses the importance of getting on with other people and sharing ideas. Liam agrees that perhaps control was learned in his role as law clerk managing the courtroom where he directed and led people. However, he balances control with delegation and collaboration. There is similar balance in his manner, which contrasts formality with friendliness and gentleness. Liam’s formality was perhaps influenced by his early courtroom experiences but it is also about respectful behaviour.

Professionalism

Liam believes that professionalism is following the agreed-to values or norms of the school. Importantly, it goes beyond the school gate, in that professionalism is
evident in the way teachers present themselves as educators to the community. He says professionalism is about being honest and genuine: “We challenge behaviour or we challenge situations, which we know are not right as per our values. And we do it in a respectful way” (PB T5).

Liam believes appearances are an important part of being a professional. Dressing appropriately for the task is one way of showing respect for yourself but also for those you represent:

I know that young people are looking at every move that we make and if we’re not presenting ourselves professionally, they notice it. They notice when we are not looking our best and they notice when we are not behaving our best (PB T5).

Liam admits appearances or performances can be deceptive and he can be easily charmed. He seeks support when recruiting for teacher positions and uses his listening skills to moderate, and seek glimpses beneath the surface of the teacher interviewees to establish an all-important match in values.

When it came to making the decision to lead the new school, Liam felt a sense of vocation: “In a way it was a calling because it was meant to be. I was given the job. It wasn’t just by chance it happened” (PB T1). He felt the responsibility of the calling immediately. Liam recalls realising the amount of trust and belief the board had in him and that this was actually a “really serious piece of work” (PB T1). Now he is very proud of what has been achieved, especially the staff, the work they’ve done and their commitment to the students. Getting there was not always easy. His board member says that, “He doesn’t assume things will happen. He just puts his best foot forward and he got through that” (BTB T3). She thinks it took about 18 months to get through the initial phase of establishing the new school.

Feeling Self

Emotional Management

Liam is honest about the difficulties of leading change. He says he tries hard to stay calm in challenging situations and has developed this skill over the years: “I think maybe 10 or 15 years ago, I would have flown off the handle and just reacted
immediately” (PB T5). Staying calm is not easy and can require a massive effort of self-regulation in some circumstances. Liam describes a situation at an emotional public meeting about the merger where he recalled he “went into a sort of third person, so kind of like removed myself from it” (PB T1). This enabled him to stay calm. Board member Maeve witnessed this event and described how he appeared to “shut down” but he remained very composed and positive. Another time Liam was called out of a meeting to deal with a difficult situation. He described how he had to return to the meeting, sit down, and carry on as if nothing had happened. He says you cannot carry the drama to the next meeting or the next situation: “You’ve got to switch off. You’ve got to leave the chaos behind and move [on]” (PB T2).

Board member Maeve says she does not think Liam is a person who would “bottle things up” but “he’s very private and careful. He doesn’t let his emotions show” (BTB T3). Liam’s deputy principal paints a slightly different picture, saying that he is a person “you have to read the time and place of. And you do that” (DPB T4). She understands that he can change register quickly and this is something also acknowledged by Liam. He says he has learned to use reflection to draw on inner strengths and past experiences to help him cope. Also important is physical exercise, eating well, and quality sleep. Talking with trusted colleagues who understand the challenges of leadership work is also an important coping strategy. Liam consciously changed his behaviour to become more self-reliant and to maintain perspective. He explains:

I don’t think it’s a maturity thing. I think it’s part of, it’s a professional thing as well, that you are in the game long enough. You are dealing with so many situations. You learn from each one and then you put it into some perspective (PB T2).

Alongside experience, Liam says he has developed a selective memory. He is somewhat embarrassed about this but recognises it as a coping mechanism. He says it is a fresh start for him every day. He puts things behind himself, and sometimes has to be reminded of issues. This happens because “you’re just so overwhelmed with everything else. There’s so much to do” (PB T1). This internal strategy allows him to keep the chaos at bay and to prioritise his thoughts.
Another strategy is to take time out. This might be anything from five minutes to several days. In very stressful situations, or where there is a major decision to make, Liam might take more time. He says when he was deciding whether or not to take the position as principal of the new school, he made an impulse trip to Australia during the holidays. He just needed to get right away and get some perspective on the situation so he could make the right decision.

Liam has built a strong support network over the years. He works hard to stay in touch and maintain these networks despite geographical distance. He mentioned one principal who emails about twice a week with professional readings. More than ten years later, they are still in contact. One elderly connection pops in for a chat every now and again. Liam describes this as a really healthy professional relationship as “she reminds me to continue to support others because she comes in to support me” (PB T5). Deputy principal Jodi describes how Liam brings his networking skills into play with staff development. Liam brought experts into the school to support staff in various roles. Jodie believes that this may not have taken place, if he had not been such a good communicator and networker.

Liam says it is good to keep those connections going. His network of currently practising colleagues supported him during the transition to the new school. They provided both emotional and professional support. This is a reciprocal relationship in that his colleagues help and support each other. Liam’s time working for a principal with health issues taught him that you can bounce back but only with support. Liam says, “We didn’t do all the work for him, I’m not saying that at all, but we surrounded him like a cloak” (PB T1). This cloak helped to protect personal vulnerabilities inherent in the self.

Passion

Liam is passionate about his work. However, at this stage in his career, Liam mentions that he can see potential to do other things outside of school that are not necessarily related to working directly with young people. Following on from his sabbatical leave, Liam plans to write a report on the impact that school reorganisation has on principal stress. He hopes his insights will be beneficial to policy makers and those affected by school reorganisation.
Related to passion is energy and dynamism. Board member Maeve sees evidence of this in the many things that Liam does: “He’s very vocal around the school. He’s always got a lot to say but it’s what people want to hear. It’s real positive stuff and he’s just involved in so many things” (BTB T3). Countering energy, Liam talks of feeling tired. He says the merger was hugely stressful and its effects are on going: “Last year was really difficult with the number of kids coming in and the challenges they brought with them” (PB T2). In his second interview, he looked forward to his period of sabbatical leave as a time to reflect and recharge.

Honesty

When asked if there was any quality of himself he would never give up, Liam said, “owning your own actions, being honest. I’d never give that up” (PB T5). Liam values honesty in others. His teachers are encouraged to talk to him or those involved if they have a concern about something. He encourages openness and honesty and “dealing with it” rather than letting situations simmer. Liam addresses potentially difficult conversations with the same emphasis on honesty.

It is important to Liam that others understand what drives his high expectations:

I’m myself. Yes. What you see, this is who I am. People know about me, who I am and [pause] personally. They know who I am professionally. They know what to expect. They know what I think about teaching and learning … I’d never give up any of that because I know that what I do and how I behave is right (PB T5).

In this statement, Liam stresses the importance of being frank and honest. People understand his expectations because they know him. By drawing definite lines in the sand and living by these values, children, staff, parents and board have a clear understanding of his expectations.

Fear and Courage

Various principals modelled courage for Liam. Witnessing these experiences, he learned how important it is to have the courage to have difficult conversations and to address issues as soon as they arise. As a young teacher, having observed angry outbursts, he also learned the importance of being courageous “in a nice, gentle
way” (PB T1). On the other side of courage is fear. Liam shared the fear he felt when he started the new school:

I was scared because it’s easy to walk into a school where everything is already there and you can just pick up… but actually starting fresh? We couldn’t just go and recreate what we had because we were an intermediate school. And I hadn’t been anywhere near a five year old for eight years (PB T1).

He was anxious about his lack of currency with the junior school curriculum but he was also fearful of meeting his new team:

I was a little bit scared about the first day when all the crew, who are in the staff now, about them being here because I didn’t know their pedigree. They thought they knew my pedigree and so I was a little bit scared, if I can use that word, nervous, anxious. But it was just fine because we talked and we worked together (PB T1).

He was also worried that the parents would not send their children to the new school. He describes how the staff lined up anxiously in the assembly hall on the first day waiting for the children to arrive. Since that day the roll has increased to where the Ministry of Education estimated it would settle. Today many families have returned to the school despite staying away initially.

Believing Self

Philosophy of Education

When asked about his philosophy of education, Liam says it has three parts, students and their learning, what teachers need to do, and community engagement. For Liam, the community needs to be “engaged in the process of developing and guiding the curriculum, guiding the way we do, how we teach in school” (PB T5). Liam believes students need to be at the heart of the learning, “I’m a great believer that children, children’s ideas, children’s strengths need to be tapped into. And that they should determine to some degree what learning looks like in the classroom” (PB T5). To this end he is addressing student agency in the school curriculum.

For teachers, Liam believes listening is important. He says that if teachers listen to community, students and colleagues then as they listen, they are in turn
collaborating with one another. As a leader, Liam concludes it is important to realise:

The school is about the kids; it’s not about the teachers. I mean we are very important, obviously, but we’re not number one. We are just in behind. And so every decision that I make is based on what’s best for the child (PB T5).

This belief underpins the decisions Liam makes in the school and is closely aligned with his personal values.

Values

When asked whether Liam feels his values have changed, he says that the values we have from very young become who we are. These values are innate and he does not think much about them. Liam says, “If I was to have to be somebody else, then I don’t think I could do it. I wouldn’t be doing a good job” (PB T5). Here, he implies that changing his values would mean becoming a different person. Liam’s values direct everything he does and permeate school culture. He admits that, in the early days of his leadership, some staff left because their values did not align with his. He reiterates the importance of shared values to ensure everyone is working towards the same purpose.

Liam speaks of times when his personal values were so challenged he nearly walked away from the job. He had to find a way through these situations and negotiate a comfortable position without feeling compromised. Sometimes this involved taking some time out to get perspective on the situation or talking to a critical friend. In each situation, it was renewed focus on what was best for all children in the school, not just individuals or vocal minorities, that helped him find a way through.

Liam’s story is one of change agency and turnaround leadership. His focus has been on collaborative development of new programmes, community outreach, relationships, and the sustainability of the school as it moves forward.
Hazelton School

Setting and Participants

Hazelton School is an urban school set in a residential suburb with a variety of housing styles catering to mid to higher-level incomes. It is a contributing primary school for Years 1-6. A recent Education Review Office report recognised the school as a high-performing school. The school site, although quite small, is a child friendly space that encourages creative play. Recently, the classrooms were extensively remodelled as a modern learning environment. There is an open plan space set over two levels with large glassed areas and a mezzanine. The reception area presents as the hub of business administration while acknowledging past traditions with dux and past principal boards, and a Roll of Honour. The principal’s office is accessed from reception. It has an uncluttered feel with minimal furniture and few personal possessions on display. The deputy principal’s office is adjacent to the staffroom. It is similar to the principal’s office in décor. The staffroom is spacious with low chairs, coffee tables, and a large data projector screen. It has a professional feel, a space to engage in pedagogical dialogue as much as to relax.

Niall is a late career principal and principal of Hazelton School for more than 15 years. Niall left school and went to Teachers’ College, completing a Bachelor of Education degree. He was a deputy principal prior to becoming principal and began his first principalship just as Tomorrow’s Schools was starting. Prior to coming to Hazelton, Niall held principal positions in a four-teacher rural school and an eight-teacher urban school in a low socio-economic area.

Deputy principal, Leanne, worked as a legal clerk and a property manager before teaching for 13 years in two different schools. She was promoted to non-teaching deputy at Hazelton due to roll growth. Leanne has leadership aspirations and is applying for principal roles. She describes Niall as incredibly professional in all that he does, his passion and commitment to the job is unmatched, and the children’s best interests underpin every decision he makes. Leanne notes he is not scared of change.
Board of Trustees member, Sean, has known Niall for about nine years and worked with him on the board for about six years. Sean works in electrical engineering and has travelled the world working in many different industries. He is used to change and stressed the importance of always having new challenges although not necessarily in new contexts. Sean describes Niall as inclusive and approachable. He finds him open, very easy to talk to, and a good listener. He describes him as quite measured in his approach, unlikely to have extreme views, and a very organised and structured type of person.

**Influence**

**Formative Influences**

The value of education was strongly emphasised in Niall’s early years. His mother was a teacher and his father left school at 12 years of age, eventually completing a PhD in his thirties. Niall refers to his father’s story as powerful. It emphasised for him that learning is a life-long process. Despite the family focus on education, Niall describes himself as not particularly engaged at school and not a great scholar, “I was just one of those kids who was vaguely disorganised most of the time and not really attending to what school was really about” (PH T1). Niall recalls his attitude changed in the fourth year of his teaching degree. He realised his learning was more than a qualification; it was entry into a profession. He also began to appreciate the notion of learning for its own sake.

Niall describes feeling isolated and a failure in his first year of teaching. He says he felt incompetent, probably was incompetent, and was left to his own devices. There was no guidance from any leadership person, even when he felt particularly bleak. He describes leaving school at the end of the year and feeling like he had been cured of cancer. When asked why he did not just walk away from teaching at this point, Niall says he still liked the notion of teaching and every so often there were good days. However, it was more than an occasional feel-good day that kept him going. Niall said it was an attitude of his generation; that you did not just give up if you had trained hard for something, you persevered.
There were positive influences too. Niall observed other young teachers that he perceived were doing a good job. He approached these observations critically, asking himself questions about teacher interactions with children and the structure of the day. In this way, he was able to learn and adapt his teaching practice. He says his second year was a transformational experience. The children were happy and they learned. Niall says he began to feel he was changing lives and this motivation kept him going even when times were tough. He described how he came to realise “the very big notion of you’re building tomorrow’s citizens really and if you do that well, you’ve got an intergenerational flow-on effect” (PH T5).

Niall reflects on feelings of inadequacy in his first leadership role too:

I think when I was first appointed; I had no idea really of what I was doing and it was kind of more relying on interpersonal nous more than anything else and just sort of trying to work out what the job really was (PH T5).

Despite this comment, Niall notes that he was well prepared after positive experience as a deputy principal. His principal focused on curriculum and quality learning for children and modelled for Niall that leading a school was primarily about leading learning. However, Niall also learned the value of systems in terms of managing administration, and the importance of professional development. His principal was an influential role model with a positive attitude to the Tomorrow’s School policy. Niall believes this experience provided a really useful scaffold into his first principalship.

Niall uses the words “shape” and “reshape” in relation to both personal and school-based change. Niall’s ability to reshape a school was enacted in his first principal’s position in a rural school. He said the school was at a low ebb and he remembers spending the holidays clearing out “the accumulated dross” (PH T1) of old resources and various other rubbish that had accumulated over the years. He carried this philosophy forward with the recently completed building project in his present school. He noted that some teachers were reluctant to give up items they had collected over the years when faced with minimal storage. He says that although as humans we are programmed to be settlers not nomads, the belief he tries to foster in his school is that “We are actually constantly moving forward and we are not
burdened by things in the past. We carry useful things but we are not bringing everything” (PH T2). In this attitude to change, Niall shows he is not afraid to move on.

These early experiences contributed to Niall’s ideas about teaching and learning but also developed his knowledge and understanding of people. He says the low decile school he led in his second position was a useful experience because it was good exposure to the complicated lives families’ lead, and the related issues children face. Niall says his political persuasion is left of centre “simply because I just have a heart for the messes people get into” (PH T1). He says that political issues leave him a bit cold. He is not one who is driven by educational campaigns. Instead, he is driven by a strong sense of loyalty to the profession, children, and learning.

Today, Niall is still influenced by role models and, in particular, a cluster of colleagues he respects. This group is critical because they provide a forum for discussing ideas. They often shape change, sowing the seeds for further school development. The process might be initiated during a phone call or perhaps at a more formal meeting where others disseminate information about what is happening in their schools. Niall often takes these ideas back to Hazelton.

Influence also comes to Niall through his leadership team. He says his team is very professional and focused on their job and he is very respectful of that and very grateful. He recalls saying to his staff, “I run fast because you run fast and you run me pretty hard” (PH T1). He differentiates their roles from his saying he drives things from “a research-based theoretical model with a sort of a quite practical overlay” (PH T2). His teachers, on the other hand, bring a very practical approach and challenge him in terms of what is feasible in the classroom. Niall says he is influenced by the pedagogical work going on in the school around student agency. He shares the excitement of his leadership team but is able to moderate their ideas on the basis of his extensive experience and theoretical knowledge.

External Influences

Niall brings a positive attitude to policy change, even when framed as a potential source of tension. Moving into principalship for the first time, Niall saw the
potential of the Tomorrow’s School’s model, especially in terms of increased autonomy. He thinks that pre-Tomorrow’s Schools, principals were largely just managers and it was a very straightforward job. He says the role of the principal changed quickly:

You were employing people, you were appraising people, you were disciplining people, you were moving people on, you were responsible for your property, you were balancing a budget, a significant budget. It wasn’t just a four thousand dollar grant from the Education Board. You were running a business. It was a really big jump (PH T2).

Although he enjoys this autonomy, Niall has some reservations about the Tomorrow’s Schools model, saying it assumes the principal is always right. He says the model is “predicated on the fact that you’ve got your little kingdom. This school is my kingdom, and it’s my school and it’s my staff” (PH T2). However, he feels the principal is often alone in being accountable for any mistakes made.

Niall talks about money as being a powerful resource while acknowledging it may cause tension. Tomorrow’s Schools brought significant changes to the way property was funded. Niall recalls “the old days” of having to get in a queue and wait for improvements like ceiling insulation. Now he says the significant property changes at Hazelton were only possible due to the decentralising of policy decision-making around property. However, utilising property funding to achieve this goal required considerable skill and knowledge of the processes involved. It was not an easy undertaking. Board member Sean recalls the tension when the building project was underway. He says Niall had some worries during this process and discussed with him the ramifications of “variations in specs and heights and things like that” (PH T5). Niall appeared relieved (and somewhat proud) to announce at an observed board meeting that the project had been brought in on budget.

National Standards was an initiative Niall felt had positive benefits but also some negative outcomes. He felt a policy that has the potential to label children has the capacity to be destructive but the upside was the power of talk in schools. However, he acknowledged that while some schools became engaged in rich, deep solution-oriented discussion, such discussion did not occur in all schools. Niall reports several “bleak conversations” with other principals that indicate the policy is
perhaps only masquerading as something significant and relevant. Niall sees the relevance as specific to individual schools and how they use it.

Today, Niall rarely feels threatened or powerless in the face of Ministry of Education initiatives but he recalls one occasion where he was challenged by a Ministry directive. In the early 1990s, schools were required to develop a self-review process. He recalls feeling “in a conundrum” about how to initiate this process. He resolved the problem by tracking progress quite simply using little cards pinned on his office wall. He reported progress at, below, and well below. Here Niall, despite initial reservations, started to think creatively and to innovate for the change that he realised was inevitable. In a later interview, Niall reflected on the process he uses when faced with change. He says he moves quickly from thinking something looks complicated to seeing potential in it. Niall perceives his approach is one of creative problem solving rather than reacting negatively and resisting proposed change. He does not panic. His deputy principal gives an example of a recent shift in decile rating that equates with less funding and a possible threat to programmes. She says the budget cut was managed in a very calm, low focus way: “He might be flapping on the inside but he doesn’t show that on the exterior” (DPH T4).

Niall admits that responding to change can cause tension. In the second interview, he talked about the challenges he faced from his new Board of Trustees. Unlike previous boards, they were questioning practice. He shared this with colleagues who assured him that this was not unusual but it still rankled. He decided to give it time to settle down and by the third meeting of the board had altered his view:

My current board is the most critical, engaged board I’ve ever had, which I found a little bit disturbing for the first three or four meetings. But now that I’ve adjusted, I rather like it, because they’re actually - they’re engaged (PH T5).

Working outside the school on a Ministry of Education project gave Niall the opportunity to learn from a powerful role model. In this forum, where the members were highly engaged, professional people with strong opinions, he observed the Chief Executive Officer at work. The CEO modelled behaviour that was completely non-defensive, and totally open and transparent. This experience helped Niall reflect
on how he might manage his relationships with the new board members differently, and he came to understand that their behaviour was not threatening.

Although Niall sees positive side of most challenges, he has definite views about things he perceives are not a good idea. Niall questions the ‘Investing in Educational Success’ (IES) policy. This government policy aims to lift student achievement and provide new career pathways for teachers and principals. Niall is unsure what it might mean if he was asked to be a lead principal.

If the principal has a critical role, I mean, if the school can get by without me for two days and there’s no discernible change in my school, what does that say about my leadership right now? Is it not all that important? So that’s the bit that concerns me. It’s sort of the question of what is my role? Why was I employed? And do I have a role to play still in those areas? And I think I do, so why would I rush to join into something else?” (PH T1)

The importance of roles, and an understanding of the complexity and diversity of them are discussed further in the next section.

**Thinking Self**

**Role Identification**

Niall says it is impossible to understand the complexity of the principal’s role until you become a principal. As an educational professional, the role is not just about tasks but it is a highly complex activity for a moral purpose. Niall believes moral purpose is the one constant in leadership. He thinks increased role complexity since Tomorrow’s Schools has resulted in better practice in the principal cohort.

I think principals see themselves very much as pedagogical leaders and if they’ve been through the First-Time Principals’ Programme, that’s just hammered into them. Reflective practice, pedagogy at the heart of your work, student outcomes; the Ministry are ramping up on that. ERO are interested in that (PH T2).

For Niall, the principal’s role is more than just pedagogical leadership. It is driven by relationships with the wider community. He believes the principal is “the gatekeeper of culture” (PH T2). He thinks school principals have a really critical
role in the way the school operates as an entity especially in terms of tone, understandings and shared beliefs. He believes it is really important to establish a healthy culture of openness and decency.

There are many different personas Niall adopts in response to different groups. With the leadership team he is a colleague, with his whole staff he is collegial but slightly more distant. With parents who come to see him about a specific issue or problem, he sees himself as empathetic but very professional. In community settings where he speaks in public, he says he is very much “the principal” and the formality that goes with that. Both inside and outside the school setting, he is always aware that he is a principal and he modifies his behaviour to reflect that responsibility. Niall believes everything a leader does is noticed and reflects a leader’s deeply held beliefs.

**Strategic Thinking**

Niall says his personal strengths lie in strategic thinking. He likes to think of big notions in elementary ways and then layer in complexity while ensuring things still make sense as a whole. He uses a circus act analogy where a performer is spinning plates on a pole:

He starts off by spinning a plate and then he spins six plates and then he spins eight plates and everybody is gasping but he knows the point at which to give up the plates; bow and leave. But in education there’s no bowing and leaving so any plates you are spinning, you actually have to keep spinning that plate. And so you can’t just keep adding plates because, sooner or later, the whole thing falls down (PH T5).

A strategy adopted by Niall is to look for links between curriculum, self-review, reporting, and appraisal. By linking these things, they become part of “one plate” rather than trying to juggle four discrete entities. He believes meshing things together is important to avoid little pieces “because little pieces are exhausting. I can’t run little pieces” (PH T1).

Strategically, when faced with something new, Niall looks to the big picture to determine best fit. He asks questions like, “Is that something new? Or is that another plate spinning on a pole?” (PH T5) He may conclude it is part of a plate already
spinning, thus reducing the need to toss another plate in the air. There is flexibility in the way Niall thinks, shifting from big picture to fine detail as and when needed.

