SENIOR LEADER EFFORTS

TO IMPROVE THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

OF MĀORI STUDENTS

IN NEW ZEALAND SECONDARY SCHOOLS

By

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ABSTRACT

Over the past decade New Zealand education has launched a number of initiatives to improve the quality of mainstream education for young Māori as priority learners. Māori rangatahi in secondary schools are considered to be some of our most vulnerable students and are at high risk of under-achieving. Education Review Office reports continue to reveal slow progress in terms of schools addressing the specific needs for improved outcomes and their reports identify a fragmented curriculum that fails to acknowledge Māori cultural identity, strengths, interests and future. An unfortunate outcome is that too many Māori students leave school early with few, if any, school qualifications. A current concern is that many leaders fail to inquire into the effectiveness of the teaching, learning and school experiences of Māori students.

A qualitative research methodology was used to explore the issues and develop a deeper understanding of the leadership practice of secondary school senior leaders in Auckland and Northland schools. Members of each senior leadership team were interviewed and each school submitted their formal strategic documents (charter and annual plans) for documentary analysis. The data from interviews showed that the role of senior leaders is multifaceted and this is conveyed in the perspectives of all the senior leaders. This research confirmed that New Zealand state secondary schools are faced with a number of complex expectations and challenges to improve the educational outcomes for Māori students. This is highlighted in the demands from the Ministry of Education, and often the limited support or guidance available to assist senior leadership teams. The findings clearly indicate that Principals and Senior Leaders are attempting to meet these expectations and challenges through articulated strategic planning, on-going professional learning and innovative projects to promote and support Māori students.

The implications from this study indicate that school leaders often struggle with the complexities of Māori student under-achievement and are not always sure where to go or who to approach to reduce the challenges and accomplish the expectations required of them. This is an area the Ministry of Education should review and address when considering future Māori education strategies. Further professional learning for school leaders is recommended to explore, understand and develop culturally responsive strategic leadership.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

asTTle	Assessment for learning
ERO	Education Review Office
HODs	Heads of Department
HOFs	Heads of Faculty
KLP	Kiwi Leadership for Principals
MOE	Ministry of Education
NCEA	National Certificate of Educational Achievement
NEGs	National Educational Guidelines
NZC	New Zealand Curriculum
NZQA	New Zealand Qualifications Authority
SLT	Senior Leadership Team
UREC	Unitec Research Ethics Committee

LIST OF MĀORI TERMINOLOGY

Ako	to learn, teach, advise
Hapū	Sub-tribe
Hui	Meeting, gathering
Iwi	Tribe, extended kinship group
Kapa Haka	Māori cultural group
Karakia	Prayer
Kaumātua	Elderly male with mana
Kaupapa	Ideology, philosophy, belief
Kōrero	To tell, speak
Kuia	Elderly female with mana
Kura	School
Kura Kaupapa	Māori immersion primary school
Kura Tuarua	Māori immersion secondary school
Mana	Authoritative status
Marae	Open area in front of the wharenui where formal greetings take place
Mātau	Knowledge, understanding
Pākehā	New Zealander of European descent
Pōwhiri	To welcome, invite
Rangatahi	Younger generation, youth
Tangata Whenua	Indigenous people of the land
Tangi	Funeral, mourning
Taumata	Ritual
Te ao Māori	Māori world view
Te Reo	Māori language
Tikanga	Correct procedure, customs
Waiata	Song, chant
Waka	Canoe
Wānanga	To meet and discuss, forum
Whakatau	Official welcome speech
Whakatauki	Proverb
Whānau	Family group
Wharenui	Meeting house

Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

The central aim of the study is to investigate and understand the attitudes and values of New Zealand secondary school senior leaders in relation to improving Māori student learning outcomes. The research will examine their expectations and the challenges of leading whole school learning to improve Māori student learning outcomes. The rhetoric of the school policy documents on student achievement and Māori student outcomes will be compared with the perspectives of the senior secondary leaders interviewed. This research aims to contribute to the current literature on Māori student learning outcomes. There has been limited research conducted with secondary senior leaders in this area and this study aims to contribute new knowledge.

My particular interest in this area comes from two different professional contexts. The first is my experience as a deputy principal for just under seven years in two large co-educational secondary schools, a decile six in Waikato and a decile three in South Auckland. The second context comes more recently from my experience as a Māori student achievement facilitator in secondary schools in both Auckland and Northland. These professional experiences triggered the need for research to be conducted on Māori student learning outcomes in the secondary sector.

According to a Statistics New Zealand project (2008) Māori will comprise a minimum of 29% of the youth population by 2026. Māori student success and academic achievement continues to be a complex issue for senior leaders. The purpose of my research is to raise a critical awareness for senior leaders in terms of the importance of cultural competence, explicit strategic decision making and genuine, not tokenistic, leadership focused on improved Māori student outcomes led from the top. The intent of this thesis is to show how these factors, when they are clearly articulated into school policy and annual action plans, and conspicuously evident in a leader's professional practice have the potential to impact on the rest of the school's

ability to engage in deliberate change to improve the educational outcomes of Māori students.