Leader as Learner

Niall is concerned that there is a gap in leadership learning for experienced principals:

I think it’s a major problem that the Ministry isn’t addressing. They’ve got the First-Time Principals Programme but they are relying on informal networks to develop the thinking and the purpose and the understandings of experienced principals and I think there is real space, I don’t know how you would fund it or what it would look like, for collaborative communities of principals (PH T1).

He addresses this gap by reading widely but also by participating in teacher learning. He says, “I’m front and centre and part of it” (PH T1) and while he often facilitates, meaning is co-constructed from readings or discussion. Being informed and knowledgeable is important to Niall. Niall acknowledges he does not have to know everything but people “should have confidence that the principal is well informed and is au fait and current with what is going on” (PH T1).

Reading helps Niall feel confident, informed and professional. He refers to the work of Sergiovanni and Barth as formative influences and still relevant today. Of particular influence was Sergiovanni’s work on moral leadership and the morality of being in a school: “That really struck a chord, that actually, we are doing something bigger and decent with our lives” (PH T1). This reference aligns with Niall’s earlier realisation that his training meant more than just a qualification; it was about entry into a profession. Niall says he is doing more professional reading recently, finding it useful and valuable. He keeps a reflective online journal. His deputy principal notes this journal is evidence that Niall is active in his own learning. The journal is available to everyone on staff to read and is part of the openness and transparency he considers so vital in the workplace. Staff can see where his thinking lies even before new directions are tabled for staff consultation.

Board member Sean observed Niall working with sub contractors, architects, the tendering process, and various other situations not usually thought of as part of a
principal’s role. He saw Niall adapt himself by learning new skills in order to manage the project. Niall agrees:

I’m really strongly linked or connected to that notion of *ako* really, that everybody can learn and everybody is a learner. And I feel quite strongly that teachers should be the biggest learners, and principals should be the biggest learners of all (PH T5).

Niall adds somewhat ruefully that this is not always the case in his profession.

**Reflective Practice**

Niall is a reflective practitioner. He thinks development of this skill was a situational response. He says, “It could have been fear [*laughs*]. I don’t know. I think awareness though, that things can go badly wrong in a school. I’m only half joking about fear” (PH T5). He believes reflective practice is a useful thing for self-preservation as it helps to bring things into perspective and to rationalise fear. Reflection can provide a view of the big picture. Niall describes his reflective thinking process: “I tend to think that would be a great idea, think about it, and if it is a great idea I spin it past other people” (PH T5). An important part of this thinking process is demonstrated in the position of words “think about it.” The thinking happens after the idea but before any action. This is perhaps a protective mechanism to manage risk without being risk averse.

Reflection also helps Niall moderate perceptions of failure: “I can’t think of any times when I felt like something’s failed. I’m a person who recycles back around though, and I think I try to be very perceptive about how things are going, and I reshape quite quickly” (PH T1). In this way, Niall takes on the persona of a chameleon, adapting quickly to changing situations and thereby avoiding failure. His reflective nature also allows him to reshape failures as learning experiences. His disastrous first year of teaching was an example of this. He recalls reflecting on the drive home what determined a good day or a bad day and concluded it was mind-set. He tried to think more positively, realising he did not want to repeat past mistakes or return to such an emotionally distressing time. Having a positive mind-set meant Niall continued teaching and from there on he began to really enjoy his work.
Personal Change

When asked about personal change, Niall says he has become more comfortable in the principal role. He notes that emotional management is easier. He says that in his second or third year at Hazelton, he noticed feeling less anxious when parents came to see him. In a recent incident, a parent was angry because he felt an ambulance should have been called to deal with a child that had cut himself. Niall says he found himself listening with no anxiety. He added that even if he felt a mistake had been made, he still would not have felt anxious. Earlier in his career, he would have felt considerable anxiety in the same situation.

Niall believes that many personal changes happened as he adapted to survive the role but he also says, “I think if you don’t keep changing then you aren’t seen as a growing person and in actual fact, you aren’t a growing person” (PH T1). Here Niall hints he seeks change for more than survival reasons. He feels a need to be continuously growing and he distinguishes between being seen to grow, and actually growing. Niall suggests that growth comes from deep within. It is more than response to a situation but something self-directed. There were times when Niall did not have to change but he chose to adopt a new behaviour or direction. He does not really think about managing change, as “change is the business” (PH T5). He feels so immersed in change, he does not see it as anything more than “the notion of that’s what we are working on next” (PH T5). Niall continues to make conscious decisions to adapt so as to stay relevant and useful in the organisation.

Niall identifies strengths that have helped him manage change within himself. Reflective practice was useful but it was his well-developed sense of identity as an educational professional that really helped him manage change. For Niall, growing and changing equates with being an educational professional, and he believes leaders are constantly learning and teaching. He says, “if you have those deep beliefs, and the personal qualities of reflection, systems, and big picture thinking, I think it makes it easier to deal with change” (PH T5).

Some beliefs and qualities are brought forward from early formative experiences, others Niall has learned from observing others, and some have developed in response to managing himself in difficult or unfamiliar situations.
Acting Self

Systems

Niall believes successful principals are systems and outcomes-oriented. However, he describes it as a complex skill set:

I think successful principals have a really strong focus on curriculum, a strong focus on student wellbeing, a strong focus on relationship. I think if you don’t have that sort of skill set, people might get a principalship but they don’t go too much further (PH T2).

For Niall, systems come first as they provide structures that allow meaningful, harmonious relationships to exist. As a leader, he finds systems “make the trivia go away” (PH T2). Systems allow him to manage property, money, and personnel while not losing sight of the purpose of the school.

Taking Action

Niall has learned from experience to take action in a timely fashion. He refers to this as “life’s lesson on the rock” (PH T1), recalling an incident where a large rock in the playground was displaced during some landscaping work. He remembers thinking he should move the rock but he did not. Sometime later a child who was having an angry outburst spotted the rock and threw it through a window. Now he uses this story as a reminder to take action. He believes in noting the small things and dealing with them quickly. He says that often, if things are not dealt with quickly, they escalate and so he tries to anticipate everything. He references having his “eyes above the parapet” (PH T1) and uses a freight train analogy:

In time, you get quite good at spotting the freight train before it arrives and sort of repositioning yourself slightly to one side of the tracks, and repositioning the school with it, so you can sort of let it roar past or stop before it collides with the building (PH T2).

He recalls several near misses where collision was only avoided due to careful preparation. An example was his first principalship where he inherited some unruly children. He learned the children’s names before they arrived and stayed one step
ahead of them. This was important because he felt he had enough anxiety about being a first-time principal without having to deal with challenging behaviour in the classroom.

Communication and Collaboration

Niall recognises the importance of good communication especially with parents. He has learned the value of making an extra phone call to check up on a child, “Parents value that out of all perspective for what it is. It’s a phone call” (PH T1). While seeing this as the decent thing to do, Niall acknowledges the response he receives from parents has reinforced his behaviour and practice.

Niall’s board member notes that, although board meetings are very open discussions where people are encouraged to say what they think, the focus is always on reaching agreement as to the board’s view. Coming to consensus allows the board to function effectively and Niall plays a pivotal role in achieving this consensus. However, Sean also says, “I’ve never felt the idea that he’s the only person directing the ship” (BTH T3). He does not believe Niall is the only person to come up with ideas, or that he is not open to what others have to offer. Sean uses the building project as an example of this. He believes Niall created real opportunities to work together as a group and sort out the design, and the implications of it for teachers and students.

Niall stresses the importance of a collaborative leadership style. His weekly breakfast meetings with his leadership team go beyond the business of managing the school to the business of leading the school. They discuss what they are trying to achieve together from a philosophical perspective and this keeps everyone focused on the bigger purpose of the school.

Open and Transparent

Deputy principal Leanne thinks Niall has become more transparent and open in his thinking. She wonders if this is part of a relationship that develops over time. Niall says he is not a “plotty guy” (PH T5). He tries to avoid hidden agendas. He says he has learned from experience that being very open and disclosing where you want to go early supports the management of change. He says, “If you get there and
everybody else didn’t want to get there, then you are better to have the conversation about whether we should be going there before you put in all the energy of getting there” (PH T5). This means being clear about direction and able to communicate vision with others.

Niall says he thinks a lot about how to get from here to there. Part of this process is to try and pre-empt issues that could act as blockers to change. An example was the extensive use of glass in the new building. Niall started conversations with his staff to get them to think about the purpose of glass and why it might be better if the large glass walls were not covered with displays. Niall says he was not directive in his manner but instead used phrases like: “Let’s explore the possibilities. Let’s think about the ways we could use this space” (PH T2). However, there is still direction in this approach. His board member hints that it is usually quite clear what Niall’s expectations might be. He says Niall has quite strong views, and he thinks a lot about the implications of what is happening in the school.

**Autonomy**

When asked if there were anything he would find hard to give up, Niall said the ability to be self-directed, with a high sense of autonomy was critically important to him. As a principal, he loves being involved in everything but acknowledges that not everyone agrees. Within the professional media, some are arguing the Ministry of Education needs to take some responsibility back. But Niall is not convinced. He says the building project could not have been achieved if he had a property manager off-site planning to repaint the buildings inside and out and put down new carpets. Instead, as principal working in conjunction with his board, he directed use of the budget to achieve a fully repurposed, functional, modern learning environment.

Niall says that personal integrity is non-negotiable and uses a fictitious example of the Ministry of Education reintroducing corporal punishment. He says, “I would just think it was outside the bounds of my personal integrity and I just wouldn’t do it. And in education, we are pretty good at just subverting silly ideas anyway” (PH T5). This is an interesting statement because it suggests a high level of autonomy. Even if something was mandated counter to his personal values and beliefs, Niall would find a way to get around it. This is an example of thinking in a space between personal
values and beliefs and externally mandated policies. Like the freight train analogy, Niall has positive belief that he can avoid a collision between policy and personal values and beliefs.

Niall does not feel too much tension between what he wants to do and what he can do. He says that autonomy is one of the joys and pleasures of the Tomorrow’s Schools type model. He believes “you can pretty much do what you jolly well like so long as it is rational. And then you’re relying on sensible people to head that off if it’s not” (PH T5). These sensible people are his board and leadership team. Niall works within the limitations of his role, acknowledging that he is an employee within a system:

We’re not an enormously wealthy entity so, given where we sit and the lovely lifestyle we have, I work within those parameters and those strictures and I don’t even think about the other things. I probably tend to focus on what’s going well and why it’s going well (PH T5).

Niall’s comment reflects confidence and a positive attitude to his role but also a sense of being in control.

Professionalism

Niall is passionate about raising the profile of educators as professionals. He believes professionalism is about “self-management, self-direction, self-starting, being accountable but as much accountable to other people as accountable to yourself” (PH T5). The repetition of use of the word “self” here emphasises that for Niall, professionalism comes from within. Even accountability has an internal focus. Niall believes in being accountable for your actions but only in that sense of “I’m not doing it because I’m supervised. I’m not doing it because it’s in my job description and I’m certainly not doing it for some sort of bonus pay claptrap” (PH T5). He is intrinsically motivated and sees external motivations as being almost insulting within a professional realm. Niall believes that ethics are at the heart of professionalism and “your ethical viewpoint is very much influenced by how you think the world is, and it should be, and how people should interact” (PH T5). For Niall, professionalism is about exceeding standards. Whatever the expectations are,
a true professional will always seek to go further and do better. He says one of the biggest callings of the profession is to be constantly learning, changing, and growing and to model this actively. Niall has always felt this way and this drives his focus on school improvement.

Feeling Self

Passion and Energy

Niall is passionate about education. He finds the concept of work/life balance irritating and says his most passionate teachers never address it. For Niall, his passion for the job means there is little or no separation between work and life. He thinks about school even when he is off site gardening or cycling. Niall describes times when “you’re sort of in the zone and all excited about it. And you can’t sleep because you are excited” (PH T5). He says this type of preoccupation is different from when you are sick with anxiety about whether or not you can handle the job, or the grumpy parent that is coming in tomorrow. His passion translates into capacity for hard work. He says he is very happy to put in long hours. The job has come with some sacrifice though. When asked whether he has had to give up anything in order to lead the school, Niall says jokingly, “Life!” (PH T5). However, he qualifies this by saying it is about giving up personal time and learning to build the family timetable around key events in the school calendar. While he sees this as sacrifice, Niall thinks it is a useful survival strategy. Time spent thinking about school or doing tasks related to school equates with preparation that in turn reduces anxiety and makes the role sustainable.

Niall is energetic. He says that, “if you don’t have energy and enthusiasm then you shouldn’t be in the job. I really, firmly, believe that” (PH T1). High energy is evident in the building project he has planned and managed. Many other principals may have felt they had enough to do in running a school without taking on something of such magnitude. Niall is a keen gardener and has spent many hours working on playground projects. Out of school he cycles or sails. But a note of uncertainty creeps in when he talks about the future. At the moment he has energy but “sooner or later I’ll probably stop bouncing and fizzing and think, I feel a wee
bit tired today” (PH T1). He says he wants to leave before that happens, as he does not want to be one of those principals that everyone hopes will retire. However, this could be a difficult transition. Niall talks about the amount of time he spends thinking about school and again a note of uncertainty creeps in as he contemplates having to fill something that dominated every minute of his day and weekends with something else.

Supportive Relationships

Although preparation and planning are key to avoiding freight train scenarios, there are some things that cannot be foreseen. Niall talks about how the support of colleagues can be a good reference. He says he has found it very useful to have colleagues you perceive are sensible and wise to talk to about things. He appreciates they do not say what they would do, they just chat about it, and while chatting a course of action often becomes clear. Another point of reference is Niall’s wife as she helps him keep things in perspective by determining how much of the issue is in his head and how much is real. Sometimes she will ask him if the issue is simply pride. This makes him step back and consider if he just wants to have his own way. By doing this, she helps bring perspective to the situation. The role of a partner in career success is possibly undervalued and not often acknowledged.

Frustration

Niall provided some insight into management of the emotional side of principalship. He shared the frustration he felt when his teachers started leaving school at break times for coffee; something he would not contemplate doing during the school day. Niall managed the situation by questioning himself and considering if it really undermined the moral purpose of the school. He rationalised that apart from a duty of care, there was really no reason why they should not go. On another occasion, he described feeling angry when a parent made a disparaging comment about another parent’s child. He recalled the conversation and his feelings at the time. The parent said, “I just don’t know what that sort of child is doing in this sort of school” (PH T1). Niall said he felt angry at the comment but tried not to let his anger show. He replied calmly saying, “I’ll tell you what sort of school, then you can tell me, what
sort of child” (PH T1). The parent subsequently moved her child to a private school. Reflecting on this, Niall is proud that he stood up for his moral beliefs about the purpose of the school. These beliefs guide his response in most situations.

**Believing Self**

**Philosophy of Education**

Niall believes education has the power to change lives and that it should be about the whole person. This holistic way of thinking can be compared to *hauora* or the Māori concept of wellbeing. *Hauora* has four components combining physical, mental and emotional, social, and spiritual wellbeing. For Niall, education is much more than just numeracy and literacy, it is about this sense of wellbeing, and the ability to contribute to a group whether that is family, school or community. Education is not about preparing children for a place in the work force but rather to be active contributors to society. Children must be equipped with critical thinking skills, with an ability to reflect on what is happening around them, and they must be taught not to accept things at face value. Niall believes all children and adults can learn. He is an avid proponent of professional learning for teachers. While Niall is student-centred, he also aims to be a good employer. He believes people need to be treated well. However, he makes the point that “the school exists for the children. It doesn’t exist for the teachers” (PH T1).

Another belief is that leaders should be inherently decent and well balanced. Niall says, “if you’re angry with your life or disappointed or whatever, then those same things spill into the school” (PH T5). He adds that it is very hard to change negative beliefs, and people who hold negative beliefs may be unsuitable for leadership. Niall believes ethical beliefs are developed in several ways but mostly from formative experiences such as upbringing and what is observed. His personal beliefs about education were formed in his early years and they provide “a strong moral sense about what I am doing and a strong reference point to fall back on if there’s any sort of discussions and debates about what we should be doing or shouldn’t be doing” (PH T1). These moral beliefs and values are the professional yardstick Niall uses to guide his practice and he has kept referencing them over time.
Values

Kindness, caring, and manners are cornerstone values at Hazelton. Niall says these values go beyond the school, evident in parents commenting that their children talk about them at home. Dignity and respect are also important. Niall sums up his values as old-fashioned values: “Manners matters, decency matters, dignity matters, honesty matters, and integrity matters” (PH T1). He is concerned that these things are lost easily. At times, Niall thinks values are sometimes misused. He thinks his perception may be “shady” but he believes that sometimes when people say, “that’s a compromise to values” (PH T1) what they really mean is that they do not want to change.

Niall’s story is one of adaptive leadership. In his various roles, he reshaped himself and the schools he led towards goals of personal and school improvement but without losing sight of moral purpose and his personal educational philosophy.
Oakton School

Setting and Participants

Oakton is a small country town bisected by a state highway. The town supports local agriculture and features a variety of medium to heavy industry. Oakton School is located in a residential area away from the main road. Classroom blocks are clustered around an asphalt playground area with playing fields on the far side. The school is a medium-sized contributing primary school for Years 1-6. On approach there is a reception area with children’s artworks displayed. It is freshly painted and has a welcoming feel. The principals’ office overlooks the playing fields. It features personal touches such as photographs and artworks. The staffroom has a small kitchen area, low chairs and coffee tables, and a white board for messages. The library is recently renovated with shelving, display areas and colourful seating specifically designed for younger children. Some tables can be joined to make a large square table for staff and board meetings.

Oakton’s principal, Shannon, came to teaching later in life. She always wanted to teach but family commitments precluded training when she was younger. Instead, she worked in private industry where her ability was quickly recognised and she was given managerial responsibilities. Eventually, she decided to start teacher training. Shannon graduated in the top five per cent of candidates in her year and became a full-time teacher in a rural school. She specialised in new entrant teaching and was promoted to deputy principal after just two years. She spent eight years at her first school as deputy principal and undertook the NAP programme. She was appointed principal at Oakton and completed the FTP programme. During Shannon’s time at Oakton School, she has led the school through considerable change.

Deputy principal, Maria, went straight into teacher training when she left school. She graduated and taught for three years in a rural primary school and then travelled overseas for a year. When she came back to New Zealand, she taught in a city school for three years and then decided to apply for the deputy role at Oakton. She was appointed by Shannon and has been at Oakton for two years. Most of her teaching experience is Years 4-6. Maria describes Shannon as very positive and
someone who puts the interests of the children first. She thinks Shannon is a very passionate and hardworking leader.

Laura is a class teacher. She was interviewed in place of the Board of Trustees member selected, as he had to withdraw due to pressure of work commitments. Shannon appointed Laura to teach in the junior part of the school and has worked with her for four years. Laura describes Shannon as a “hands on” principal and says the students love her.

**Influence**

**Formative Influences**

Shannon’s mother modelled a sound work ethic raising a young family on her own. The children were taught the value of money and hard work. At school, Shannon remembers two influential teachers. One shared his passion for Māori language. Another was a casual teacher from London who taught secondary English. Unlike some others, this teacher focused on personalising learning and motivating students. From a young age, Shannon was open to new thinking and the power of a teacher to make learning engaging.

As a teacher, Shannon’s work was recognised by others, and opportunities and promotions followed. Her preparedness to take on difficult teaching assignments as a casual teacher led to appointment in a full-time position. Shannon’s mentors under the FTP programme were influential in that they directed her to other principals with experience in similar challenges. The mentors set up Professional Learning Groups comprised of other beginning principals. Shannon still meets with this group, usually three times a year. She says the network widened as the group made contacts with other more experienced principals. Shannon stressed the importance of keeping these networks going.

**External Influences**

Shannon believes she is different to some principals in that she does not consider herself political. By this, she means she does not get involved in arguing the
political issues in education. She explains she comes from farming stock and is probably fairly traditional in her thinking. She is conscious that the government has to balance the books and is not an endless source of money. Instead, her priority is to get what she can for the betterment of her students.

Shannon has some concerns about the proposed ‘Investing in Educational Success’ (IES) policy in terms of her participation in existing clusters. She is concerned that the proposed cluster organisation might limit choice and result in principals becoming siloed. She was pleased that, at the time of interview, the concept of IES was becoming more flexible. While Shannon thinks it is an exciting way forward, her attitude is to wait and see what happens. She prefers not to worry about the things she cannot change: “There are some principals that get out there, get really angry and focused, and more or less become activists. Whereas I think that’s a waste of time and energy” (PO T5). To date, Shannon has directed her energy into meeting the needs for change she has identified within her school environment.

Oakton School required Shannon to form responses to many new, unexpected, and difficult situations. The experience influenced her development as a leader. She made conscious changes to the way she related to people from the beginning. When she began her leadership, she knew the hardest challenge would be to work at these relationships. Shannon found staff expectation and levels of commitment varied. She had to acknowledge that everyone is different. She modelled professional behaviour by treating people how she wanted to be treated, and she believes this has impacted the school culture positively.

Shannon recognises that her staff have different expectations of leadership. She says some believe there is a pecking order in education. Ranking is based on longevity in the job rather than effectiveness. Shannon does not agree but found that, when she supported the views of younger teachers, she met with opposition. Her own relatively short tenure as a teacher prior to principalship may have been a factor in this attitude.

Shannon takes pride in the appearance of things. She works hard to present an engaging and attractive learning environment to the outside world. She does this partly because she likes things done properly and, by doing them herself, she can
achieve this, while lightening the load for her staff. She says that most teachers appreciate this, but some just take it for granted. Shannon’s thinking is changing and she is beginning to acknowledge that it may be possible to do too much.

**Thinking Self**

**Role Identification**

Shannon variously describes herself as a mother hen, a peacekeeper, a manager, a curriculum leader, and a team player. She also acknowledges the importance of her role as partner, parent and mother. Despite this, Shannon says she does not feel she has more than one identity in her role as principal. She reflects, “It’s not necessarily me as a different identity but it’s me just picking the right way, selecting the right way to deal with something” (PO T5).

Shannon has a number of different perceptions of principalship. She is learning from experience and observation of others, the behaviours and practices that she perceives encapsulate “good” leadership. In this way, she is forming her own unique individual principal identity.

**Motivation**

Shannon is adamant she never wanted to be a principal. She says she does not like being the centre of attention and would rather work in the background. She undertook the NAP programme because it was free professional development, with little workload, and good networking opportunities. Later, Shannon became motivated to become a principal after a disappointing ERO report in the school where she was deputy principal. She could see opportunity for improvement but she did not have control. She recalls thinking, “I bust my gut and yet I had no control over that [report] and it reflects on myself and the school” (PO T1). She determined that she needed a place where she could use her passion to make a difference. For Shannon, that was principalship at Oakton. When faced with the challenge of initiating change for school improvement, Shannon said it was all about keeping the big picture in mind. She wanted to do the best for her students. She was determined that the school needed change and this sustained her motivation.
Strategic Thinking

Shannon distinguishes between management and leadership. She feels confident as a manager but says she is still growing and developing as a leader. Having vision and being able to articulate it is important but she notes that implementation is key. She says she is still learning to pace change or implement it in a way that works and is effective. She stresses the importance of buy-in from everyone so “that they eventually share your passion and share your vision” (PO T2). Deputy principal Maria says Shannon is very organised and knows the direction that she wants. Under Shannon’s leadership, Maria believes that most teachers have come to understand that the school’s vision is to create responsible and active learners but some are still learning the practices to achieve this.

Systems

Shannon uses systems to support change processes in the school: “I am quite organised and structured. In these kinds of systems I can see that way of thinking, of being able to assess it, clarity around where I want to go, and how to get there” (PO T5). Having a clear purpose and defined processes means Shannon can break things down into small steps and ensure that nothing important is missed out. However, this was not so straightforward in the beginning. She recalls that, initially, it was choosing what battle to fight based on questions such as: What is most important? What will have the most impact? What is vital for the here and now? Shannon says she came to the realisation that she could not change everything at once. She had to learn to read the situation and determine when people were ready for the change she wanted to implement.

Decision-making and Problem Solving

In the beginning, Shannon had to make many choices and decisions so as to instigate change. The amount of consultation with staff varied depending on the priority the project was assigned. Her deputy principal thinks Shannon is a confident driver of change, gathering people’s opinions to a certain point but not wasting a lot of time on this. This was evident during the library renovation in the decision-making around furniture and colour schemes. Less consultation meant the project could be
implemented quickly. Deputy principal Maria notes these decisions could have absorbed an entire staff meeting and at that time, a higher priority was teaching and learning and the changes being addressed there. However, she notes “as a good leader, you sort of need to keep in the back of your mind, even five minutes quickly sharing might have prevented some backlash” (DPO T4).

Leader as Learner

Shannon believes the principal is the curriculum leader of the school. To this end, she is still hands-on when it comes to the purchase and organisation of resources. She also attends professional development sessions alongside her staff. As a teacher of some 10 years’ experience, this is a familiar and comfortable place to be. Shannon is also confident in her management tasks. At the Board of Trustees’ meeting, she presented the financial accounts to the board, efficiently and effectively. She says, “I think I’m a great manager sometimes. I think that comes from my background, I love to manage and have things sorted” (PO T1). However, she still feels like an inexperienced principal with so much to learn.

Shannon has found opportunities for leadership growth and development beyond the NAP and FTP programmes difficult. She says there is no longer a leadership team based at the local university that visits schools. The responsibility for new learning is with the principal. As a result of these changes, Shannon is concerned that principals may become isolated in schools and she is keen to avoid this. She looks to various groups and clusters for professional development: “I like the idea of going and sharing and then taking out bits that will work for you. If you’re not around those people, you don’t get exposed to those ideas” (PO T1). Shannon finds groups such as these provide a source of new thinking and ideas. There is opportunity to learn from the experience of others.

Reflective Practice

Shannon’s mentors have helped her reflect in the job and guided her development. Another source of learning for Shannon was observing others. She recalls how her first principal modelled trust in people. She hopes she can be the same. Shannon uses the Professional Standards for Principals provided by the Ministry of Education
as a scaffold for practice and a framework for reflection. She views the Standards as a guide for teachers and principals but believes some people think of them as a tick box rather than living them. She says, “It’s about being honest to yourself and to others and being reflective on that and knowing when to change” (PO T5). However, she adds that it is hard to change people, as not all role modelling will be recognised and adopted by others.

Reflection is an on-going process for Shannon. When asked how she makes time to reflect, Shannon says she does a lot of thinking at night but she also uses her travel time to process her thoughts. She comments that she is a naturally reflective person, saying she is always thinking about what could be. However, reflection is as much about hindsight as foresight, and her deputy principal provides valuable feedback. Maria helps Shannon reflect by encouraging her to think about her actions and leadership style, and she brings the feelings and thoughts of other staff members to her attention.

**Acting Self**

**Facing Resistance**

Within a school, various changes can cause tension. One change is staff moving year levels or changing classroom spaces. Another is the way budgets are divided. Another is the school hierarchy and the way positions are described. Yet another is the way resources are organised. A specific example of change at Oakton was the decision to move staff meetings from the staffroom to the library. Shannon felt the staffroom was not a productive place to hold meetings as the staff sat in small cliques and sometimes made negative comments. She reflects how the tone of the meetings changed with the move into a more professional environment. Deputy principal Maria commented that in the library meetings, Shannon was more confident, communicated her purpose clearly, and staff were open and reflective. Shannon is happy that everyone contributes a view in these meetings. Even although not all are in agreement, at least discussion is happening.

In managing staff attitudes, Shannon learned not to focus on the secondary behaviours or the symptoms of the problem. This came with greater understanding
of the people she works with. She realised their reaction was not necessarily the important thing; she needed to understand where they were coming from and why they were acting that way. Now Shannon considers whether the behaviour is having an impact on anyone but herself. She asks, “Is it really undermining myself as a leader or do I just need to give that person a bit of space and time?” (PO T2) Asking this question redirects the issue away from the personal context and allows it to be managed independently of the self. It becomes an issue for the acting self rather than the feeling self, and demonstrates a separation between personal and professional identity.

Acting Carefully

Shannon introduced curriculum change with care, ensuring readiness in staff. Initially the pace seemed rapid, partly due to mandated changes such as the new curriculum. There was a need to develop a clear vision for the school and with a new board, new principal, and new students and families; it was time to create this. She worked with a consultant to guide staff through the change process. Shannon changed the reporting format from paper to electronic reports and shifted the lunch hour to better suit the needs of the children. These were significant changes that met with some resistance. Class teacher Laura notes a change in Shannon’s management of staff. She says that to prepare staff for change, Shannon now forewarns them of what might be coming up in staff meetings thus allowing time for discussion beforehand.

Shared Leadership

Shannon respected the principal of her previous school because he was a team player. He put a lot of trust in others and provided them with opportunities for leadership. She models this team approach and tries to avoid a hierarchical style by distributing leadership. Under the outgoing principal, Oakton was divided with junior and senior syndicates, separate budgets and resources. Now the school operates as one team. To this end, Shannon appointed Maria in a shared deputy role. Now two deputies work across the school sharing responsibilities for all teachers and classes with some defined roles for curriculum and assessment. Class teacher
Laura describes Shannon as a collaborative leader. Shannon says collaboration with staff is important to ensure they feel ownership of the changes. She thinks the teachers are beginning to appreciate the benefits and results of their work. She feels that there is greater pride in the environment and desire to do things properly.

Although Shannon believes in a team approach, she perceives a more autocratic approach might be needed at times. She has observed strong and dictatorial types of leadership elsewhere and is unsure how much her desire for shared leadership is related to not wanting to be “out the front” (PO T1). This perhaps indicates tension between her perception of herself as a principal and perceptions of what a principal could or should be.

**Professionalism**

Shannon has firm ideas about what constitutes professional behaviour. She thinks professionalism is taking pride in yourself and your appearance saying she may be “old fashioned and nitty-gritty but I think you show that you have that pride and that gets passed on to the children” (PO T5). She adds that professionalism is also about taking responsibility for yourself and your professional development and always giving one hundred per cent. Professionalism extends to the relationships you have with all stakeholders and is important especially when managing conflict. Shannon thinks professional conduct should be evident in collegial relationships:

> Although we run the school all as one team, that doesn’t mean we all have to agree with each other and that’s a good thing. You don’t want ‘yes men.’ You want people that can have those professional conversations where you explore ideas and then come to a shared understanding. Even if that understanding is okay, I don’t agree with you but, for the good of the school, this is the way we’ll head (PO T5).

Here Shannon makes it clear that she values the opinions of everyone in the school and that collaboration is important.

**Personal Change**

Shannon has learned to pace change. This meant consciously restraining the urgency she felt in herself. The change process made her stop and take things at other
people’s pace. She says while most staff are more accepting of the change culture, the biggest change came as she accepted the need to slow down and focus on one thing at a time. This was difficult especially for one so passionate and caring about her work.

Shannon does not believe that she has given up any aspects of herself in order to lead. Instead, she has grown and changed in some ways. Shannon notes that as a teacher, she felt part of a team, a team that was sometimes critical of management. Now she has to be aware of everyone and how her actions influence all stakeholders in the school. Her deputy principal has noticed Shannon is more resilient: “Just from the beginning of the year to now, I’ve noticed a change in her being able to confidently state something, or put guidelines in place” (DPO T4). She says that Shannon is more confident to drive change. Shannon identifies that, now she has a clear purpose, she finds it easier to implement change.

**Feeling Self**

**Perfectionism**

Shannon is uncompromising about excellence. This is a part of herself she would never change. She says it helps define her in her role. She admits she is a perfectionist and a bit pedantic. She will take on jobs most principals would not consider. She acknowledges there is tension between what she would like to do and what she has time to do. This tension has arisen out of conflict between the perfectionist side of Shannon, her need to maintain control, and what she perceives as the role of a principal. It is evident in her focus on continuous school improvement:

> In education you’ll never ever have it right. You’ll never be perfect. It’s always evolving, changing. There’s always something to consider. It doesn’t mean that everything has to change but you’ve got to be open-minded and look into things. It’s being adaptable and always looking to go to the next mark (PO T1).

In this area of school improvement, Shannon acknowledges some areas of weakness:
There are things I know I need to change. There are things I’d like to be better at. I can identify in myself the things I’m not good at, but I wasn’t good at them beforehand. And there are things where I think I’ve grown (PO T5).

One of the biggest challenges she faces is holding difficult conversations. She has learned that careful preparation is important and keeps a card in her drawer that outlines the steps to take to facilitate these types of conversations. Such conversations do not come naturally and she feels she could do better. Shannon rationalises this feeling saying the most important thing is to get to the outcome needed. She has learned to think carefully about the timing of these conversations and, where necessary, to seek guidance or advice beforehand.

Open and Transparent

Deputy principal Maria says Shannon is a very positive person who is always willing to speak to children about any issues. She says Shannon wants to know about everything that is going on. This is echoed by Shannon who says, “I’m a believer that if there’s an issue, you want to know about it because you’re not going to change anything otherwise” (PO T5). She says it is important to be there and just listen. Knowing about things has been of vital importance to Shannon. In her work, she models open and transparent behaviours. She says getting to know staff and being able to anticipate reactions to new initiatives helped her to manage situations to the outcome she wanted but she still gets nervous anticipating what she has to do or say. She believes she has become a more tolerant, open-minded person since becoming a principal. This has arisen from a need to “think of everybody and how this is going to impact and keeping the big picture in mind about the kids” (PO T1).

Openness is evident in the way Shannon has reorganised her office. A door to the playground once nailed shut is now open and the voices of children can be heard outside during break times and physical education lessons. Her desk has been moved to the other end of the office, close to the secretary’s area and the photocopier just outside. Her door stands open most of the time. She says she encourages staff by saying, “It’s just an open door. Come in” (PO T2).
Loss and Loneliness

Shannon coped with feelings of loss when taking on the principalship. She says that in the first two years she wondered what she had done. She had given up an amazing, supportive environment she loved. Added to this was a loss of time for family and friends. Now she prioritises time for school and family activities but still regrets loss of time for herself. She misses going for walks and looking after herself. She says she has let friendships slide because she does not have time to catch up with people. She has lost touch with her old community because she is rarely there. Shannon thinks the role of the principal is potentially a very lonely one. Despite these feelings of anxiety and loss, Shannon says she loves her job and, if she ever felt differently, she believes it would be time to retire.

Becoming Hardened

In response to her situation, Shannon developed a number of coping strategies. Primarily, she kept focused on what was best for the school and the children. She says it was difficult building new relationships at the beginning because she had always been liked and fitted in to her previous workplaces. She adapted by strengthening herself: “You just had to grow a backbone or a thicker skin” (PO T1). Now she says she is not so sensitive: “You learn to focus on the big things, what’s important and what’s important is the kids. So yes, I’ve definitely changed in that way” (PO T2). This change has come about as a result of Shannon’s school context, combined with clear identification of personal values and beliefs.

Support Networks

Since coming to Oakton, Shannon has developed a wide range of contacts who can support her. She says she listens to others and takes note of who to ask if she has a question. She looks for this expertise among her peers. This is a change from the beginning of her principalship when she relied on her mentor to answer most questions. Her mentor played a role in widening Shannon’s contacts by introducing her to others who could extend this mentorship informally but Shannon has been instrumental in maintaining these contacts. She says she does not pick up the phone so often these days but her network is wider. Shannon’s appraiser is influential. She
appreciates his experience in a number of different fields and listens keenly to what he has to say.

Shannon built a support network within the school too. There are many reciprocal relationships. Class teacher Laura talks about how, when she first started teaching, she felt numeracy was a personal area of weakness. Shannon was able to use her skill and expertise in numeracy to support Laura who now feels very confident and is very supportive of the new initiatives Shannon is implementing. Laura is also pleased that everyone has shared goals and collaborates.

**Believing Self**

**Educational Philosophy**

Shannon believes New Zealand schools should not be elitist and should aim to provide a good education for every child. She values the fact that Oakton School caters for children from all walks of life. Shannon believes the children in the school are a collective responsibility and that she has a role in this as principal. To this end she comments, “I’ve heard of some principals that are so good, they go into every classroom, everyday. Although I don’t know if the teachers necessarily like that! But I’d love that, to be able to touch base with the kids everyday” (PO T2). Here Shannon explores the notion of a good principal and imagines herself playing that role. This is the type of principal she would like to be.

Shannon is adamant that her beliefs about teaching and education have not changed. She believes teachers should “do it for the passion, for the love of it, because you want to make a change to this child” (PO T5). She says it is definitely not a profession that you should be in just for financial reward. She says every decision she makes, and the board makes, is about what is best for children and their learning, and not what is best for teachers. When asked what she would never change about her role, she is adamant: “I think just my passion. I think my kind of high expectations and the quality of the work that I put out. I won’t change that” (PO T2). Shannon is determined to do what she thinks is best for the school.
Shannon’s story is one of school improvement and complex change management. Shannon has led change that has impacted the school on all levels while simultaneously constructing her professional identity as a school leader.

Summary

Each case tells a different story. For Cara and Shannon, Elmton and Oakton are their first principal positions. Liam and Niall have led other schools. Their stories represent different approaches to leadership. Cara’s story portrays her concerns about poverty and injustice faced by her students and her desire to meet their needs while balancing demands for compliance and accountability. Liam’s story is about managing a difficult school merger, building and leading a new team in the face of resistance, and changing the perceptions of others while meeting his own high expectations for performance. Niall, as a late-career principal, undertook a significant building project and led change in pedagogical thinking around learning spaces and student agency. Shannon took on her first role as principal in a change-resistant culture, balancing her expectations of leadership with the perceptions of others. Each leader faced challenge. Each perceived personal and professional change in response to these challenges. In the next chapter, these changes are discussed in a way that compares and contrasts their respective cases.
Chapter 5: Discussion

Introduction

In this chapter, the focus shifts from individual principals to overarching themes emerging from data and how these link to the literature. Individual case study findings revealed the principals’ perceptions of change emerging in response to influence. Four different aspects of self were identified. These aspects were categorised as thinking, acting, feeling, and believing selves as shown in Table 6.

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<tr>
<th>Axial Coding</th>
<th>Selective Coding</th>
<th>Propositional Statements</th>
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<tr>
<td>Formative influences</td>
<td></td>
<td>External influence impacts the professional and personal self. Influence may or may not result in change. Influence occurs as the self interacts with others, often through policy or political change, or in relation to role expectations. Influence can be positive or negative, and anticipated or unanticipated.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Influential others</td>
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<td>External sources of influence</td>
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<td>Role identification</td>
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<td>The self may change professionally in leadership qualities, behaviours and the practices of the self. The thinking self is strategic, uses adult learning and reflective practice, can identify roles, has individual agency, and is motivated.</td>
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<td>Strategic thinking</td>
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<td>Leadership learning</td>
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<td>Reflective practice</td>
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<td>Individual agency</td>
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<td>Motivation</td>
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<td>Personal change</td>
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<td>Decision-making</td>
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<td>The acting self has the ability to make decisions, set priorities and take action. Expertise in these areas can be learned and enhanced. The self forms multiple relationships that are different in nature, include giving and taking, and may cause the self to change.</td>
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<td>Systems thinking</td>
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<td>Delegation</td>
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<td>Conflict resolution</td>
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<td>Measured response</td>
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<td>Taking action</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social justice</td>
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<td>Beliefs and values set moral purpose. Beliefs and values are personal to the individual and can be difficult to change.</td>
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<td>Child centred</td>
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<td>Moral purpose</td>
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<td>Philosophy of education</td>
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<td>Values</td>
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<tr>
<td>Becoming hardened</td>
<td></td>
<td>Personal feelings influence attitudes and behaviours. The feeling self can regulate feelings, attitudes, and behaviours. The self negotiates new roles and may seek emotional support to manage these transitions.</td>
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<td>Loneliness</td>
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<td>Staying calm</td>
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<td>Adapting relationships</td>
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<td>Support</td>
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<td>Humility</td>
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<td>Honesty</td>
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<td>Fear and courage</td>
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Referencing these categories, results of cross-case analysis are discussed, similarities between cases explored, and outlying differences identified. Actions were formed in response to the influences and experiences identified in the findings. Changes in action may imply personal change. Changes in the aspects of self are explored in the following sections titled leading with thought, leading with heart, leading with conviction, and leading in response. Each section of this chapter varies in length as a result of the weighting that emerged from the data. It is perhaps unsurprising that the section leading with conviction is the shortest section. This is reflective of greater constancy in the self and less evidence of personal change.

**Leading With Thought**

The ways the participants thought about practice, and how they perceived their professional thinking changing, were aspects of the thinking self. Role identification, strategic thinking, systems thinking, leadership learning, and reflective practice were important to the participants as areas of perceived change.

**Roles**

Each principal enacted a variety of roles. Interpretation of these roles was unique to each individual and influenced by the perceptions and expectations of others. The thinking self balances the perceptions and expectations of others with those of self, in relation to these roles. Hausman et al. (2000) describe the principal’s role as multi-faceted like a portrait gallery. However, it is more likely that these portraits are fluid, blurring and changing “like a watercolour in the rain” (Stewart, 1976). The portraits change as professional identity transforms in response to expectations of others, of self, and of the leadership role. Transformation of professional identity is challenging and it is continuous. As role expectations change, new identities are negotiated and constructed. The participants described negotiating between identities such as team player or hierarchical leader, micro-manager or delegator, child-centred or systems-focused practitioners. Participants noted they had to relinquish some control as they acknowledged the complexity of their roles. Delegating responsibility enabled them to cover their perceived weaknesses, empower others, and make the role manageable.
Coming into educational leadership from other schools or types of workplaces can be difficult as roles and expectations may not be as strongly delineated. Roles sometimes conflict, and changes in role can result in feelings of loss as relationships and situations change (Nicholson, 2011). It can be a struggle to align thinking and acting selves with believing and feeling selves when adapting to new roles. In this study, the participants looked to role models to understand the differences between old and new roles, and to learn how to operate in different systems. Leadership was learned. However, the participants emphasised the necessity of “flying solo” in order to really learn a role. They felt they learned by doing.

In adapting to new roles, reflective practice enabled the participants to learn from both positive and negative experience. They found themselves changing as they acquired new skills and ways of behaving in stressful situations. Initially, they experimented with ways of behaving and acting. If the behaviours or practices worked, they were adopted. The participants adapted their leadership style. Heifetz, Grashow, and Linsky (2009) equate adaptive practice with biological evolution. It is a gradual process, it requires experimentation and diversity, and it builds on past experience. Importantly, adaptive practice may allow the individual to cope or survive in challenging situations.

Challenges occurred when the expectations of others did not align with the leaders’ personal expectations and values. Participants shared examples where expectations and values did not align such as off-site coffee breaks, inappropriate remarks by staff or parents, and variation in expectation of hours spent by staff at school. Sometimes the participants had to compromise to align personal expectations with those of staff or school so as to find a way forward. Often, the participants put what was best for the school before their personal interests. Crippen (2005) describes this selfless behaviour as servant leadership. Servant leaders provide moral stewardship of an organisation. They are motivated by desire to nurture and grow people. However, it could be argued that servant leadership is never entirely selfless. Empowering others may allow the role to be more manageable; thus self-preservation is still an overriding factor.

As they developed as leaders, the principals moved beyond roles of beneficiaries of new learning and expertise. They became benefactors of these things as others began
to draw on their growing knowledge and expertise. There is some evidence here to
support the work of Dinham (2008) who found that teachers move through several
stages of practice from novice to expertise and for some, to mastery. Although
describing the development of teachers, it seems likely that this progression applies
to principals too. One participant acknowledged the value of the Ministry of
Education Professional Standards for Primary Principals (Ministry of Education,
2016) in providing a scaffold for the principal role. Dinham (2008) argues that it is
the novice teacher that most benefits from documents such as standards to support
role change. At the expert/mastery stage, personal and professional knowledge
governs thinking rather than standards or frameworks and autonomy is important.
This is reflective of the work of Day and Bakioglu (1996) who identify a stage of
experienced leadership as autonomy. Dinham (2008) describes the qualities of
expertise as “working and talking with colleagues and supervisors, professional
learning, trial and error and experimentation, role-modelling, feedback and
reflection” (p. 9) but he warns experts cannot always share expertise with others.
However, findings from this study suggest the qualities listed here enabled
participants to share expertise with others. These qualities are both inherent and
expressed in the expert leader. If they are not expressed, the leader is competent but
may not have attained expertise or mastery.

School principals have multiple roles (Crow et al., 2002). The participants listed
examples of these such as gate keeper of school culture, curriculum leader, and team
player to name a few. However, they were firm about identification of self. They felt
that while they played different roles, they remained intrinsically themselves.
Shannon suggested that although others might see her as many different things to
many different people, she was still the same person. Liam agreed saying that
“Liam” (his sense of self) was at the heart of every role he enacted. However, all
participants acknowledged that they were changed in some way by the roles they
undertook. In meeting the demands and expectations of new roles, they reflected on
personal strengths and weaknesses. Sometimes they worked on perceived
weaknesses until they became strengths. This required a change in self-perception as
they came to acknowledge this new strength or level of expertise. Once aware, they
felt changed. They were changed in their confidence and ability to enact their role.
Liam says he has completed his apprenticeship role. He is recognised by his staff and board as a master craftsman and is willing to share his expertise through modelling leadership values and practices actively in his community. Niall is a highly reflective practitioner who identifies himself as a pedagogical leader and a gatekeeper of culture. He is very confident in these roles, which are grounded in his philosophical beliefs. Despite their experience and expertise, all four principals emphasised that they are still learners. As such, they have a continuing expectation that they will adapt to meet the changing needs of their schools. They model the flexibility that Dinham (2008) suggests is evidence of expertise/mastery. All found themselves reshaping their identities in response to role expectations and to stay relevant in their current contexts. Although over time greater definition has emerged in the watercolour portraits, there is still a likelihood they will continue to fade or blur, only to be reworked by the artist-self to create a clearer image.

**Strategic Thinking**

Shifts in strategic thinking occurred throughout the principals’ careers. Cara says she is more of a big picture thinker. Strategically, this has meant a shift in her thinking self from implementer of change to initiator of change. She has become a change agent (Fullan, 1993). Although primarily concerned with developing children, Cara now has a role in developing staff. This role change required an unexpected shift in thinking. Cara had to learn best practice for educating adults and to consider individual staff needs with respect to what is best for the school as a whole. As Fullan (1993) suggests, Cara links moral purpose with specific skills she has identified as supporting her moral purpose. She thinks strategically about the implementation of change. Cara’s believing self influences this thinking.

Liam was always a skilful planner and a big picture thinker. He sees his role as short term and his focus is on sustainability. His aim is to address programmes and staffing so that the school can continue to function successfully beyond his tenure. To do this, Liam emphasises capacity building within the school and strong relationships between the school and community. He is working across what Leithwood et al. (2010) describe as the four pathways of leadership. The rational, emotional, organisational and family paths are identified as interrelated areas where
the principal can have indirect influence on student outcomes. Liam engaged Māori and Pasifika families in the school community and raised student achievement. Strategically, he committed to programmes that will outlast his tenure. His thinking self is in alignment with his believing self.

Niall is also a big picture thinker but admits he had to learn planning skills. He does not see his role in the same short-term sense Liam does. He continues to be innovative within his context. Niall likes to build links between the whole and its discrete parts. He can see both detail and the bigger picture simultaneously. He referred to an influential teacher at primary school who taught him to make a balsawood model boat. From a collection of small parts, he was able to assemble something meaningful. This enjoyable childhood experience within a school setting was a formative influence. Today, he has an ability to break complex issues down into smaller tasks, and then gradually layer in the complexity for his staff. This aspect of his thinking self was instrumental in his ability to manage change in others but also in himself.

The principals seek to make meaning in their schools where they “strive for coherence” (Fullan, 2001, p. 11). Cara referenced the work of Simon Sintek (Sintek, 2009) in thinking about her practice. She sought to identify why things such as values, technology, or student agency were important, before thinking about how they might be articulated or utilised, and what they might do in practice. Participants sought to identify what was important for their schools. They made links between these priorities so that all stakeholders were aware why they were important. Change flowed from a sense of coherence and meaning in the school. The principals thought strategically about the implementation of change. Their ability to think strategically was developed over time as they interacted with influential others.

**Systems Thinking**

Systems were important to the work of the principals. Learning systems was not difficult. Two recalled they learnt systems by copying powerful role modelling. The others gained some systems knowledge while attending the NAP and FTP programmes. However, while one participant valued the training in systems, the other felt already a competent administrator as a result of previous work experience.
Participants felt that systems were relatively easy to learn but the relational side of leadership presented greater challenges.

Alongside differences in learning about systems were differences in the value participants placed on systems in organisations. Niall’s view was that systems were important because they provided the structure needed for people to work together successfully. The systems had to be in place first to allow meaningful, harmonious relationships to exist. Here Niall’s thinking and believing selves are in comfortable alignment. On the other hand, Cara put people and relationships before systems, differentiating between systems/people and people-people. She expressed concern that educational leadership was becoming increasingly more about systems than people and felt a tension that sometimes arose between the two. However, she accommodated the systems, appreciating that systems’ knowledge increased efficiency and helped to instigate change.

Resolving the tension that arises between systems and people-focused leadership styles represents a struggle between the thinking and believing selves. This struggle is articulated in the literature (Gold et al., 2003; N. Wright, 2003). The struggle is pronounced where there is demand for school improvement. Fullan (2005) believes that, in turnaround situations, there is greater emphasis on accountability rather than capacity building. With the emphasis on accountability the outcome is quick, but the results are short-term. His evidence suggests turnaround results are not sustainable. This may be because first-order rather than second-order change has taken place. Old systems are reworked or adjusted, allowing old mistakes to be repeated. Although first-order change may be less threatening, change that requires a shift in norms does not occur, and failure may be inevitable. The study participants were concerned with second-order change. As Lewin (1952) suggests, they sought to ‘freeze’ the change in school culture so as to prevent a return to old ways. Systems could be used to facilitate change but deep change in terms of values and pedagogy was the end-goal.

**Exerting Individual Agency**

Each principal acknowledged that the leadership journey is never-ending. They felt they were still learners. Their purpose and decision-making were grounded in moral
beliefs and values. These views align with Cranston (2013) who argues that it is not productive to be overly concerned about the focus on accountability in today’s schools. Instead, the focus should be on professional responsibility. Taking professional responsibility for a school means negotiating a space between organisational and personal values. In this space, flexibility rather than rigidity enables innovative and creative solutions to be found. Whether this is difficult or not depends on the degree of discord between personal and organisational values and the adaptability of the leader.

Taking professional responsibility implies leaders can act with agency. The ability to exert individual agency was important to the principals. The degree to which the participants acknowledged this seemed to be related to experience in the role. It was also related to the nature of their responses to external influences. Niall, as the most experienced principal, was adamant that school principals should retain their increased responsibility for property, finance, and personnel. He saw these responsibilities as integral to his role and allowing him to fulfil his goals for the school. Niall was determined to develop a modern learning environment rather than have the school undergo a minor refurbishment. He believed the school had choice. As a school, they could choose an environment that was aligned with pedagogical beliefs around student agency or they could choose to maintain the status quo. For Niall, deciding on a modern learning environment required the development of new skills so he could envision and implement a major building project. He acted with individual agency.

Acting with individual agency helped maintain personal integrity and focus on moral purpose. Cara felt she needed flexibility to operate within the system to reduce feelings of compromise to values. For example, Cara developed an outdoor education programme as a form of social action. This programme enabled her students to have experiences they would otherwise not have had due to impoverished circumstances at home. In this situation, she had to develop a new programme, allocate budget, and utilise different staff. It was not a programme mandated from outside the school. It was not a programme that directly assessed outcomes under National Standards but Cara believed it had greater value than
simply benchmarking. The programme aligned with her moral purpose and meant she could exert some individual agency.

At times, it was a struggle to maintain a sense of agency when the system placed structures on what participants felt was ethically the right thing to do. Although largely compliant, the participants were always looking for creative and innovative ways to work within the limits of accountability and compliance to address the needs of students that would otherwise not be served within the school system. They saw themselves as acting professionally and able to do what was best for the school. In this respect, they acted within an ethic of profession (Stefkovich & Begley, 2007). This ethic takes into account both personal and professional ethical principles related to teaching as a profession. Originating in the legal system where the best interests of the child are taken into account, an ethic of profession considers the best interests of the students in decision-making. This ethic may allow principals to resolve the tension between accountability and capacity building that Fullan (2005) identifies, by putting the needs of the many ahead of the few, including themselves.

**Leadership Learning**

The principals stressed they were life-long learners. They all participated in, and frequently led staff professional development. Niall talked about the notion of ako (being a learner) in terms of himself as a principal. Ako, together with mannaakitanga (leading with moral purpose), pono (having self-belief) and awhinatanga (guiding and supporting) are four leadership qualities outlined in the model of educational leadership shown in Kiwi Leadership for Principals (Ministry of Education, 2008). For Niall, modelling ako is important in the school situation for both students and staff. He models the value of professional learning for himself and the school, by participating in and providing rich opportunities for professional development for his staff. He shares his personal learning with them through a reflective online journal. Robinson et al. (2009) found that leadership participation in professional development has a moderate to high impact factor on student success (effect size 0.84). But learning has an influence on the leader too. Very often, learning can reinforce or challenge educational values and beliefs. For example, Niall commented that reading authors such as Sergiovanni and Barth helped him to
articulate his values and beliefs. In this case, the learning strengthened his conviction and sense of moral purpose.

Influential others were important in terms of support and new learning for the participants in their current practice. One finding suggested role models could be sourced beyond schools to meet needs in development of leadership skills. Niall’s thinking was altered after observing a Chief Executive Officer at work. This was an important insight as Niall is a well-regarded role model in his local educational community. Yet even at this level, he is still a learner. He looks outside school to role models in other industries and to educational reading to learn. It is worth noting that as young teachers and aspiring leaders, it is very often role models within the school that provide great influence on teaching and learning practice and interpersonal relationships. This was a finding of Turner and Sykes (2007) who investigated whether the expectations of others’ influence the development of professional identity. Kornives et al. (2005) also found that role models, peers and mentors influence the development of identity as a leader. However, a concern arising from the findings of this study is that there is less opportunity to observe role models once in the leadership position. It is perhaps of particular concern in isolated rural communities in New Zealand where many less experienced principals are employed. Findings from this study suggest that role models are still important factors in the development of the professional identity of school leaders.

Although the participants emphasised the importance of leadership development, they had different ideas about what this might mean for experienced leaders. Liam preferred to meet in face-to-face groups rather than in an online or distance learning situation. Niall visualised groups of principals working together as collaborative learning communities. All stressed that use of external expertise was needed to prevent thinking becoming too siloed. All four emphasised the need to be working with people at similar stages of development. In this way, developmental programmes that build in stages such as the New Zealand NAP and the FTP programmes seem to meet a need initially, but it becomes difficult to tailor a next stage as longer-serving principals have such wide-ranging experience. For leadership learning to take place, adult learning principles need to be taken into account. Knowles (1977) proposes an adult learning theory (androgyne) based on
four principles. Firstly, adults are self-motivated learners provided the learning is based on needs and interests of the learner. Secondly, adult learning should focus on situations rather than subjects. Thirdly, adult learning should focus on “analysis of experience.” Lastly, adult learners are self-directed. The emphasis on experience in this theory is particularly relevant for school principals. This study highlights that the career trajectory for each principal is unique. Even within a sample of four experienced principals, levels and types of experience vary. These principals emphasised that for learning to be relevant, it must acknowledge past experience and current context.

Also relevant to a discussion about leadership learning is the work of Thomas Guskey. Guskey (2002) argues that successful practice is required for learning to take place. Quick-fix solutions such as workshops may not allow deep learning to take place. A mix of problem-based and success-based learning may better serve leaders to further understanding of their identity. Getting together to talk about successful experiences in practice may be more useful than the usual problem-based training that takes place (Schechter, 2011). An opportunity to observe others was important to the participants. However, such occasions are limited for experienced principals who rarely get to observe each other at work. Yet, in the findings discussed here, observation of others had a critical influence during both early and later stages of leadership. The participants also referenced the isolated nature of the principal role. These feelings of isolation may have arisen from a lack of opportunity to observe others in the similar situations, going through similar experiences. Observations with the opportunity for critical reflection afterward may be more powerful learning than merely meeting to share experience.

Hattie (2009) argues that there is little or no value in teachers relying on war stories from the classroom to justify their thinking about practice. Instead, robust conversations based in evidence are more useful when considering effective practice. Whether this thinking is relevant to school principals is uncertain. The principals in this study turned to their networks for dialogue about leadership issues. Their opinions were mixed as to how useful this was, with some referring to the danger of becoming too narrow in their thinking. They identified a danger in self-directed learning, somewhat akin to visiting a lolly shop. Learners may stick to
reliable favourites or choose only new sweets thought to be easy to swallow. There is danger of a piecemeal approach to professional development, a “mixed selection” rather than focusing on an agreed goal or purpose. When faced with so much variety, as in the shop, it may be difficult to make wise decisions about priorities for professional development.

Although seeds can be sown for new growth and valuable information disseminated through collegial meetings, more is needed for change in thinking to take place. Timperley, Wilson, Barrar, and Fung (2007) and Guskey and Yoon (2009) agree that skills must be practised before change in beliefs and attitudes can take place. Knowles, Holton, and Swanson (2005) also argue that “we learn what we do” (p. 37). For leaders to continue to grow and develop, opportunity for learning that embodies these principles is necessary. While the NAP and FTP programmes provided initial learning, the study participants felt there was little to support the more experienced principal with further development. All participants found their collegial networks invaluable for introducing new thinking and ideas. However, they were busy and wanted development that was tailored to their needs specifically. Like Normore (2004), the principals identified a need for leadership learning in mid to late career. To support the notion of ako in school leadership, they expressed desire for on-going professional development for all school leaders.

**Reflective Practice**

Reflective practice was important to the participants. Barnett and O’Mahony (2006) describe reflective thinking as combining “hindsight, insight and foresight” (p. 501). Each of the participants used reflective practice in different ways. It was crucial to all of them for sustainability and support in their roles. Reflective practice helped reshape attitudes and feelings towards negative experiences. Sometimes, it arose out of a need for self-preservation, helping to manage risk and moderate perceptions of failure. The participants found reflective practice helped evaluate perceived weaknesses. They found appraisals useful and valued the perceptions of others. Identification of strengths and weaknesses resulted in hard work to address perceived weaknesses to a point where they became strengths. However, feedback from others was important to change the perception that something, once a
weakness, had now become a strength. One participant tended to focus on the foresight aspect of reflection and continually evaluated what needed to change in the future from assessment of the present.

The value of reflective practice is articulated with some reservations in the literature. Edwards and Thomas (2010) argue that reflective practice is “a description of how people come to be apprenticed to communities of practice” (p. 411) and thereby influenced by the distribution of power in organisations. There are concerns too about the desire to make connections between reflection and action (Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). Not all reflective practice can and should result in immediate change of action. Not all reflective practice will have measurable outcomes that are immediately significant. Indeed, unless beliefs about practice are changed, it is unlikely any change will occur. Fendler (2003) makes the point that too much guidance around strategies for reflective practice may limit what is already natural practice. The principals in this study were naturally reflective practitioners. Indeed, their willingness to participate in the study indicates a desire to reflect on practice. Although appreciative of the opportunity to reflect, and critical friends to reflect with, they did not use particular strategies or put time frames around reflection.

Another concern is that solitary reflection can lead to unhealthy introspection (Brookfield, 1994). However, for the participants in this study, introspection was used to apply positive thinking and change behaviours. Reflection provided opportunity to step away from emotion-charged situations and take stock of their thoughts and feelings. It also provided opportunity to question personal practice. Sometimes it was solitary, but often the participants sought counsel from trusted others. Reflection allowed participants to temporarily disconnect from their feeling selves and allow their thinking selves to focus on the issues at hand.

To sum up, the thinking self can identify roles, use systems, be strategic and reflective, and learn. Change in the thinking self becomes evident in professional practice in leadership qualities, behaviours and practices exhibited by the self. Changes in professional identity were perceived to occur as the leaders observed role models, identified and adapted to role expectations, undertook professional learning, exerted individual agency, and reflected on practice.
Leading With Heart

In this section, the importance of emotional management and support for those in leadership roles is discussed. Throughout the findings, feelings of loss, loneliness, frustration, and fear were countered by courage, commitment, passion and energy. In countering these feelings, the participants exhibited resilient behaviours. As Kouzes and Posner (2012) suggest, the motivation for the participants’ work and the courage to keep at it was embedded in their love for the job. They led from the heart.

Emotional Management

The participants recalled times when they had to regulate emotions in order to stay calm. Staying calm is an example of the emotional labour described by Hochschild (1983) and Møller (2005). The reasons for staying calm varied from causes of frustration, personal hurt, to feelings of being overwhelmed. All believed they had learned to project a calm image, even when feeling distressed inside. Staying calm meant they could maintain control of a situation and steer it towards a more desirable outcome. Although they acknowledged that some outcomes could be achieved with angry outbursts, participants saw this behaviour as unprofessional. Acting professionally was highly important to all participants, as was maintaining personal integrity. All described situations where they had to control feelings in order to stay calm. Often this was when their personal values were being challenged such as when Shannon and Niall addressed parents who made derogatory comments about other children or families. In these situations, participants referenced their thinking selves to moderate their feelings and this, in turn, influenced the action they took. All participants saw their ability to control their emotions as having a positive effect in that it allowed them to pursue their moral purpose.

Each participant used different strategies to manage emotions. Liam used “switching off” mechanisms to handle stressful situations and took time out to reflect, and moderate his response. Niall referenced his beliefs about the moral purpose of the school to moderate his personal feelings. Both Cara and Shannon talked about becoming emotionally hardened. They described this as growing a thicker skin, or building an impenetrable shell around the inner self. For them, emotional
management required building a barrier between vulnerable inner selves and external stressors. Liam and Niall, on the other hand, describe emotional management more in terms of withdrawing from the external stressor by taking time out or switching off. It is not the purpose of this study to consider whether this indicates gender difference. Liam and Niall are the more experienced of the four principals and this may be a factor in emotional management too. However, the emotional numbness Beatty (2000) describes was not evident in any of the participants. Instead, as Gardner et al. (2005) argue, these leaders developed identities that enabled them to act authentically, aligning their actions and decisions with personal values and beliefs. This development seems to have been influenced by reflective practice.

All participants perceive that they have become more measured in their response to people and situations. Becoming less reactive allows them to maintain perspective, take time, and act carefully. In this way, they stay in control. Sometimes quick responses were needed. Liam talked about the rapid-fire decisions he made on the day when the schools merged for the first time. On a day that could have descended into chaos, he took a strong leadership role but then got everyone working together to avoid possible feelings of isolation and alienation that could have occurred. For all participants, remaining highly visible at points of crisis was important. This required courage at times when it would have been tempting to walk away.

**Self-Awareness**

Participants who attended the New Zealand NAP and FTP programmes found these helpful for the development of greater self-awareness. Goleman (1996) describes self-awareness as the ability to know one’s emotions. Being self-aware is important, as it is one of five aspects of emotional competence and “the more complex the job, the more emotional intelligence matters” (Goleman, 1998, p. 22). Cara stressed that the NAP and FTP programmes helped her to see how important it was for her staff to have that self-awareness too. Personally, she found that greater self-awareness in staff led to improvement in teaching practice. Cliffe (2011) suggests that emotions can be used intelligently to manipulate and control. However, for Cara, understanding her emotions helped her to understand others better. Greater self-
awareness led to heightened levels of empathy. As Cliffe (2011) argues, authentic emotional intelligence includes high levels of empathy. Understanding self and others was important to Cara as it helped her to fulfill her role in developing others. Her desire to increase self-awareness in staff was not an attempt to manipulate and control but rather to take action that aligns with both an ethic of care and an activist identity.

**Strategies for Support**

In stressful situations, each participant provided insight into high levels of self-awareness around personal emotional states. They employed a number of strategies to manage these emotions such as looking after the self by getting plenty of exercise, sleep and quality food. Careful preparation and anticipation to try and pre-empt challenging situations was also important. All used support networks within their schools and communities of colleagues for support. These relationships could be described as symbiotic in nature as support was given and returned. The relationships were typified by high levels of trust and respect as found by Daly and Chrispeels (2008) in their survey of teachers and administrators in California. In addition to networks related to the workplace, the study principals mentioned the importance of their respective partners in providing support in their roles. Partners and families provided encouragement and a sense of perspective that often prompted reflection. The significance of partner support to successful educational leaders is not widely researched.

The participants valued strong support networks, although Niall commented it was important not to over emphasise this value. All four referenced the loneliness and overall responsibility of the position. Participants saw other school stakeholders as being supported by organisations such as unions but principals were alone. Instead, they looked to the Professional Standards for guidance and information about role expectations. They valued the opportunity to seek advice from colleagues and advisors, saying that they had built networks of people to help with particular issues. However, it seemed to be family that they turned to in times of personal crisis.
Resilience

Resilience was evident in each participant. This was unsurprising, as Day (2014) points out that resilience is a necessary factor for principals “to become and remain successful, to enact ones moral and intellectual self over time” (p. 639). Study participants provided insight into development of resilience by showing that it is a product of the interrelationship between the thinking, feeling and believing aspects of self. Like Gu and Day (2013), these findings support thinking that resilience is adaptive and responds to personal, relational, and organisational conditions. Resilience is less about capacity to “bounce back” from trauma but more of developmental process as identity is transformed to deal with adversity. Christman and McClellan (2012) cite Grotberg (2003) who argues resilience is transformative as it can result in personality change. Findings of this study provide some evidence to support this. The participants learned to balance risk factors with protective factors as identified by Harland et al. (2005). The risk factors were largely contextual whereas the protective factors related to self. Protective factors included coping strategies, reflective practice, and care of self.

Findings show that the participants drew on protective factors to build resilience and this influenced change in professional identity. Participants used protective factors to address feelings of loss, loneliness, fear, and tiredness. They took care of themselves by making an effort to exercise and see that needs for sleep and nutrition were met. They reflected positively on their feelings, and discussed problems with others. All referenced feelings of loss during their careers. Sometimes it was loss in terms of an expected outcome, or loss of friends and community in moving schools, or loss of relationships in changing roles, or anticipation of loss on retirement after long and busy careers. The principal’s role was described as sometimes lonely or isolated especially if things go wrong. Being able to address feelings of fear was important too. Liam described the feelings of fear and anxiety he felt as he led the school merger. Niall recalls situations where he could see the “freight train” coming and had to take evasive action. All relied on courage, intuition, careful preparation, and forethought in challenging situations. All had worked hard to hone these qualities and skills.
Negative feelings were offset with feelings of achievement, courage, energy and passion. Although humble about their achievements, the participants had successfully led their schools through major change processes. These processes required courage in decision-making, courage to challenge inappropriate or disrespectful behaviours that did not align with the values of school culture, courage to face resistance to change, and courage to fight for the opportunities needed for students whether a special programme or a new school building. All four participants saw passion and energy as crucial to their work. However, most expressed feelings of tiredness. Opportunities for sabbatical leave were welcomed. All expressed that they would leave the job if they lost their energy or passion. This was an interesting perspective from both early-career and late-career principals. It supports Mulford et al. (2007) who argue that the late-career principal is not disenchanted but is rather “a committed and valuable resource” (p. 47).

In these findings, there is some support for Gu and Day (2013) who argue that resilience is not fixed or innate but can be learned. Two participants were actively using positive education programmes to support their students, staff and personal thinking. Learning from experience and reflecting on all experience positively, allowed participants to adapt so as to be better equipped when similar challenges emerged in the future. Thus resilience was built slowly but steadily as experience increased. By extending this approach to their staff and other school stakeholders, the participants built protective factors into their working environments as well as within themselves. Milstein and Henry (2000) argue that, “resiliency is not just about developing individual capabilities. It is also about developing resiliency-supportive environments” (p. 18). In this respect, Cara worked with her staff to encourage self-awareness and reflective practice. Each participant used protective factors to overcome risk factors (Beltman et al., 2011; Milstein & Henry, 2000). Of these, the ability to implement coping strategies, reflect professionally, and care for self and others, all contributed actively to the resilient behaviours exhibited when faced with change.

All four had a highly developed work ethic and relied on passion and energy to maintain their capacity for hard work. Related to this was motivation. Motivations varied among the participants. Some wanted to make a difference to the lives of
children and this drove a powerful desire for school improvement. Another motivation was a desire that all children should have equity of opportunity. One participant mentioned money and how supporting the family was sometimes a motivation when times were challenging at school. All felt that the principal role was underpaid for the level of skill and hours required but money was not the driving force behind their desire to be school principals. All felt a sense of vocation and desire to be respected. Principalship was something they wanted to do, that they worked hard at, and self-improvement was an important part of their role in creating opportunities for children and school improvement. In this, the participants’ motivation was intrinsic.

Intrinsic motivation is a factor to consider when planning for adult learning (Knowles et al., 2005). Adults will readily engage in new learning especially when it is relevant to their situational context. However, the motivations described above also illustrate that motivation is complex. Franken (1982) argues that there may be biological, learned, and cognitive aspects to motivation. For these principals, it seemed that motivation occurred in response to situational context but also arose from formative influences, beliefs, and values. An example of this was Niall’s interest in student agency. As an aspiring principal he observed various principals at work in small country schools where the principal had responsibility for a class as well as administrative responsibilities. He noticed differences in the ways these principals engaged with their students; some encouraging them to be independent learners while others directed activities. Some years later, he is now exploring these notions further in his school where he is leading pedagogical change by encouraging the development of student agency. Niall’s beliefs about pedagogy were influenced by these early experiences and now provide motivation for change in pedagogical practice.

To sum up, leadership behaviours and actions were influenced by the feeling self. Feelings varied among participants depending on personality, experience, influence of others, and situational contexts. Each participant learned to regulate feelings and emotions. The thinking and believing selves moderated the feeling self. However, the feeling self also provided positive emotions such as courage, passion and energy to counter negative emotions. All perceived that they had changed in their ability to
remain calm, to provide measured responses, and to build and access strong networks for support. Changes to the feeling self reflect changes that enabled them to maintain motivation and become more resilient leaders.

**Leading With Conviction**

In this section, perceptions of the believing self are discussed. All four principals shared their educational philosophy. However, the ability to articulate this clearly varied with the experience of the individual leader and level of reflectiveness in their personality. Most could respond succinctly when asked about their personal beliefs about education. The more experienced leaders could directly correlate their beliefs with their leadership practice and their personal response to situations. Although this ability was emerging in the least experienced leaders, their philosophy was less clearly articulated. As moral purpose became clearer, confidence as a leader increased. With enhanced confidence, the thinking and acting selves drew on the believing self for vision and purpose.

**Beliefs and Values**

The participants portrayed different leadership styles and qualities that were underpinned by personal beliefs and values. Mulford (2008) argues there is no one recipe for leadership success, and this was evident in the variation between the participants in terms of beliefs, values, and educational philosophies. Both Shannon and Niall believe schools should not be elitist and should aim to provide a good education for every child. Niall further believes that education has the power to change lives and that the role of educators is to equip children to be active contributors in society. Liam’s philosophy is grounded in children, teachers and community and he reaches out to his local community encouraging families to become actively involved in the life of the school and the education of their children. In this way, he focuses on creating positive links to community to support learning as espoused in Kiwi Leadership for Principals (2008). This is also an example of capacity building (Fullan, 2005). For these participants, personal philosophies sit fairly comfortably within the educational leadership frameworks and models, and expectations of government and policy makers. However, for one
participant, there appeared to be greater tension between personal philosophy and expectations of government and policy makers. For Cara, this tension resulted in what she described as on-going battles as she negotiated to provide what she perceived was necessary for her students.

Cara’s belief that all children should have equal opportunities emerged from a desire for social justice. Her leadership style is similar to the characteristics of servant leadership (Crippen, 2005). Cara believes that the needs of children should be at the heart of all decision-making. To this end, she actively developed programmes to support social justice outcomes. These programmes frequently go beyond the normal offerings of a school curriculum as she fights various obstacles to meet the needs of her students. In these beliefs and actions, Cara portrays characteristics of an activist identity whereby she values openness and trust, collaboration, reflection, capacity to solve problems, concern for the common good as well as the rights of individuals and minorities (Sachs, 2001). Yet there are aspects of entrepreneurial identity here too, in meeting demands to be compliant and operate efficiently and effectively. Further, this is an example of the tension Blackmore (2004) identifies between performativity and passion. In Cara’s case, negotiation between these two is a continuous process in the daily battle to achieve balance. Cara seeks a space within where she can operate with agency. This results in finding creative and innovative solutions to budget shortfalls, staffing issues, and student management. This finding aligns with Stevenson (2006); Cranston (2013); and Gold et al. (2003), who argue it is possible to attain balance between performativity and passion. Leaders can find a space within where they can operate without subverting personal integrity. Here, leaders are not going to the “dark side” (Brookfield, 1994, p. 2) or enacting “bastard leadership” (N. Wright, 2003, p. 2) but rather they act with innovation and creativity to find solutions without compromising values.

There is a point where there is no room for negotiation or creative solutions. Both Cara and Niall said they would refuse to do some things. Cara says she would leave the role if the need to compromise became too great. Liam has been in situations where he has walked away temporarily, to try and find the necessary perspective to resolve dilemmas where he felt his personal values and those of others were not in alignment. This study is limited to principals who are currently employed in schools.
It would be necessary to interview those who had left principal roles for other occupations to determine whether failure to compromise between organisational and personal values was a deciding factor. For those that stay within the profession, there may be times when personal values are compromised in order to do what is best for the school, such as meeting demands for accountability that are perceived to be unrealistic. Cranston (2013) refers to this as the new professionalism. Such professionalism can be compared to the ethics of profession and community, as determined by Stefkovich and Begley (2007). Both ethics relate to schools and the ethic of profession has the best interests of students at heart.

Somehow, as with the development of resilient behaviours, principal identity is transformed so that demands of performativity can be aligned with passion. In this study, the principals’ responses aligned with the thinking of Notman (2008, 2010) who advocates a values-based model of principal development. By interrogating personal values, and understanding how they aligned with organisational values, they were able to manage dilemmas where values were contested. This management involved a degree of flexibility in being able to understand the perspectives of others. They focused on what was best for their students and the school as a whole. In this way the principals were able to achieve balance between personal and organisational values. They acted within an ethic of profession. Day et al. (2005) suggest that teachers employ occasional identities to overcome these hurdles and find this space within. It is likely that school principals also employ these identities. This is explored in the next chapter where the notion of transitional identity is discussed further.

**Personally Unchanged**

The believing self was found to be the least flexible of the five aspects of self. For the participants, personal beliefs rarely changed but rather strengthened as they grew in leadership experience. They considered values as almost innate and inextricably tied up with concepts of self. Liam noted that to change beliefs would be to change himself as a person. He could not see how this could happen while still maintaining any sense of integrity or authenticity. Niall thought that it was important for school leaders to have positive values and beliefs. He stressed that leaders should be
inherently decent and well balanced. In his experience, those with negative attitudes or values that do not align with the moral purpose of the school are hard to change. Whether or not it is possible to change deep-seated beliefs is a moot point. Dweck et al. (1995) differentiate between fixed and growth mind-sets. Niall felt a growth mind-set was necessary to operate successfully in a leadership role. He suggests that people who say their values are being compromised might just be resistant to change. In this statement, Niall seems to imply that values can be flexible in the face of change. Human attributes can flex and change. Indeed, flexibility is identified as a factor in resilient behaviour. Day (2014) and C. Watson (2013) support this thinking. They argue it is important for leaders to have some flexibility in values, especially where there are cultural differences in the school community.

Values and beliefs are at the heart of professional identity (Busher, 2005). They are also at the heart of educational philosophy. Although there was some variation in educational philosophies, it was clear that the participants’ philosophies informed the moral purpose they had for their schools. As the participants became more experienced, the values and beliefs that informed their educational philosophies were more clearly articulated to all stakeholders. Their values and beliefs underpinned all decision-making in the school. For those with a strong school culture, staff members’ values and beliefs were in alignment with those of the leader. Where values align, the coherence and meaning-making to which Fullan (2001) alludes, may be more likely to be attained.

Although the participants felt they were largely unchanged in terms of personal value and beliefs, it was apparent that they had become better at articulating their values and beliefs over time. Once clearly articulated, the principals’ values and beliefs became a moral yardstick against which they were able to moderate feelings, thoughts and actions. In these schools, there was a strong relationship between the principals’ believing self and school culture. It was important to the participants that those working in the school were aligned to these values and beliefs. While the participants made many changes to the way they acted, thought and felt as evident in change in leadership style, and their development of strategic thinking skills and emotional management, their philosophical beliefs were largely unchanged despite the challenges they faced.
To sum up, the beliefs and values of each participant set moral purpose. Beliefs and values were established from an early age and difficult to change. However, participants identified a need to remain flexible and open to the beliefs and values of others. Alignment between personal beliefs and values and those of the school were important for a healthy school culture.

**Leading In Response**

Aspects of *thinking, feeling* and *believing* selves are expressed as the *acting* self responds to change. As aspects of self interrelate to form response, leadership actions can be modified or adapted. Findings describing the participants’ formative influences, current relationships, and external influences revealed how participants responded to change and, in turn, how they were changed themselves. Examples of change included new roles, policy change, changing relationships, and changing situational contexts. Influences could be positive or negative. Sometimes both occurred simultaneously such as taking on a promotion (positive) but facing resistance in this new role (negative). Influence occurred as the self interacted with others. Sometimes change was expected (new government policy) or unexpected (resignation of a staff member). In this section, the principals’ responses to formative experience, relational experience, and contextual experience are explored. These experiences shaped the *thinking, feeling* and *believing* aspects of self. This thesis argues that these experiences brought about change in the self.

**Formative Experiences**

Each participant recalled formative experiences and influential people that shaped their response to current contexts. When describing their early experiences, people rather than events were most often recalled. This aligns with thinking that professional identity is negotiated and jointly constructed with others (Gunn, 2006; Jones, 2008; Rhodes & Greenway, 2010; Wenger, 1998). Parental influence was important to all participants who recalled growing up in families where education was valued. A career in education aligned with values established from an early age. The ability to make life-changing decisions was often influenced by people who had faith in the participants. They recalled being encouraged to apply for leadership
roles by people they respected, even though they may have felt personal reluctance. Conversely, failure or rejection made participants even more resolute. This strengthens the argument that others can be influential in the development of professional identity and resilience by providing an example of a negative experience to contrast with the more positive ones. Both types of experience had similar outcomes in that they resulted in a decision to become a principal.

On starting teaching, influential role models provided support and guidance. All participants describe at least one significant figure who modelled teaching or leadership practice that influenced their thinking. This happened as young teachers but also later in their careers as they moved into leadership roles. It was often powerful role models that provided the learning needed to transform identity. It appeared modelling was influential, despite differences in power relationships. As deputy principal, Niall’s principal provided a compelling scaffold for him as he moved into principalship. Liam also experienced leadership modelling when he was deputy but the situation differed from Niall’s as the principal needed support. The power relationship was different but the learning was still significant. Most participants witnessed the principal role changing significantly when Tomorrow’s Schools began in 1989. This new role required a skill set many principals simply did not have and participants had different opinions about the changes. Cara recalls sadly some principals with outstanding relational skills who left the profession at this time. However, Niall’s principal was excited by the shift, modelling thinking that this was positive change. In turn, Niall embraced the new managerial autonomy offered to school principals as a result of the policy change.

Two principal participants worked in other roles before coming to teaching as mature students. They felt they could utilise many skills learned in these roles in their management of schools. Of great benefit was the opportunity to develop knowledge of people and insight into the situations people get into when things go wrong. This gave them a broad view of what goes on in the lives and families of children beyond school. But both say that these early roles were very clearly structured with clear rules and expectations. Staff management was easier because there was an explicit set of rules and expectations for employees to follow. As Crow et al. (2002) argue, the school principal’s role is increasingly complex. There has
been a shift in the workplace. Role models established in a hierarchical society with an emphasis on efficiency and productivity are no longer so relevant (Bottery, 2012). The principals in this study transformed professional identity in order to resolve the “tension between change and continuity” that continues to be a feature of educational leadership (Crow et al., 2002: p.190). However, formative influences are still evident in the principals’ professional identity. The values laid down in early years continue to inform practice, and continue to influence thinking, feeling, acting, and believing aspects of self.

Relational Experience

The importance of relationships is emphasised throughout the educational leadership literature (Barth, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992). Relationships are placed at the heart of Kiwi Leadership for Principals (2008) and are integral to the other leadership frameworks outlined in this study. As school leaders, relationships were all-important to the participants too. Personally, they perceived that relationships had a continuous influence on professional identity. Developing relational skills meant changes to the acting, thinking and feeling aspects of self as the participants learned to stay calm, moderate response, empower others, have difficult conversations, and utilise systems so as to manage change processes in others.

Times of role change were identified as times when relationships changed and the influence of others increased. For Cara, moving from deputy to principal in the same school meant adapting her relationships with staff by increasing the distance between them. To counter the loss she felt at the time, she built new relationships with principal colleagues. She shifted her focus from developing the students in her class to growing and supporting her staff, and built new relationships based on respect and trust. Cara’s thinking self was changed as she learned the skills she needed to build different relationships.

Liam faced resistance at a time of role change. In merging the schools, he brought together a mixture of staff, students and families. Some were supportive, some were resistant or grieving the loss of their school. Some had no previous knowledge of the situation, as they were new to the school. Liam understood from the outset that building relationships was of paramount importance. He role modelled a positive
attitude to the situation, focusing on the future and creating opportunities for staff to talk and get to know each other. It required considerable courage and ability to lift above the negativity that was present in the situation. Liam’s thinking self, grounded in his beliefs for what the school could become, moderated his feeling and acting selves, enabling him to build strong relationships within the school and local community. For Shannon, moving into principalship from another school, the experience was similar. She found that she had to prioritise the building of relationships. As she gained support in her role, she began to empower others and, like Cara, to build trusting and respectful relationships.

The value of trust in organisations is clearly articulated in the leadership literature. It was also evident in this study, where Cara emphasised the need to build trusting and respectful relationships so as to provide support for herself but also to enact her moral purpose and build a healthy school climate. Liam’s deputy talks about how the staff function as a family most of the time. This is echoed by Kouzes and Posner (2012) who say that leaders “build spirited and cohesive teams, teams that feel like family” (p. 214). The word “spirited” is interesting as it implies robust conversations. Shannon talked about the necessity of these conversations when managing change. She felt it was important that everyone had a voice. She did not want to encourage compliance without conversation and was happy that these conversations sometimes included disagreement. She, like Niall, saw these conversations as part of the openness and transparency that are evident in school cultures where trust flourishes.

Leadership style varied among the participants. An example was attitudes to collaboration versus control in relationships. Although participants felt control was needed at times, they emphasised collaboration. Collaboration was important because it resulted in personal ownership of change and empowered others (Rosenblatt, 2004; Zimmerman, 2011). All four participants stressed the importance of using their leadership to empower others. This was leadership work that had to be learned and was sometimes not anticipated prior to taking up the role. Empowering others through shared leadership involved relinquishing control. As the participants became more confident in their roles, this became easier to do but it involved building a school culture based on trust and respect as identified by Daly and
Chrispeels (2008). Collaboration rather than control suited goals of capacity building and sustainable school improvement. Liam understood from the outset that this would be a priority for creating a sustainable school. He worked hard to build capacity and was delighted to see that the school continued to function effectively even while he was away on sabbatical leave. Collaboration also helped with self-management. Cara recalled a change in thinking in her third year of leadership, realising that she needed to relinquish some control so as to support herself in the role. Now she delegates to cover perceived weaknesses or gaps in knowledge but again, she acknowledges that she had to build trusting and respectful relationships first. She did this by showing care and concern for her students and her staff. Her motivation to build trust came not just from the mind but also from the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Niall desires consensus and is adept at creating readiness in his staff to meet change in a positive way. He admits he spends a lot of time thinking strategically about how “to get from here to there” and this involves anticipating potential blockers so as to pre-empt issues that might arise. He invites consultation but within a directive approach. Although he prefers not to talk about vision, his purpose for the school is communicated clearly to all stakeholders. Shannon experienced a flat leadership structure with a team approach in her previous school and prefers to encourage a team approach. She says that she is reluctant to be the one “out front” but is beginning to acknowledge that sometimes this is what is needed. As the participants adapted to constant change within their roles, they actively sought a preferred leadership style within which they can feel comfortable. At this point there can be a tension between believing and thinking selves and acting self. In the next chapter, consideration is given as to how this tension might be resolved by employing transitory or occasional identities (Day et al., 2005).

**Contextual Experience**

Despite the four participants holding similar roles as primary principals in a New Zealand context, all responded to external influences and varying school contexts in different ways. For Cara, it was societal change and the pressures she felt in supporting children struggling with different types of disadvantage. She outlined the
difficulty of securing funding to run the special programmes she felt necessary for her students. To operate with agency in this environment, she sought creative solutions to make the money go further, so as to address the needs of these students and the welfare and development of her staff. Driven by desire for social justice, she perhaps typifies the activist identity described by Sachs (2001). She is an emancipatory leader. Cara’s leadership reflects a concern for the “common good” but she acknowledges the rights of individuals and minorities. She is creative and innovative and puts these skills to use to benefit her students. Cara works within an ethic of care (Starratt, 2008). Her focus on positive education is in line with this ethic. All scenarios can be reflected on positively as learning experiences.

Hallinger (2011) argues several different types of leadership can be in place simultaneously. There was evidence of this in the study where participants adopted different leadership styles in response to different situations. Like Cara, Liam is faced with meeting the needs of children in a low socio-economic area. External pressure was applied with the school merger and the challenges of bringing together staff and students as a new school. Facing community resistance, uncertain enrolments, and developing school culture based on sound values was an enormous challenge. In response to his complex situation, Liam led both first-order and second-order change simultaneously. First-order change is technical, systematic, problem and solution-orientated (Dempster, 2001; Young et al., 2011). Examples from Liam’s experience were the systems needed to run a new school and the practical problems to be solved. Second-order change goes deeper and can challenge existing norms. To overcome these challenges, Liam saw relationships and capacity building as his first priority.

For Niall, a major school building project provided challenge at a time when the National Standards and the new National Curriculum were introduced. As argued by Dinham (2008) and Stoll (1998), Niall identified the importance of creating readiness in his staff to accept change. A focus on staff professional development kept goals in focus and pre-empted resistance through ownership of the changes. Shannon also used staff professional development to sow the seeds for change. School culture provided positive influence too. Examples of this included the strength of leadership teams, affirmative ERO reviews, encouraging feedback from
boards and staff members, and community support for the new initiatives proposed and undertaken such as positive education programmes, specific values teaching, language immersion classes, and new building projects.

All participants described personally challenging situations where they had to manage response carefully. The situations varied but all perceived that they modified leadership practice and behaviours in response to these challenges. Managing change in resistant cultures was an issue for most participants at some point in their careers. In these situations, every aspect of self can be challenged. The *believing* self is threatened by a culture that is out of alignment with personal beliefs. The *feeling* self has to cope with disappointment, frustration, and hurt. The *thinking* self has to adapt systems and practices relied on in the past to achieve goals wanted for the school. In response, participants found that they had to modify actions, and slow down the pace of change so as to combat resistance. This is in line with Zimmerman (2006) who found that it was important to take time to change mental models and create readiness for change. There was evidence of an ability to balance paradox as found by McCarthy et al. (2005). The principals were flexible in the face of change. They recalled times when they moved quickly, dictating rather than collaborating, wielding power rather than empowering but they also adapted quickly, slowing down the pace of change, and switching to more collaborative modes of thinking and distributing power within the school when required. This flexibility enabled them to drive both first-order and second-order change in their schools simultaneously. For Liam and Niall, who led major changes in physical environment and pedagogy, there was a need to address both types of change, putting in new systems but also collaborating on deeper changes that impacted school culture such as pedagogy and shared values and beliefs.

In these complex situations, the *thinking* selves of the participants moderated their *feeling* selves in that they shifted focus from negativity in staff or community to a deeper understanding of why the staff might be thinking, feeling and acting this way. They maintained their personal beliefs but articulated them clearly so that all stakeholders came to understand why the changes were taking place. To do this the participants sought the support of others, especially those who embraced change or “early adopters” (Dinham, 2008). Niall realised he had to create readiness in his
staff and parent community for the changes that were about to take place. This required courage and conviction. Courage was needed as he took on the challenge of project managing a school rebuild on a limited budget. However, the real challenge came in leading a whole new pedagogy around modern learning environments. He was determined that his staff would move into the new space understanding why and how they were to use it. This is an example of second-order change. Here, Niall referenced his moral purpose for the school to direct his leadership actions. His believing self influenced his thinking self and that in turn directed his acting self to respond to complex situational change.

In conclusion, each participant brought a leader-self shaped by formative influences and previous experiences to their role as principal. In order to respond, the acting self, informed by the thinking, feeling and believing aspects of self, made decisions, set priorities, used systems, and took action. Expertise in these areas was learned. Each participant led first- and second-order change within his or her school environment. Sometimes the change was external, imposed by government policy changes, a major building project, or a school merger. At other times, change was required within the school, when a shift was needed in school culture to facilitate school improvement. As the acting self responded, it interrelated with others. These relationships were different in nature and influenced change in leadership behaviours and actions. Identity was transformed by experiences that could be positive or negative, anticipated or unanticipated, and relational as the self interacted with others.

The four participants exhibit very different career trajectories but all put children at the heart of what they do. They are naturally reflective people, resilient, with vision, and a strong sense of moral purpose. As leaders of learning, the participants perceived themselves as growing and changing, and importantly, still learners themselves. As their thinking, acting, feeling and believing selves interacted in response to influence; new learning took place. As a result of new learning, the participants’ professional identity was in a state of continuous transformation. As the participants managed change processes, they became changed themselves. In the next chapter, the focus shifts to transformation of professional identity and the adoption of transitory identities to meet the challenges of changing situations.
Introduction

Part One of this chapter, Change and Constancy in the Self, has a conceptual focus. Identity theory is revisited to explain how this theory links to the findings and discussion of aspects of self. The four aspects of self guide further understanding of both constancy and change in the self. Hence, the ways the thinking, acting, believing and feeling aspects of self contribute to change or constancy in the self are outlined. Two qualities are identified as contributing to change in the self. These are the ability of the self to be reflexive and flexible. It is argued that these qualities contribute to adaptive leadership practice.

The study principals were influenced by the implementation of change processes. As a result of these influences, even the highly experienced principals continued to experience identity transformation. It is argued that during this transformation, principals may employ transitory identities in order to mediate conflicts between personal values and beliefs and organisational demands and values. A model is later proposed to explain how this might occur.

Part Two: Aspects of Self in Leadership Practice has a more pragmatic focus. Consideration is given as to how the conceptual understandings and the model proposed might be applied in practice. Principles for implementation are provided based on the adult learning assumptions of Knowles et al. (2005). Lastly, strategies for critical analysis are provided that link with the conceptual model and the principles of adult learning.

Part One: Change and Constancy in the Self

Identity Theory Revisited

Identity theory acknowledges a duality between conception of the self as a discrete being, and the self as a socially constructed being. Traditionally, identity theory is
viewed as having two distinct strands. One strand is the self in relation to social context and the other focuses on the internal workings of the self (Stryker & Burke, 2000). However, Burke and Stets (2009) distinguish three emphases in identity theory. These are described as interactional, structural and perceptual. All three have roots in symbolic interactionism. Rather than focusing on one of these emphases to define identity, this study draws upon all three. This means that, while the self is considered to consist of multiple identities in a state of flux (interactional emphasis), pre-existing social structures enable us to make sense of our world and to enact our roles within it (structural emphasis). Our ability to make meaning is influenced by our interactions (perceptual emphasis) but we are able to make choices about behaviour and attitudes based on a core sense of self. This core sense of self draws on values and beliefs that provide some constancy to balance the constantly changing identities that make up the self. Thus, there is both constancy and flux inherent in the self.

The paradoxical nature of the self is acknowledged by Collinson (2006) who argues that there is blurring of the lines between the self as a discrete or as a socially constructed being. While the social constructionist may regard the self as a socially constructed being, the constructivist differs in that the self has the ability to be reflexive: “The self has the ability to take itself as an object, to regard and evaluate itself, to take account of itself and plan accordingly, and to manipulate itself as an object in order to bring about future states” (Burke and Stets (2009, p. 9). Although the external influences of the social world may motivate the self to change, here the discussion goes beyond what makes the self change to look at how the self changes with respect to professional identity.

Professional identity was defined earlier as those aspects of self specifically oriented to roles along a personal career trajectory; that set of beliefs and values, knowledge and understanding, and experience and wisdom that influences leadership practice. The study findings showed how this set can be further categorised into thinking, believing, feeling and acting aspects of self. The four aspects of self interrelate to form response to influence from a wide range of sources. De Bono (1985) suggests Six Thinking Hats that “allow us to conduct our thinking as a conductor might lead an orchestra” (p. 2). In a similar way, the self can be thought of as an orchestra with
different sections that sometimes play alone, sometimes in harmony, and sometimes with a note of discord. The different orchestral sections are the *thinking, believing, feeling* and *acting* aspects of self. The responding self can be likened to the sound that emerges when the orchestra plays. Like a conductor, reflexivity of the self allows us to direct these aspects of self, sometimes resulting in changes to identity. Just like instruments in the orchestra, the aspects of self interrelate continuously and the degree to which each aspect influences the others may vary. Sometimes the timpani are louder than the strings. One or more aspects of self can be adapted or changed as the self forms response to various influences such as a persuasive role model, or an ethical dilemma. Other aspects of self may remain unchanged. The figure below illustrates how the four aspects of self form a core sense of self, or an inner self. Numerous interactions are possible between the aspects of self. The *believing* self may influence the *thinking* and *feeling* self. The *feeling* self may influence the *acting* self and so on.

![Figure 4: Four aspects of self](image-url)
As the aspects of self interrelate, they may shift and change resulting in identity transformation. Identity transformation can occur as a conscious reshaping, such as when the participants took particular steps to improve practice. However, study findings suggest transformation can occur without cognition. Participants could not identify exactly when their professional identity changed, simply that in hindsight it had changed. Although transformation can occur rapidly, such as when learning a new role, more often it happens gradually over time.

**Improving Personal Competency**

Changes to the aspects of self are most often dependent on relational and situational contexts. However, there is value in attempting to understand unique personal responses. It is through forming response to changing contexts that identity may change. Understanding how and why these responses form may be important for awareness of self.

Learning about self is important as this knowledge may contribute to personal competency. Goleman (1996) suggests personal competency can be linked to emotional intelligence:

> Whether it be in controlling impulse and putting off gratification, regulating our moods so they facilitate rather than impede thinking, motivating ourselves to persist and try, try again in the face of setbacks, or finding ways to enter flow and so perform more effectively – all bespeak the power of emotion to guide effective effort (p. 95).

Returning to the leadership frameworks discussed earlier, personal competency underpins the knowledge and skills required to sustain leadership in the twenty-first century. If reflexivity of the self is accepted, then it is possible to improve personal competency. Goleman (1998), in his Emotional Competence Framework, describes the elements of personal competency as being self-awareness, self-regulation, and motivation. Each of these concepts can be better understood in relation to aspects of self, as described below.
Self-awareness

Self-awareness is a protective factor that increases resilience (Milstein & Henry, 2000). For the participants, reflecting on practice seemed to enhance resilience. Critical reflection enabled them to respond differently when faced again with difficult situations. They were better able to control feelings, moderate response, and act calmly. Critical reflection on experience may be enhanced by interrogating values and beliefs (Notman, 2008). Once understanding of the believing self is reached, the thinking aspect of self knows how and when to moderate or strengthen feelings, or to make changes to beliefs. Whether or not change takes place is dependent on the outcome needed to best preserve the self. Self-awareness can enable leaders to clearly articulate values and beliefs, and develop moral purpose for their schools. Awareness of the believing self provides some constancy; a point of reference for the thinking, feeling and acting aspects of self. However, self-awareness is also important when the believing self is challenged to adopt a new perspective. As the Scottish Framework (General Teaching Council of Scotland, 2012) suggests, it is important that principals keep reflecting on their values and beliefs so as to meet the demands of the rapidly changing society in which school constituents live.

Self-control

The thinking and believing selves can moderate aspects of the feeling self by reinforcing or regulating emotions. For the participants, a capacity to separate feelings from context meant they could maintain self-control during important moments. They talked about ‘changing face’ or building a protective shell around themselves so that their feelings would not show. Maintaining self-control enabled them to enact their roles in what they perceived to be a professional manner. It also allowed them to meet the expectations of others. In difficult situations, awareness of different aspects of self, especially the believing and feeling aspects of self, may enhance reflexivity of the self. Having awareness means the self can regard and evaluate behaviour and actions as needed, in order to maintain self-control. It becomes possible to separate the feeling self from the challenging context so as to act professionally. Self-control enables emotional management of various roles
within the boundaries of expectations set personally and by others. Self-control may allow a return to a base line of perceived normalcy where all aspects of self are in alignment.

Motivation

Understanding aspects of self may help identify weaknesses or strengths and provide motivation for personal change. Reflexivity enables the self to view itself as both subject and object. As Burke and Stets (2009) argue, “this ability to recognise the self as an object allows the mind/self to think about and act on the self in the same way that the self can think about and act on any other part of the environment” (p. 19). Once a weakness is identified, the thinking self seeks ways to change and this process may provide motivation for new learning. In a similar way, once a strength is identified, the thinking self may look to how to maximise this. This process does not always happen in solitude. Sometimes it can be guided with appraisal, mentoring, or a critical friend. Knowles et al. (2005) argue that adults are different to children in that they are intrinsically motivated to learn. However, for the study principals, intrinsic motivation was more aligned with the ability of the self to be reflective and reflexive, and less dependent on age or maturity.

Understanding aspects of self may help motivate and sustain performance in a role. Sustaining performance is difficult when the four aspects of self are out of balance. For example, when a marathon runner seeks optimum performance, the body must be well nourished, physically fit, mentally focused, and well rested. If any of these factors are lacking, the athlete will be unlikely to perform with endurance. For school principals, situations where emotions are continually strained, or thinking or beliefs constantly challenged, or actions always questioned, can result in one or more of the feeling, thinking, believing and acting aspects of self shifting out of alignment. The feeling self may overwhelm the thinking self. Ideally, all four aspects will be in comfortable alignment. Rather like Vygotsky’s zone of proximal development, an ideal state is neither too comfortable nor too challenging (Vygotsky, trans. 2011). The ability to recognise aspects of self that are out of alignment combined with capacity to flex and change may contribute to sustainability in a role.
Identity Work

As the participants learned about themselves, they worked consciously to address perceived weaknesses. This reflexive behaviour could be described as identity work (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003; T. J. Watson, 2008). Although the participants worked consciously, they did not always perceive they had changed until others noticed the change. Sometimes the change was affirmed but required greater validation before it could be accepted. The need for affirmation is in line with the thinking of Baumeister (1986) who argues that, “Ideas of fulfilment and success are defined and validated by society” (p. 251). McCall and Simmons (1978) claim that identities are validated or affirmed by intrinsic or extrinsic rewards. Acceptance of such rewards suggests that individuals must become, in some way, conscious of personal change before it becomes part of their identity.

Identity work takes place when the self is “engaged in forming, repairing, maintaining, strengthening or revising the constructions that are productive of a sense of coherence and distinctiveness” (Sveningsson & Alvesson, 2003, p. 1165). This sense of coherence may be felt when the aspects of self are in alignment with expectations of role. For the study principals, meeting role expectations required identity work that resulted in perceptions of personal change. Each participant understood clearly where they stood in relation to their actual selves and sought to adopt an ideal self. Frequently, identity work was undertaken by the thinking self but it was also driven by personal beliefs about leadership practice. Sometimes identity work occurred as a response to negative feelings. In these situations, identity work was difficult as there was a need to overcome negative feelings about practice.

Burke and Stets (2009) argue that people “change behaviours to counteract disturbances and allow the self to return to a set point that is perceived as uniform, constant and predictable” (p. 29). In terms of identity work, this is that “sense of coherence and distinctiveness” recognised by Sveningsson and Alvesson (2003). When the aspects of self are in alignment, the disturbances to the actual self, as might be evident in tensions felt between feelings, thoughts, and beliefs, are removed. Coherence is restored. The need for fight or flight no longer exists. Identity work, based on understanding of thoughts, feelings, actions and beliefs, achieves shift towards an ideal self, and a subsequent state of improved wellbeing.
Catalysts for Change

As the four aspects of self move in and out of alignment, subtle shifts in thoughts, feelings, actions, and beliefs mean that perceptions of self can change. All participants identified aspects of self they perceived were changed or changing. Sometimes the change was deliberately driven by self, at other times it was a less conscious process. Identity work is possible because the self is reflexive. Although often difficult, the self can objectify thoughts, feelings, beliefs and actions in order to bring about change. There are a number of ways reflexivity acts as a catalyst for change.

Critical Reflection

Personal change can arise from critical reflection. For the study participants, the motivations for change sometimes arose from critical reflection on what was not going well. As the self interacts with others, negative feelings may be stirred. Negative feelings may awaken the flight or fight response as adrenalin is raised. However, for school principals, these types of responses must be moderated in order to meet the expectations of the role. The thinking self enables the feeling self to moderate behaviour. What followed this moderation for the study participants was reflexive behaviour whereby the thinking self reflected on the situation and the feelings that arose and formed a new course of action or set of behaviours for the acting self. It became possible to reframe a negative experience as a positive learning experience and move forward.

Negative introspections can be countered by reflecting on things that are successful. Basing reflective practice on successful experiences is perhaps as important as critiquing the failures. The participants tended to avoid deficit thinking, focusing on solutions rather than problems. Reflection on positive experience, or the positive perceptions of others, reinforces the steps taken to transform identity towards an ideal self. These steps form the basis of success-based learning by making (self) knowledge explicit, deepening understanding and creating meaning (O'Connor & Yballe, 2007).
By reflecting on successful practice rather than weakness in practice, it may be possible to harness the feeling aspect of self to bring about change. The feeling self can influence the thinking self with positive emotions and thus provide a positive response to new learning. The participants made changes to practice based on their beliefs about what it meant to leader, and learning gained from observing others. From perceptions of a lack of competence, the participants began to perceive they were better practitioners. Their professional identity changed. This is not to suggest that weakness in practice should be ignored, but rather that a balance is attained between problem-based and success-based learning, and that opportunities to practise new skills with success be provided. Reflection on positive experience can encourage the self to remain hopeful and may provide sustenance for leadership practice.

Responding to Change in Role Expectations

Identity work was evident at times of role change when new behaviours and practices were learned so as to facilitate changes. When adapting to new roles or facing change in a current role, the thinking and acting selves may struggle to align with the feeling and believing selves. To obtain this alignment, new ways of thinking or changes to beliefs may be required. Identity work begins. Often, knowing what to learn requires initiative and intuition. For principals there is little training or guidance for undertaking new roles such as management of school building projects or difficult mergers. In these situations, motivation for personal change might include self-preservation or a desire to improve or prove oneself. Sometimes identity change is motivated from deep within the believing self so as to pursue a moral purpose such as social justice. At other times, the thinking self is adapted so as to meet or exceed perceived expectations of a role.

Personal change can be driven by the social expectations of a role. Roles exist independently of self but as they are adopted, each individual enacts the role in different ways (Burke & Stets, 2009). For example, in this study, the role investigated is school principal. Although a readily identifiable role in our society, each participant interpreted and enacted their role in different ways. One example was how the principals met externally imposed and expected requirements for
compliance and accountability. For most, meeting these expectations required strategic thinking as expected of the role, and there was little conflict with personal beliefs. But there were occasions where external requirements conflicted with personally held beliefs and values. In these situations, motivation to act was influenced by personal expectations of the self in the role, such as desire to act with social justice in mind. This resulted in a need to manage and resolve tension between personal beliefs and external expectations.

**Learning from Others**

People rather than events were more directly effective in bringing about reflexive behaviour resulting in identity change. The participants recalled times when people brought about direct change in an aspect of their thinking, feeling, acting or believing selves. Sometimes these changes were initiated by frank and open discussion such as through appraisal processes. Sometimes transformation was triggered by a serendipitous moment that suggested a change in thinking such as a compliment, a casual observation of something, or some sort of “aha” moment. Sometimes the participants changed feelings, behaviours or practices after interaction with role models. Role models provided powerful learning experiences for the participants at all stages of their careers. They observed others at work and imitated practices and behaviours they saw as being closer to what they perceived as an ideal self. Sometimes these role models provided a model of what not to do. This was an equally powerful learning experience, as through comparison, the participants identified what they saw as working more successfully and adapted their style accordingly.

Sometimes supportive relationships acted as a catalyst for change. Despite collegial support, the principal role was perceived to be a lonely one. For those that found value in collegial relationships, it was because the relationship was symbiotic in nature; based on mutual support rather than dependence. For experienced principals, these types of relationships may be hard to find. They are perhaps more likely to be in a position of mentoring others, or in some sort of critical situation such as a school merger where relationships consist of many unique kinds of interdependencies. Outside the school, families and partners provide valuable
support that is frequently unconditional and aligned with personal values and beliefs. In trusting, respectful relationships, the opinions of others may be easier to digest. Trusted partners or critical friends can help reframe difficult issues using different perspectives.

Reflexive behaviour also occurred as a result of exposure to new learning. Although new learning was important to the participants, professional development programmes can have limited success. A comprehensive report on the professional development of teachers found that learning undertaken in one-off workshop or lecture situations had limited effects in that the teachers studied were unlikely to sustain new practices or adopt new learning fully (Darling-Hammond, Chung Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009). Supporting these findings, Guskey and Yoon (2009) argue that successful practice of new learning is needed before any long-term change can take place. This argument can be further explained with reference to the aspects of self. In this study, it was shown that while changes to the thinking, feeling and acting aspects of self are likely; changes to the believing self are less likely. To learn something new first requires adoption by the thinking self. Once practised successfully by the acting self, if the thinking and feeling selves see benefit, change may occur to the believing self in terms of beliefs about practice. Deep learning occurs when the four aspects of self interrelate. In short, learning must be seen to be of benefit to the self for deep learning to take place.

**Constancy in the Self**

Although the self consists of multiple identities that are in a constant state of flux, the cases discussed here suggest that the believing self provides some constancy in the self. Deeply held beliefs and values are unlikely to change, as there can be little motivation to change something so integral to the self. Constancy in the believing self underpinned the leadership practice of the principals. Beliefs and values were seen as non-negotiable. Perceptions of change were more closely related to the thinking, feeling and acting aspects of self. The leaders changed in these aspects to further their moral purpose for the school, and the believing self drove this purpose.

For the participants, some learning such as management of systems was seen as relatively straightforward. It was driven by the thinking self and required shallow
rather than deep or profound learning (Schechter, 2011). Learning to manage relationships was perceived as more difficult. In terms of the self, it is perhaps more difficult to objectify relationships and act reflexively. Managing relationships may demand change in the feeling and believing aspects of self. As the believing self tends towards constancy, it is less likely to respond to change quickly. Change in the believing self is second-order change. It requires higher-order thinking skills such as reflection and application and it is usually a gradual process.

Constancy in beliefs and values was perceived as integral to professionalism. External perceptions of the principal role affirmed that constancy in a principal (as demonstrated by consistent thinking) was a desirable asset. It would be impossible to run schools if principals were constantly changing the beliefs and values that drove thinking and approaches. Elements of constancy in the aspects of self enabled others to perceive the principals were acting in a consistent and rational way. The principals intimated it was more likely that outright rejection of a role might occur before a change in beliefs, as continuous challenge to the believing self is unlikely to be a sustainable state of affairs. However, some form of compromise may allow the self to align organisational values and beliefs with personal values and beliefs. Kouzes and Posner (2007) found that leaders with “the greatest clarity about both personal and organisational values have the highest degree of commitment to the organisation” (p. 55). For the study participants, clear articulation of personal beliefs and values was needed to negotiate compromise and maintain commitment to the school.

To reach compromise, participants sought a space where they could act with agency. Belief in capacity to act with agency made it possible to accept the almost untenable. When faced with difficult dilemmas, to make this change in thinking possible, the participants sought a space within where they could act with agency. Stevenson (2006) argues that spaces exist between the inner and outer worlds of leadership where it is still possible to exercise individual agency. Others agree such spaces exist (Levin, Glaze, & Fullan, 2008; Sachs, 2001). Negotiating these spaces within may make use of transitory identities. Transitory identities may be adopted to protect or advance the self, when resolving conflict or addressing change. Although
adoption of transitory identities may result in change, they can also allow the self to remain constant.

Protective factors, such as high self-awareness and capacity for critical reflection, can enhance resilience. These factors can help negotiate the space within to resolve tension between personal values and external stressors. This supports Christman and McClellan (2012) who argue there are links between critical reflection, development of resilience, and identity transformation. For this study, reflection and reflexivity were factors in identity transformation in that the principals perceived that these factors contributed to change in enactment of a role. This suggests professional identity is created rather than merely discovered.

**Flexibility**

Leadership requires both flexibility and constancy. To maintain constancy, aspects of self must be affirmed and supported, but to bring about change, aspects of self must be challenged. Constancy is a personal baseline, a place of comfort and control. But flexibility allows the self to be resilient and adaptive.

Flexibility is a key quality for successful leadership, especially school leadership (Marzano et al., 2005; Mulford, 2008; Rosenblatt, 2004). Without it, successful leadership practice may not be sustainable. School leadership is a complex role that involves balancing diverse needs with limited resources. Working with a diverse client base results in a high level of uncertainty and a lack of predictability. School leadership is less structured, and roles and expectations are less clearly defined, than on a factory floor or in a financial institution. There is an element of unpredictability that requires a flexible and adaptive nature to navigate.

The principals described wearing many hats in terms of role diversity. Rapid switching of roles took place within a single day. Sometimes, several roles were enacted simultaneously. This level of flexibility is perhaps underestimated in terms of effect on the self. De Bono (1985) describes thinking (and feeling) in terms of six hats. A white hat is used when thinking about “objective facts and figures”; green is for “creativity and new ideas”; black for thinking about the negative aspects of a situation or dilemma; yellow is for “hope and positive thinking”; a red hat is for the
emotional view; and the blue hat is for “control and organisation of the thinking process” (pp. 31-32). In a similar way, the study participants compartmentalised thinking about issues so as to deal with them objectively. Metaphorically changing hats, stepping back, or switching off from situations allows time to reflect on issues, or to depersonalise or objectify situations. Another way of thinking about this might be to consider issues in terms of the aspects of self. Using these, it becomes possible to differentiate or compartmentalise feelings, thoughts and beliefs so as decide on a course of action.

The need to be flexible can challenge any of the aspects of self. Flexibility in the thinking self was evident in changes in thinking as the participants adopted new strategies, and looked to create readiness in others. Flexibility in the feeling self required high levels of intuition and sensitivity and awareness of others. Flexibility in the believing self required an awareness of the beliefs, values and perspectives of others. Flexibility in the acting self meant setting a purpose and navigating carefully through often-choppy waters with that clear goal still in sight. It meant accepting that different or unforeseen tacks might be needed to reach that goal. To lead adaptively, the self must know when to change and when to stay constant.

Transitory Identity

In analysing how leaders are changed as they respond to management of change processes within schools, it became clear that conflict can occur between the believing, thinking, acting, and feeling aspects of self. But what is actually happening as these conflicts occur? How do school leaders continue to operate when beliefs and values are challenged? Transitory identities may be formed in response to external influences. Transitory identities allow the thinking, acting, feeling and believing aspects of self to interrelate in new ways. In the study, the participants experimented with different leadership practices and behaviours. Through such actions new ways of responding emerged or were borrowed and professional identity began to transform.

Day et al. (2005) use the notion of a transitory self or occasional identity that is borrowed by teachers as they negotiate a space between actual and ideal identities. It is likely this occurs for school principals too, as their professional identities continue
to develop throughout their careers. As suggested earlier, each self is made up of multiple identities that are in a constant state of flux. For principals, professional identity is influenced by the extent to which the four aspects of self are in alignment with external influence. Influence can be positive or negative, or sometimes both at once. The *inner self* provides *response* to influence. Response is straightforward if the *inner self* is in alignment with the demand for response. However, where there is conflict between the *inner self* and external influences, such as when a new role is being learned, knowledge and experience is challenged, or feelings stirred, then tension can arise. Principals may adopt a transitory identity as they negotiate a path forward. By adopting a *transitory* identity, the self may experiment with the notion of an ideal self as shown in Figure 5.

![Figure 5: Ideal self](image)

As the self responds, it may change or remain unchanged. There is no time limit to this process and the self may move back and forth between a perceived actual and ideal self or remain in a transitory state for some time. Adopting a transitory identity may allow time to reflect, and it may allow the self to compromise without changing deeply held beliefs and values. In this way, adopting a transitory identity may be advantageous to principals during times of change and challenge.

For the purposes of the model, transitory identity might be thought of as having similar properties to a balloon. Transitory identity may expand or contract depending on the extent of the threat or excitement to the self. In times of great change, transitory identity expands. For example, stepping into leadership for the
first time requires a significant change in identity. Everything is new. Every aspect of the self is challenged. The self, although still grounded in the four aspects, tries new ways of thinking, feeling, acting and believing. If experimentation is successful, eventually the new ways may be adopted and there is change in one or more of the four aspects of self. Transformation of identity may occur. This is an on-going process, indicative of the flux inherent in the nature of the self. When challenges to the self are smaller, the transitory identity “balloon” may be thought of as less inflated or barely evident. The aspects of self may change only slightly or temporarily to meet the challenge. When there is no challenge to identity, response is formed directly from within the thinking, acting, feeling and believing aspects of self and a transitory identity is not adopted.

Understanding which aspects of self are being challenged to form a transitory identity may enhance reflexivity of the self. For example, when the feeling self is out of alignment with other aspects of self, the thinking self may try to moderate the self by adopting a transitory identity so as to manage emotion and return the aspects of self to alignment. The participants noted that when they had emotional control, they were able to achieve the outcomes they desired. The transitory identity (of an outwardly calm person) was adopted and over time, with continued successful practice of this identity, they found there was change in the feeling aspect of self, and their professional identity was transformed. Personal change was reinforced as others began to perceive them as being a calm rather than a reactive person. Beatty (2000) suggests continued repression of emotions may lead to an emotional numbness that affects all personal relationships. Although not evident in this study, this seems likely in extreme situations, as the self seeks to counteract disturbances and maintain constancy.

Using aspects of self to understand transitory identity may be helpful in leadership development. Leadership frameworks and models recognise the importance of knowledge of self. New Zealand programmes such as the NAP and FTP programmes acknowledged that leadership development moves through a series of stages. Kornives, Longerbeam, Owen, Mainella, and Osteen (2006) found leadership development occurred in a series of stages from initial awareness of leadership through to integration/synthesis of leadership as a part of personal identity. In this
study, the exploration of aspects of self provides some insight into how this final stage of synthesis/integration might take place. However, this thesis argues that even highly experienced leaders continue to transform. There is no endpoint to transformation. This finding has implications for leadership development programmes that target more experienced principals. As principals become more experienced, linear models of leadership development may be less relevant. Rather than thinking of leadership identity developing in stages, it may be more useful to think of identity as occurring on a continuum. Transitory identities can form anywhere along the continuum as shown in Figure 6.

![Transitory Identity Continuum](image.png)

**Figure 6: Transitory identity continuum**

Transitory identities might be employed to experiment with a subtle change in professional identity resulting in a minor change in leadership practice and taking a step closer towards what an ideal self. When experiencing greater conflict between the actual and ideal aspects of professional identity, adopting a transitory identity can allow experimentation without giving up deeply held beliefs about leadership style.

External influences and changes in situational context may result in even highly experienced leaders taking a step back along the continuum. A change in role or school may mean that the skill set already mastered is no longer sufficient and new skills may have to be learned in order to maintain that level of expertise. Fullan (2005) points to a failure in turnaround leadership in that expertise may not be transferable from one context to another. It may take time to learn and adapt to a new situation. Lack of flexibility may mean the leader is unable to adapt to the new school culture and turnaround fails (Mulford & Moreno, 2006).
Development of professional identity is not a linear process. After Young et al. (2011), it can be likened to a helix. New knowledge is built upon old knowledge that is continually revisited in order to move forward. Likewise, Brookfield (1994) describes a rhythm of learning as a series of steps forward and back with an overall forward momentum. For the experienced participants in this study, the rhythm could sometimes be likened to treading water, as aspects of self were adapted and professional identity transformed so as to move forward. These findings suggest even highly experienced principals still adopt transitory identities in response to changing contexts. As the study participants adapted and flexed in response to external influences and changes in a particular context, reflective processes and transitory identities were employed, and professional identity was transformed.

A Model for Understanding the Self in Educational Leadership

To illustrate how the acting, feeling, thinking and believing aspects of self interrelate to form response to external influences, it is helpful to outline a visual representation. In Figure 7 below, Figures 2 and 4 have been combined to show how aspects of self combine with transitory identities to respond to external influences.
Influence acts on the *thinking*, *believing*, *feeling* and *acting* aspects of self. Where these aspects are not challenged, response is formed directly from the interrelation of the aspects of self. Where these aspects are challenged, a transitory identity may be adopted as the self experiments with different ways of being. If the experimentation is successful, it may be adopted permanently. Change to one or more of the aspects of self takes place and identity is transformed.

This model provides a way of identifying how the self responds to change and challenge. It becomes possible to understand how the *thinking*, *acting*, *feeling* and *believing* aspects of self have interrelated to form response. Questions can be asked such as: Which aspect or aspects are controlling response? Is there an aspect out of alignment? Is this important? Why? Is a transitory identity evident? How is this impacting leadership practice/identity? By reflecting on the aspects of self in relation to experience, it may be possible to gain greater self-awareness and understanding of the changing nature of the self in educational leadership.
Part Two: Aspects of Self in Leadership Practice

In Part Two, the focus shifts to how conceptual ideas for enacting self might be used in educational leadership practice. Study findings provide some insight into how principals develop self-understanding. These reflective processes are explored further to understand how they might be used as strategies for critical self-analysis. Firstly, some basic principles for implementation are considered.

Implementation Principles

In thinking about how to implement the conceptual understandings and the model proposed in Part One, it is helpful to consider the principles of adult learning. Andragogy can be described as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 61). Knowles (1977) developed this concept originally to show that approaches to adult learning might differ from teaching young learners. He proposed six basic assumptions about adult learning that are summarised below (Knowles et al., 2005, pp. 64-69).

1. The need to know: Adults need to understand the purpose of the learning.

2. The learner’s self-concept: Adults prefer to be recognised as capable of self-directed learning.

3. The role of the learner’s experiences: Adults bring a wide range of life experience to learning and thus there is a greater need for individualised programmes that draw on these experiences but also encourage new ways of thinking.

4. Readiness to learn: Learning experiences need to be matched to developmental stages.

5. Orientation to learning: Adults learn better when the learning is related to real life situations especially to their immediate context.

6. Motivation: Adults are most often intrinsically motivated to undertake new learning.
These assumptions (Knowles et al., 2005) provide a foundation for exploration of
the four aspects of self. Links between the aspects of self and the assumptions can be
illustrated as follows. The thinking self uses strategic thinking for purpose,
orientation, and timing of learning (Assumptions 1, 4 and 5). The feeling self
expresses the motivation and confidence needed to carry out self-directed learning
(Assumptions 2 and 6). The believing self influences learning through motivation,
formative influences, and finding purpose for learning (Assumptions 1, 3 and 6).
The acting self has capacity to be self-directed so as to undertake and complete
learning (Assumption 2). Thus any strategies for critical analysis that seek to
develop school principals, in terms of aspects of self, should draw on these
assumptions.

**Strategies for Critical Analysis**

In this section, some strategies for critical analysis of professional identity are
proposed. These professional learning strategies are concerned with identity work
and thus may be seen as more concerned with personal transformation rather than
transmission of knowledge. Collay (2006) argues that more than knowledge needs to
be transmitted through professional development programmes. She advocates
transformational learning, as opposed to informational learning that is knowledge-
based. Transformational learning aligns with the assumptions of Knowles et al.
(2005) by providing attention to context, and interpretation of experience. Such
learning focuses on development of creative, critical, and reflective capacities
(Kochan et al., 2002). The principals emphasised the need to think creatively to
resolve conflicts and dilemmas. They also referenced the importance of reflective
practices, critical self-evaluation, and appraisal. This implies there is value, and
indeed desire, for transformational rather than knowledge-based learning for
principals.

Variation in learning styles, school context, and professional identity suggests that
there is not a single model of development that will work for all experienced
principals. However, a thread of similarity existed between the study principals. This
related to the believing self. For each principal, learning had to be purposeful; it had
to relate to what they believed was important about education within their school

settings. Thus exploration of the *believing* aspect of self is an area of development that may benefit all principals. Strategies for implementation focus on reflective practice, values interrogation, and use of role models, together with the need for support and renewal.

**Reflective Practice**

The biographical stories of the principals revealed they were always highly reflective people. This supports the thinking of L. Wright (2009) and Edwards and Thomas (2010) who argue that reflection is innate and therefore not something that needs to be “taught, encouraged or developed” (Edwards & Thomas, 2010, p. 407). However, the principals valued opportunities to reflect formally, supported by scaffolds for critical reflection. In particular, they perceived that reflection on values and beliefs informed vision and leadership practice. There is debate in the literature about whether reflective practice should be formalised (Edwards & Thomas, 2010; Fendler, 2003; Mälkki & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2012). Formalisation of reflective practice may result in a requirement for evaluation but evaluation may be difficult. As the perceptions of the principals in this study illustrate, transformation of professional identity is not always a cognitive process. It may be transitory in nature, and it can take considerable time. Identity work is deep learning (West-Burnham, 2002) that involves second-order change (Dempster, 2001; Young et al., 2011). Although in the short term, it may be difficult to measure whether reflection contributes to action, findings here suggest there are benefits to be gained from reflective practice.

One benefit is that reflective practice may contribute to skill flexibility. Reflection enabled the principals to identify strengths and weaknesses. All principals found appraisal and the input of mentors useful. Mentors, in particular, were able to support the reflective process through the quality of conversations that took place. These relationships were integral to the reflective process. Trust was critical. Mentors helped to identify how others perceived the principal’s leadership practice, and this was useful understanding in terms of identity work. Once identified, goals could be set to either maximise strengths or address weakness. In this way, skill flexibility could be enhanced. Another benefit of reflective practice was that it was
perceived to contribute to resilience. Reflection not only provided opportunity to learn from successful experiences thus building self-esteem, but also to learn from mistakes. Reflection on less successful experiences meant these often could be reframed as positive learning experiences. As a result, the study principals felt they coped better when faced with similar scenarios in the future, and resilience was enhanced. Resilience is important as it may contribute to the sustainability of a role.

Lastly, case study findings illustrate that given appropriate time allocation, personal reflection is a powerful tool. This is in line with Assumption 2 (Knowles et al., 2005) that adult learners are self-directed. However, these findings suggest guided reflective processes that provide time for reflection on past experience, understanding of the perceptions of others (such as 360 appraisals), goal setting based on strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities for practice of new learning might best support experienced principals to move beyond competence to expertise.

Support for Experienced Principals

Findings identify that all principals, even experienced principals, continue to need support. This may be “a sage word” from a trusted colleague, support of a mentor or advisor, or support from a partner, or someone outside the educational context. The principals perceived that their role was a lonely one, a unique position situated between staff and board of trustees but also accountable to the Ministry of Education, students and parents. They used the phrase “the buck stops here” and hinted at the burden of responsibility faced by principals. This was not something they fully understood, or really anticipated, prior to taking up the principal position. Coping with responsibility of this kind requires a complex set of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills. While principals may be expert in teaching and learning, much more is required of the role than pedagogical leadership. Practical skills may be quickly learned, but relational skills can be more challenging. Opportunities for further training and development in areas such as conflict resolution, counselling, and coaching could be beneficial to support principals in managing difficult relationships.

Collegial networks were valued for support and guidance but the study principals hinted something more was needed. Alongside support, experienced principals may
need opportunities to refill the “spiritual reservoir” (Flintham, 2003). While not referring to spiritual in a purely religious sense here, Flintham (2003) in his study of twenty-five serving head teachers talks about renewal and asks, “quis custodiet ipsos custodes? – who cares for the carers?” (p. 19) The four study principals reported here also sought opportunities to replenish themselves, to stay relevant, and to find appropriate support and guidance. To fully support renewal in experienced principals, professional development programmes may need to go beyond what is obviously required of the school principal in terms of technical and practical knowledge. In addition to often-busy school holiday breaks, and scarce sabbatical leave, principals might be offered short breaks or retreats to provide opportunity to reflect or explore new possibilities. Such opportunities may counter “burn out,” reawaken creativity, stimulate flexibility, and renew a sense of moral purpose.

**Role Models and Observation**

While the principals learned from personal experience, they also reflected on the experience of others. Sharing experience with trusted colleagues was important but role models also provided impetus for change. The principals spoke of doing their apprenticeships, implying that master craftsmen had taught them. They shared examples of past principals that inspired them. These leaders were influential because they represented the ideal self to which the principals aspired. As role models, they provided the learning tools needed to scaffold the principals into aspirational roles. At other times, the principals observed role models who provided examples of what not to do. Observing these differences and reflecting on them, allowed the principals to make changes to their own styles, often by adopting transitory identities in order to practise the leadership behaviours first. The value of role models for practising principals is perhaps underestimated. Opportunity to observe appropriate role models, including those outside educational contexts, may provide a rich source of learning for principals.

**Interrogation of Values**

The principals were highly reflective people; they appreciated the opportunities they had to reflect on their values and how these influenced their leadership style. The
FTP programme provided opportunity to reflect on leadership style and educational philosophy, resulting in enhanced self-awareness. However, as the Scottish Framework (General Teaching Council of Scotland, 2012) proposes, principals should continue to have opportunities to reflect on values and beliefs as they progress through their career. This may help them “stay relevant and useful” as one principal suggested, while providing opportunity to experiment with new ways of thinking. As Knowles et al. (2005) imply in Assumption 3, and this study argues, the believing self is characterised by constancy. Tightly-held experience may result in a fixed mind-set. It may be necessary to rethink what is personally, or more widely accepted, to develop a more flexible mind-set in order to move forward. Re-examining values and beliefs may allow this to happen. For more experienced principals the use of values-interrogation may encourage flexibility thereby enhancing adaptive leadership practice.

Adopting a model such as a values-based model (Notman 2008, 2010) may allow principals to clearly articulate values and beliefs. An understanding of the believing self and how it influences thoughts, actions, and feelings may provide a stable base from which to seek the spaces within where principals can resolve dilemmas such as Cara faced when reporting on National Standards. Principals who are grounded in their values may adopt transitory identities to experiment with new ways of thinking and being. They may choose to learn new skills or borrow from the strengths of others. Without a strong core sense of self, leaders may be easily swayed or persuaded, unable to see beyond their current context, or limited by the negative experiences that life has dealt them. Principals might begin to explore their believing selves by utilising various values inventories such as the Leadership Practices Inventory (Kouzes & Posner, 2013), questionnaires, or taking advantage of mentoring, coaching, or guided reflections. Opportunity to explore the four aspects of self, and how these interrelate to form response, may strengthen a core sense of self. A strong core sense of self may guide ethical decision-making and help principals balance the many paradoxes inherent in leadership.
Chapter 7: Conclusions

In this chapter, the findings are reviewed in response to the research questions, key positive features of the research design are highlighted, and challenges with the methodology discussed. Implications for practice are provided together with recommendations for further research.

Review of the Findings

General Question

In what ways do primary school principals perceive themselves as changing or changed?

All four principals perceived themselves as changed or changing. Different ways of thinking, feeling, and acting were adopted in response to the social and personal expectations of their role, and what they believed. Personal change was perceived to occur as a result of learning new skills, interacting with influential others, or reflecting on experience. Therefore, the study provides a number of insights into the nature of the changing self.

While forming categories from the data, four aspects of self emerged. These were described as the thinking, feeling, believing and acting aspects of self. The thinking self influenced change in professional identity by identifying roles, thinking strategically, and using adult learning and reflective practice to consciously transform practice. The acting self was evident in leadership practices and behaviours. The feeling self provided an emotional response to influence. The believing self adhered to personal beliefs and values, and influenced professional identity by setting moral purpose. In practice, the four aspects of self interrelated to form responses to specific external influences.

Findings support thinking in the general literature that the self is reflexive. The principals perceived change in the four aspects of self as reflexive practices enabled improvements in personal and professional competence. Experimentation with different ways of being often took place consciously, after exposure to role models,
coaching by a mentor, as a result of reflection or through some form of transformational learning. Thus, professional identity was continually changing or transforming in response to influence but also due to the reflexive nature of the self.

Despite the changing nature of the self, the principals perceived beliefs and values were an intrinsic part of personal and professional identity and likely to remain constant. The *believing* self provided some stability amongst the flux and change evident in the multiple identities that make up the self. Constancy enabled the self to act in rational, consistent ways and to achieve a perceived state of wellbeing. For the principals, the *believing* self provided a moral yardstick that underpinned their sense of moral purpose and supported ethical decision-making. Constancy in the *believing* self provided consistency and direction for the school.

Transitory identities allow the self to experiment with a different identity. For the principals, transitory identities were adopted to learn new skills, resolve dilemmas, or to achieve compromise. If practice was successful, the transitory identity was adopted and identity was transformed. If the experimentation was unsuccessful, where there was no benefit to the self; identity was unlikely to change. By allowing the self to experiment with other ways of thinking and being, the principals were able to negotiate a space within where seemingly untenable situations or dilemmas could be resolved. Although this sometimes meant compromise, the *believing* self was still in control, as permanent change to identity was not made. Negotiation of a space within required flexible thinking, creativity, and innovation but it also allowed the principals to maintain a sense of agency. Agency was important as they felt without it, any sense of purpose might be reduced, and it could be difficult to feel hopeful or maintain a positive outlook.

Identity transformation was most often a slow process, and awareness of change sometimes only occurred in hindsight. At times of significant role change, transitory identities expanded as the self experienced challenges that resulted in impetus for change. At other times, transitory identities were adopted to help with “minor tweaks” in thinking or practice. Hence, transformation of identity continued for experienced principals, including those with long tenure in the same role. The principals had changed, and anticipated they would continue to change, throughout career trajectories unique to each individual.
Specific Questions

1. How do primary school principals perceive themselves changing professionally?

During analysis, it was difficult to separate professional identity from personal identity. All four aspects of self interrelated to form response and transform identity. However, changes in the thinking and acting aspects of self were instrumental in forming professional identity. Changes were driven by personal expectations of the role and through interaction with others who provided expectations for professional performance in the role. Changes were most often related to the technical or practical competencies of leadership. They included learning to think more strategically, to prioritise, to plan and implement change, to delegate tasks and distribute responsibility, to ask for help when needed, and to use systems. Often the principals identified needs in the technical/practical aspects of leadership personally, and addressed these relatively quickly. However, they stressed that they worked hard to make these changes. The principals recognised that, on some occasions, this “identity work” turned their perceived weaknesses into strengths.

2. How do primary school principals perceive themselves changing personally?

Although personal change was interwoven with professional change, two aspects of self were identified that most directly related to the personal nature of the principals. These aspects were the feeling and believing aspects of self. The principals identified changes in the ways they managed themselves emotionally, and enhanced feelings of self-belief or self-worth. They were better able to objectify their feelings and subsequent needs, and to understand the triggers that caused personal stress. They developed strategies to employ when feeling stressed. Importantly, they learned to resolve tension between personal and organisational values in creative and innovative ways. The principals felt their beliefs and values were little changed but articulation of them was improved. These personal changes strengthened professional identity and were translated into leadership practice.

3. What factors are perceived to contribute to this change?

The principals identified various factors that influenced personal and professional change. Some factors were external such as societal change and government policy
directives. Other factors included school culture, relationships with various stakeholders, collegial networks, critical incidents, and perceptions and expectations of others of the role. Personal factors that influenced personal and professional change included early formative influences, values and beliefs, reflective practices, influential role models, new learning, interrogation of values, the influence of critical friends, mentors, and appraisals. Also important were the principals’ personal expectations of the role, motivations, and desire to act with autonomy.

4. Is leadership learning considered a factor in change? If so, what types of experiences do primary school principals find significant for professional change?

The principals perceived that they were life-long learners for whom leadership learning had a profound personal and professional influence. Learning that influenced practice and shaped professional identity included reading about educational leadership and new pedagogies, observation of role models, and critical reflection. Learning experiences could occur alone or with a mentor or appraiser to provide scaffolding. Learning that promoted greater understanding of the self provided insight into areas for potential growth and transformation.

Findings suggest that development of experienced principals does not occur in linear stages but on a continuum between competence and expertise. Movement in either direction is determined by role change, situation, and various personal challenges to the self. To respond to this context for learning, any professional development should be informed by the principles of adult learning. The study principals perceived that technical or practical learning could be picked up quickly. However, they emphasised that they were concerned with leading and managing people rather than systems. They sought opportunities to learn coaching and counselling skills. They valued opportunities to reflect. Therefore this study suggests that to develop principals in these areas, strategies might be employed such as leadership coaching, reflective practice, values interrogation, and observation of role models. Professional development targeted to provide support and encourage growth, could induce synthesis between leadership and identity.

In highly complex roles, where so much is given in terms of self, time is needed to replenish the “spiritual reservoir.” The study principals sought opportunities for new
learning in order to renew, enrich, and challenge themselves. However, just as important were opportunities to share skills and understandings with others to provide a sense of meaning and purpose, enhance feelings of self-worth, and to heighten satisfaction in the principal role.

5. How did the significant others perceive the professional change of principals influencing school leadership practice?

The significant others noted greater clarity of vision that led to a sense of consistency and coherence in the organisation. Decision-making and conflict resolution was easier due to a clearly articulated set of values and beliefs that everyone recognised. The principals’ communication skills were improved. Communication was easy, honest, clear and respectful. Communication skills were honed to specific situations and often set the tone. The significant others felt the principals were more open and transparent in their leadership practice. This was epitomised in high levels of trust throughout the school context. As a result of this, they felt that the principals demonstrated an enhanced ability to remove fear, scaremongering, and deficit thinking in the school and wider community.

6. How did the significant others perceive a principal’s ability to change professionally as related to success in implementing and sustaining change in schools?

The significant others thought the principals’ ability to flex and change helped in management of sustainable change initiatives in the schools. They identified the principals as skilled in planning and implementation. Clear, realistic plans were negotiated collaboratively with staff, the Board of Trustees, and the wider school community. The principals were adept in creating readiness for change. Principal intuition and foresightedness reduced fear and uncertainty in the school culture, and provided opportunities for others to be involved in the leadership of new change initiatives. The principals cared for, supported, and provided opportunities for their staff to grow. They had high expectations for all in the school community including themselves. The significant others noted that the principals were highly visible, emphasising that the principals were not afraid to tackle difficult issues or stand up for their beliefs.
Research Design

Advantages of the Design

Situating a multiple case study within a constructivist framework meant it was possible to explore identity conceptually, referencing the interactional, structural, and perceptual emphases of identity theory. The flexible nature of the design took into account all participants’ perspectives. This allowed analysis of varied and complex perceptions that shifted from social interactions and perceived influences to internal thoughts, feelings, and recollections. The richness of data collected provided opportunities for in-depth analysis to enhance understanding of the participants’ perceptions of change.

The use of purposive sampling was a strength of this design. The long tenure of the principals meant they were in a position to reflect on past and current experiences of managing change. They could reflect on how these experiences had influenced their professional identity. The purpose was not to determine whether the principals were successful or otherwise but rather to provide insights into how they had changed, and the influences that brought about this change.

Two further strengths of the design were the nature of the data collected and the type of analysis used. The study collected data from multiple interviews, observations, and documentation. Although semi-structured, the interview questions were open-ended and probes were used to elicit further detail. Thus, data analysis was concerned with words rather than numerical analysis. The choice of constant comparative analysis allowed categories to emerge from the data rather than being preconceived by the researcher. This strengthened the voice of the participants as their perspectives, rather than those of the researcher, led the analysis by informing the naming of the categories. The analysis allowed the researcher to move back and forth from the data to the setting, adding depth to the findings.

Another strength of the design was a comprehensive audit trail that added to the trustworthiness of the study. The audit trail entailed comprehensive memos, detailed records of site visits, debriefing questionnaires following interviews, and a research
journal kept for each site. The software NVivo was used to store data and to sort data at the first level of coding.

**Methodological Challenges**

Despite the strengths and advantages of the design, there are some challenges with a qualitative methodology. These are addressed as follows:

Fieldwork was carried out over one year. Lack of a longitudinal study limits any generalisations that could be made about transformation of leadership identity over time. However, the respondents participated in reconstruction of experience that contributed to what was witnessed and experienced directly during field study. The contribution of the significant other participants gave some credibility to these reconstructions.

The small sample size (four school leaders) also limits generalisability and transferability. Location of the cases in a single regional area of New Zealand limits the degree of transferability to school settings in other regions or countries. However, by selecting cases for maximal variation, it was possible to show through cross-case comparison that some of the themes emerging from the study were pertinent to more than one participant or setting.

The sample of participants included significant others that were nominated by the principals. To reduce bias in the study, the researcher made the final selection of significant others from the lists of nominees. Apart from one case where a teacher was interviewed in place of a board of trustees member who had to withdraw from the study due to work commitments, teachers were not selected to be significant others. This was to avoid a risk of bias being introduced into the study as a result of hierarchical relationships and balance of power issues. Instead, participants were selected who knew the principals well, had worked with them in the implementation of change over time, and who had a broad understanding of the complexity of the principal’s role.

The study did not investigate gender or ethnicity specifically. While these issues are important, especially for identity construction, it was not the aim to limit findings to
a specific gender or culture. Instead participants were selected on the basis of tenure in current role of five or more years. The participants’ perceptions of change were explored to discover how identity was transformed rather than initially constructed. In this instance, willingness to participate in a study of this kind perhaps indicates a naturally reflective personality, and this has to be taken into account when considering transferability of the findings.

Working with “expert” participants, such as school principals, can limit findings. Expert participants can be adept at presenting a certain persona or rehearsed perspectives. However, repeated site visits, observations and multiple interviews allowed a relationship to be created between the researcher and principal participants where honest views could be exchanged. A small amount of data was later withdrawn from participants who felt it was too sensitive to be shared. Expert participants can be easily identifiable in a small country like New Zealand. Member checking ensured the participants were comfortable with the extent of disclosure, and pseudonyms were used for this purpose.

**Research Implications for Practice**

This study has generated implications for principalship practice in New Zealand. These are as follows:

The recruitment and retention crisis in New Zealand calls for new ways of supporting school leaders. The principal role has become increasingly complex and perhaps less desirable. Factors such as parental expectations, burden of responsibility, isolation in rural communities, relationships with Boards of Trustees, and lack of support within the sector are cited as reasons for principal stress. In this study, the need for support for principals was underlined but there was also a desire for further learning, enrichment and renewal.

Findings identified a call for targeted professional learning that enriches or remediates, based on need. At this stage of their careers, the principals were particular about how they spent their time and money. To attract experienced principals to professional development programmes, they felt that it was important to acknowledge previous experience, and to provide opportunities to work with
principals of similar experience. These views imply that the principles of adult learning should underpin any professional learning that targets experienced principals. As learning should be tailored to fit individual principals, it may be difficult to develop programmes that can address the needs of all experienced principals. However, findings indicated that learning that was related to the *believing* self was relevant to all the study principals. It was evident that experienced school leaders still address identity issues of self-knowledge and self-management. To address these issues, learning for experienced principals might focus on adaptive rather than technical skills. These skills and understandings might include but are not limited to: emotional management of self and other, self-awareness and self-belief, relational skills, critical reflection, and values interrogation.

Although the principals acknowledged the value of their collegial networks, they noted further that the value of these networks should not be over-estimated. The networks varied as to what they had to offer. Networks may not offer much to the experienced principal in terms of new learning and development, as these principals are often leading the networks. While keen to share knowledge, skills, and understandings in these relationships, there was a sense that the principals also wanted opportunities for new learning in order to address the challenge and maintain the excitement of their roles.

Findings showed that professional identity is constantly changing, and learning never reaches an endpoint. Experienced principals may still require mentoring. The principals addressed personal and professional issues that are faced by those in other fields such as health, commerce, and law. While the principals’ primary focus is the school, findings suggest it may be useful to look outside education for role models to support development in areas such as personal change, development of interpersonal skills, and for ideas to support renewal and enrichment.

Lastly, there is a need for thoughtful and directed career planning. Career planning might begin with teachers as leaders, and then offer training such as the NAP and FTP programmes, and continue by addressing the needs of experienced principals in a meaningful way. Acknowledgement is needed that moving from competence to expertise may involve stepping back and forth along a continuum. Such steps may be occasioned as principals meet challenges in their existing roles, or move to new
positions. Not all may reach expertise but findings suggest that it is possible to improve personal competence given motivation and opportunity to do so. The final career stage is transition to retirement. This stage might involve more mentoring, leadership of networks, study and research, and greater opportunities to share knowledge, skills, and understanding.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

This study is both descriptive and exploratory in its design. Several specific questions and challenges for further research are suggested below. Further research could be conducted within the specific knowledge provinces Gunter and Ribbins (2003) describe in Chapter 2.

**Extending the Study**

Findings are limited by the small size of the sample. A larger study could replicate the research methodology to consolidate these findings. The variety of settings could be widened to include principals in early childhood, secondary, tertiary leadership settings, and similar settings in other western countries. A longitudinal study that tracks teachers who move into designated leadership positions and continues to track them throughout their careers could provide valuable information about development of professional identity over time. Such studies might identify needs for professional learning pertinent to phase or stage of development or place on a learning continuum.

**Aspects of Self**

The study provides a model that explores identity in terms of the *thinking, acting, believing* and *feeling* aspects of self. This model could be used to explore differences in gender or ethnicity. Within the New Zealand context, ethnographic studies or phenomenological studies that focus on the transformation of professional identity in Māori and Pasifika principals might provide insights into the way culture influences leadership practices and behaviours. Similarly, investigation of differences in aspects of self in different principal genders could increase understanding of diversity in leadership behaviours and practices. Such studies
might fall within the critical knowledge province as described by Gunter and Ribbins (2003), especially if there are social justice issues or inequities in the distribution of power to consider. Lastly, targeting research at highly reflective “successful” experienced principals could provide insights to inform success-based learning programmes.

Values and Beliefs

The principals shared scenarios where a space within was negotiated to allow some compromise or to resolve dilemmas. Findings suggest that identification of personal values and beliefs pre-empted the creative and innovative thinking required to reach these solutions. Further research could determine whether lack of ability to negotiate this space within is a factor in principals leaving positions or perhaps leaving education altogether. A sample could be sought of principals who have a made a career shift in mid to late career. Participants could be selected from principals who take up positions in the education sector outside schools, or those who leave the education sector to take up work or study elsewhere. Findings might concur that the development of awareness and understanding of the believing self is just as important as development of the technical, practical aspects of leadership. Findings might also provide data to enhance understanding of the factors that make it difficult to retain experienced principals.

Principal Support

The value of partner support was identified in the study. This role is largely unrecognised, and the importance of it perhaps underestimated. A sample drawn from the partners of experienced principals could be interviewed or surveyed to investigate the level and type of support provided by partners to those in leadership positions. The sample could be extended to include the partners of those in other leadership positions such as ministers of religion, company executives, and self-employed business owners. While contributing to knowledge of the construction and transformation of professional identity, such research might further develop understanding of the type of support accessed and required by those in leadership positions.
Leadership Learning and Career Planning

The importance of reflective practice is underlined throughout the study. The aspects of self could provide a framework to resolve some of the questions about reflective practice already evident in the literature such as: Should scaffolds for this type of thinking be provided? Should scaffolds be used alone or with a critical friend or even in a group situation? How is it possible to turn reflection into action? How can we measure these outcomes? How can we best support those who are not naturally reflective people? Such research is important for leadership learning, and may guide reflective practices that are transformational rather than mechanical exercises.

Principal retention and transition to retirement concerned some study principals and their boards. In New Zealand, there will be a need for instrumental studies to examine the value of the ‘expert partners’ programme for experienced principals. In addition to these studies, research that targets transition to retirement or recently retired principals might inform a restructuring of career pathways in the final years of principalship. New ways of passing on knowledge, skills, and understandings in the transition to retirement might inform a restructure of the principal role that could forge a career path, the thought of which both sustains and excites those in the mid and late-career stages of principalship.

Epilogue

There is much to be learned by exploring the identity of leaders who have fully integrated professional identity into their actual selves. Personal change enables leaders to stay relevant and useful in their roles. Awareness of those aspects of self that are constant and those that are changing is important as it encourages the self to be reflexive and flexible. The freedom to adopt a transitory identity encourages new learning and potential for change. The principals in this study were adamant they were continuing to grow, and they actively sought ways to further this growth. They considered themselves to be life-long learners. The perceptions of change the principals’ share illustrate that knowledge of self, reflexivity, flexibility, and an ability to negotiate a space within so as to act with agency, are qualities that contribute to adaptive and sustainable leadership practice.
The final word rests with Niall as he reflects on change and constancy in his experience of educational leadership:

_The wisdom part is knowing when to change, and when not to change, and what is still constant. And I think the deep values stuff is still constant._ (PH T1)
Reference List


Griffith University, Queensland, Australia.

http://www.griffith.edu.au/centre/clme


Appendices

Appendix 1: Letter to Principals

Reference Number: D14/113

Date

Dear

I am an experienced classroom practitioner and school leader currently engaged in doctoral research at Otago University. My academic supervisors are Associate Professor Ross Notman and Dr Darrell Latham. My research is a multiple case study that aims to explore how change influences the practice of primary principals.

As principal of School X, I am writing to ask if you will participate in the study so as to provide a diverse range of settings, leadership experience, and to provide gender balance. The study will offer you the opportunity to reflect on your career path and to consider the strategies you use to manage change. Participation will provide opportunity to share your wisdom and experience anonymously with others, while reflection on the perspectives of others may provide fresh insights into personal and school-based change management strategies.

Field study and interviews will take place during Terms 3 and 4, 2014 and early in 2015 at times best suited to your schedule. If interested in participating in the study, you will be asked to supply a pool of names of significant others for interview. Ideally, they will have worked with you during a change management process.

This is a three-year project, funded by a University of Otago Doctoral Scholarship and the Wadell Smith Postgraduate Scholarship (2013). The study aims to provide greater understanding of change management strategies in schools. Results may be used to inform leadership-development programmes and could be published in international educational journals. Further information about the study can be found on the sheet enclosed in this mailing.

Your confidential expression of interest would be greatly appreciated. Please email me at the address below.

Many thanks and kind regards

Sylvia Robertson

(email address)
Appendix 2: Information Sheet for Participants

Reference Number: D14/113
28 March 2014

“Changing the Changers”

How leaders adapt to manage change processes in New Zealand primary schools.

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS

Thank you for showing an interest in this project. Please read this information sheet carefully before deciding whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate we thank you. If you decide not to take part there will be no disadvantage to you and we thank you for considering our request.

What is the aim of the project?

This project addresses educational leadership within a primary school context and is concerned with change management. The aim is to inquire how management of change processes influences the development of school leaders, with particular attention to transformation of professional identity. The insights gained may support the place of *pono* or self-belief in leadership-training frameworks, and inform professional leadership-training programmes. This project is being undertaken to fulfil the requirements of a Doctor of Philosophy degree.

What types of participants are sought?

Participants sought are primary school leaders who have led their current schools for approximately 4-9 years. The study aims to include both male and female participants from either rural or urban locations within Otago/Southland. Once selected, each school leader will be asked to provide the names of two significant others who have worked alongside them during a change management process. A total of 12 participants will be involved in the study.

As a result of participating in the research, it is hoped the participants will gain insight into their practice through personal reflection and access to survey results. There will be opportunity to share these insights (anonymously) with other school leaders participating in the study.

What will participants be asked to do?

Should you agree to take part in this project, you will be asked to participate in one-to-one interviews and observations within the school setting. The researcher will be on site for 5 days between August and November 2014 at times convenient to you. There will be four formal interviews of one-hour duration and a short survey to complete. A follow-up interview or observation may be requested in early 2015.

Participants nominated as significant others will be asked to take part in a one-to-one interview of approximately 45 minutes duration.

What data or information will be collected and how will it be used?

Data will be collected regarding management of change processes and development of professional identity. Data will consist of interview recordings, field notes, and relevant documentation. Interview
data will be collected using an audio recording device. No personal information will be collected that could identify the participants. Data will be transcribed and interpreted for the research project.

Data will be securely stored so that only those named below will have access. Data obtained as a result of the research will be retained for at least 5 years in secure storage. Any personal information about the participants will be destroyed at the completion of the research, although data derived from the research may be kept indefinitely.

The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve your anonymity. However, due to the nature of the research whereby a case study method has been chosen with only a small number of participants, it may not be possible for your anonymity to be preserved in the completed research.

This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: career path, personal and professional change, factors influencing change, and influence of change on practice. Some questions will be developed prior to the interviews and you will have access to these in advance. However, the precise nature of the questions asked depends on the way the interview develops. You are reminded of your right to decline to answer any particular question(s).

As a participant you will have the opportunity to correct or withdraw information at any time. All participants will have the opportunity to view data that relates to them. As a participant, you will be most welcome to request a copy of the results of the project.

**Can participants change their mind and withdraw from the project?**

You may withdraw from participation in the project at any time and without any disadvantage to yourself.

**What if participants have any questions?**

If you have any questions about our project, either now or in the future, please feel free to contact either:

Mrs Sylvia Robertson  
PhD Candidate  
University of Otago College of Education  
University Telephone: xxx  
Email: xxx

Associate Professor Ross Notman  
Director, Centre for Educational Leadership and Administration  
University of Otago College of Education  
University Telephone: xxx  
Email: xxx

This study has been approved by the University of Otago College of Education. If you have any concerns about the ethical conduct of the research you may contact the University of Otago Human Ethics Committee through the Human Ethics Committee Administrator (phone 03 479 8256). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated and you will be informed of the outcome.
Appendix 3: Consent Form for Participants

Reference Number: D14/113

28 March 2014

“Changing the Changers”

How leaders adapt to manage change processes in New Zealand primary schools.

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS

I have read the Information Sheet concerning this project and understand what it is about. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that I am free to request further information at any stage. I know that:

1. My participation in the project is entirely voluntary;
2. I am free to withdraw from the project at any time without any disadvantage;
3. Personal identifying information such as digital recordings will be destroyed at the conclusion of the project but any raw data on which the results of the project depend will be retained in secure storage for at least five years;
4. This project involves an open-questioning technique. The general line of questioning includes: career path, personal and professional change, factors influencing change, and influence of change on practice. The precise nature of the questions which will be asked have not been determined in advance, but will depend on the way in which the interview develops and that in the event that the line of questioning develops in such a way that I feel hesitant or uncomfortable I may decline to answer any particular question(s) and/or may withdraw from the project without any disadvantage of any kind.
5. The results of the project may be published and will be available in the University of Otago Library (Dunedin, New Zealand) but every attempt will be made to preserve my anonymity.

I agree to take part in this project.

.............................................................................
(Signature of participant)  (Date)

.............................................................................
(Printed Name)
# Appendix 4: Debriefing Sheet for the Interviewer

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<th>Debriefing Sheet</th>
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Appendix 5: Interview Questions

Interview Questions for Study on Leadership Professional Identity

For the principal (Interview 1):

Career Background: Tell me the story of your career to date.
Family background, early educational experiences, early leadership experiences, university experiences and subject selection, teaching background and experiences, leadership background and experiences – successes and failures, significant role models, contributing values, dominant leadership style.

School Changes
1. What have been the major changes in your school and community since you were appointed principal? e.g demographic changes, policy mandates, societal changes such as technology, societal values.
2. Are there any major changes coming up in the future?

Personal Change
1. Personally, do you think you are the same person as when you began your career/principalship? In what ways have you changed – personally and professionally?
2. Who or what influenced these changes e.g leadership learning, role models, significant others, critical incidents, departmental or political directives etc?
3. Why did you make these changes?
4. How have these changes influenced your values and practices?
5. Is it important to be able to change? Why?
6. How do you see yourself changing in the future?
7. What do you think might influence these changes?

Questions for significant others:

Principal as leader
1. How would you describe X as a school leader to someone who doesn’t know him or her?
2. How is X different from other leaders you have known?

Managing change
1. Can you think of an example where you saw X manage a change process? What happened e.g. curriculum change, National Standards, falling or growing school rolls, change in staff dynamics, building projects etc. What happened?
2. Is there a current change process underway that involves X or a future change being planned?
3. How do you think managing the change process influenced the leadership practice of X? Can you describe any changes you noticed e.g. personal changes, professional changes, changes in teaching/leadership philosophy etc?
4. What do you think caused this change?
5. How did you feel about the changes that were taking place?
6. How do you influence X’s leadership?
7. Do you think it is important for leaders to be able to change? Why?
Sample of follow-up interview questions for principal (Interview 2):

1. Can you tell me more about that first year teaching and any direction you may have received from the leadership team? (p. 2)
2. After that experience, you mention you reshaped the way you worked with children and your thinking around teaching and learning. Can you tell me how you did this?
3. On p. 2, you mentioned your role as Deputy Principal often involved co-leading. Can you tell me more about that?
4. On p. 3, you mention the difference in principalship pre and post Tomorrow’s Schools. Can you tell me more about that?
5. You talk about loyalty sometimes not supporting healthy relationships (p. 4). How did you come to take this view?
6. You mentioned ‘a hidden curriculum that really runs things’ (p. 5). Can you tell me more about that?
7. Can you give me an example of a challenge you faced and how you overcame it? (p. 9)
8. How were you and (name of principal) different? You talk about him being massively influential (p. 10). In what ways do you recall yourself changing – practices, attitudes, values?
9. You mentioned colleagues that provided a ‘sage word’ when you were in ‘a bit of a dark place’ (p. 11). Are there other strategies you use in these situations?

Questions for principals (Interview 3):

1. Can you tell me your philosophy of education? Has this changed during your career?
2. Can you share with me an incident that made you change your thinking or modify your behaviour?
3. What are your personal strengths? How do these contribute to your management of change within yourself?
4. Are there any aspects of yourself that you would never change? The non-negotiables?
5. Can you tell me about an aspect of your practice you are currently focusing on developing?
6. Can you describe what professionalism means to you? How does this concept support you in your daily practice?
7. We talked about formative influences in your early life/career. Is there anyone who influences you now? In what way?
8. Do you ever feel tension between what you want to do and what you can do? Can you give me an example?
9. When feeling conflict, do you think it is possible to operate in a space between personal values and external demands? Can you think of an example of this in your current practice?
# Appendix 6: Field Study Observation Sheet

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<th>Jottings</th>
<th>Observations</th>
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## Appendix 7: Field Study – Record of Site Visits and Tasks 2014

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<th>Task</th>
<th>School E</th>
<th>School B</th>
<th>School H</th>
<th>School O</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Select 4 participants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Following consultation with Primary Advisors</td>
<td>Participant selected after first approach</td>
<td>Participant selected after first approach</td>
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<td>and Pilot Study principal.</td>
<td>(From Pilot Study Principal’s list of 4 possible participants)</td>
<td>(From Primary Advisors’ list of 15 possible participants)</td>
<td>(From random selection list after consultation with supervisor)</td>
<td>(From Primary Advisors’ list of 15 possible participants)</td>
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<td>Mail out and follow up call.</td>
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<td>(Completed during the period: 14/07/14 – 10/09/14)</td>
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<td>12/08/14</td>
<td>10/09/14</td>
<td>19/08/14</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assembly 45 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Office: informal chat 60 minutes</td>
<td>18/08/14</td>
<td>28/10/14</td>
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<td>Assembly 60 minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff Meeting 75 minutes</td>
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<td>Assembly 70 minutes</td>
<td>School tour with BOT 20 minutes</td>
<td>Staff Meeting 80 minutes</td>
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<td>3/09/14</td>
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<td>Staff Meeting 45 minutes</td>
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<tr>
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<td>BOT Meeting 105 minutes</td>
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<td>Staff Meeting 75 minutes</td>
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<td>Observation 8</td>
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<td>7/05/15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Assembly 45 minutes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>Brief school tour. 15 minutes</td>
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Original field notes from observations stored in individual black journals. Copies in individual case study folders. Coded scans stored electronically in data analysis folder on computer. Documentation stored in individual case study folders. Coded scans stored electronically in data analysis folder.
## Appendix 8: Sample of Open Coding from NVivo

**Open code - Walk the talk**

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I think, I think you’ve got to walk your talk – you know – it’s all very well to talk the talk but I think it’s so important that teachers and children see you walking the talk especially around our values. I mean (pause) there’s no sense in grumping and growling at children when you’re asking them to be respectful to you, you know. I think that’s so important. I have to be what I, the talk I’m talking about.

Reference 2 - 1.06% Coverage

we talk about strengths and often the kids will come up with it and say, you know, if you have to talk about somebody’s else strength they’ll say that I’m kind and I’m caring and I mean – they – to me that’s – I’m very happy about that. So they obviously see that that’s what I’m doing as well as that I’m talking about it. Yes. So it would be awful to think that that wasn’t happening because our whole values, you know, our cornerstone values – our values program. Our strengths are all around being respectful and responsible and kind and being a learner. So obviously they see me – that I am doing that.

Reference 1 - 0.46% Coverage

I thought those aspects of what she was interested in, with the value system and the like, something I think that passes right down to the kids as well.

Reference 1 - 1.22% Coverage

she is a really nice person, you know. And I think, you know, one thing – like its almost her philosophy comes from within her. Like she’s a real heart person and she's really kind and caring and that is really sort of -- comes across to everybody and even when she has to be a wee bit stern with someone, she does it in such a nice pleasant way that they -- they certainly get the message but she's just, you know, that real sort of strengths of the heart that we talk about here with the positive education.

Reference 2 - 0.67% Coverage

we happily, even between us teachers and that’s probably just come from (name of study principal). It’s like if you want to – if (name of child) needs a break, she comes to me for the afternoon or to another teacher who I know has been having problems with them and vice versa.

Reference 3 - 1.75% Coverage

It’s been – honestly this is the best school in (name of city) to work in. That's the only thing I can say (laughs). It is the best school and it’s because of (name of study principal) because you know, all the good stuff filters down really.
Appendix 9: Sample of a Memo

Memo

Thoughts post first round of interviews (8/10/14)

How are the changers changed? How do I find out – without being too inquisitive, too challenging to what must surely be a fragile inner self?

Principals seem to spend a lot of time in the early years ‘sweating the small stuff’. A change seems to occur around the 6-year mark. Is this influenced by age? Maturity? Enhanced confidence arising from experience? Early or previous leadership experience e.g. DP or teacher prior? School decile?

X referred to being able to ‘box up’ the difficulties and not be consumed by thinking about them all the time – great image – Pandora’s box.

X referred to creating distance between self and issues or stressors. X referred to a kind of selective memory that allowed X to ‘forget’ dramas but X also feared the subconscious continued to work on these problems and X worried that X did not remember things until reminded. Is this the emotional numbness Beatty describes?

X referred to a thick skin or protective shell that was built. Also this image was referred to by X.

All principals referred to role models that had encouraged them. It seemed important to them to have someone to have belief in them. Perhaps these role models were great leaders because they developed people. Perhaps this is the essence of true leadership – that ability to be able to encourage, inspire and grow others. I suspect this can only come from a strong sense of self. Development of others may be the key to sustainable leadership, as these highly experienced principals seemed to get great satisfaction from this development. They no longer focus solely on their own practice/career but look outward to develop others within and beyond the school. It seems there are some powerful leaders in this sense in (region) – and some who aspire to this.

X mentioned school leaders have changed dramatically since Tomorrow’s Schools. X bemoaned the loss of people oriented, relationship savvy leaders who have been replaced with more managerial types – systems focused. If this is so, there has been a major shift in leadership identity. Who or what drove this shift? Those who survived Tomorrow’s Schools are now mentoring the young ones coming through. Is this perpetuating this type of principal – a more entrepreneurial leader – CEO in the 1980’s sense of managerialism? Is the current focus on instructional leadership a closet attempt to pull these leaders back into the core business of teaching and learning and therefore force a return to the more relational type of leadership needed to get academic improvement happening in schools. Interesting that distributive leadership was seen as the answer but this approach does not seem to have worked – why? Still need one person holding the reins?