To put things into perspective, it is important to remember that New Zealand state schools and educational leaders have an obligation under the Treaty of Waitangi (New Zealand's founding document) to foster the bicultural (Māori and New Zealand European/Pākehā) culture, language and identity that makes New Zealand unique. The Treaty of Waitangi has two versions, one Māori and the other English which has created some problems because the English version is not an exact translation of the Māori version. However, despite this, both versions clearly represent an agreement between Māori and the Crown, with the Crown given rights to govern and develop British settlement whilst still guaranteeing Māori full protection of their status, interests and citizenship (Waitangi Tribunal, 2012).

This is further reinforced in a number of the Ministry of Education's (MoE) National Educational Guidelines (NEGs) where recognition and validation of Māori identity and culture is mandated to be incorporated into the teaching and learning process (Ministry of Education, 2004). There are ten NEGs in total and these are used by school leaders to articulate and support school policies. The NEGs that have a more explicit focus on the position of Māori in our education system are:

> NEG 2 - Equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders, by identifying and removing barriers to achievement;

> NEG 9 - Increased participation and success by Māori through the advancement of Māori education initiatives, including education in Te Reo Māori, consistent with the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi; and

> NEG 10 - Respect for the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand people, with acknowledgment of the unique place of Māori, and New Zealand's role in the Pacific and as a member of the international community of nations.

Research from the School Leadership and Student Outcomes Best Evidence Synthesis Iteration (BES) shows there are more disparities in educational achievement and success for students, particularly Māori, within a school than between schools and that socio-economic status is not a significant contributor (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). This implies that it is not the decile rating or geographical location of the school that determines the achievement success of its students but more specifically what occurs inside the school in terms of the teaching, learning and leadership.

The purpose of investigating the processes used by senior leaders is to identify how decisions are made and actions put in place to effectively initiate and implement change management in relation to improved Māori student experience and outcomes. This will also distinguish whether senior leaders are aligning their strategy and practice to the vision and principles of the revised New Zealand Curriculum (2007) document and using an evidenced based inquiry framework.

My personal experience has shown that in secondary schools there is a significant delegation of responsibility to middle leaders in charge of teaching and learning to be able to disaggregate achievement data and develop engaging programmes to suit the needs of their students. This of course is an essential requirement of their role, as this group of leaders has the impetus to initiate the most change when it comes to the quality of teaching and learning in a school. In order to be able to do this efficiently and effectively middle leaders are extremely dependent on the direction and motivating influences promoted by the senior leadership team.

If the senior leadership team has a lack of cultural competence and sensibility, collaborative and distributive leadership, there will be no evidence based practice role modelled and led from the top. Then it will come as no surprise that staff outside the senior leadership team will be less likely to engage in or demonstrate a willingness to step outside of their comfort zone and embrace the issue of under-achievement for Māori students.

Wilms (2007) states that raising achievement and reducing disparities in countries where there is clear evidence that most of the variation in student performance is within the school, as is the case for New Zealand, requires greater reform efforts focused on low performing students. This has significant relevance not only for school curriculum leaders but more specifically for senior leaders who are not only responsible for the strategic intent and direction of the school but also for ensuring that the school is meeting the needs of all the students and communities they serve, and in particular, students who are currently under-served by our education system.

This is not a new concept in New Zealand education and over the past decade there has been the launching of a number of initiatives to raise the quality of mainstream education for Māori. There was a renewed focus with some major research initiatives and evaluations providing substantial information on student achievement leading to the publishing of the first Māori Education Strategy (1999). This was then republished in 2005 as an affirmation of the Ministry of Education's commitment to continued support for improved Māori education. In August 2007 a three month public consultation of a new draft document, *Ka Hikitia - Managing for Success*, aimed to set specific priorities for Māori education across all sectors from early childhood through to tertiary with a clearly defined focus on leadership both in schools and the Ministry of Education (MoE). This led to the inception of a four year strategy of the same name, *Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012* (Ministry of Education, 2009).

Māori students continue to become alienated from mainstream schooling and the patterns of dominance of a mono-cultural curriculum that strongly represents a western world view remain largely the norm (Macfarlane, 2004). Currently, at least 85% of Māori students are in English medium mainstream schools yet a disproportionate number of Māori students continue to disengage and significantly under-achieve compared to their non-Māori counterparts at the same level, particularly in the secondary environment. Generally we continue to see Māori students negatively over-represented in educational statistics for truancy, stand-down, suspension and exclusion. The annual national NCEA (National Certificate of

Educational Achievement – New Zealand's nationally recognised qualification for senior secondary school students, years 11 to 13) statistical data continues to highlight the inequity in achievement for Māori students with a large number of secondary schools performing below the national average. For schools whose Māori students are achieving at or above the national average there is still a significant gap with non-Māori students still out-performing Māori students (New Zealand Qualification Authority, 2010).

Hood (2007) in his report for the Ministry of Education on retention and achievement of Māori students in secondary schooling provided data and information that drew attention to the overall lower academic levels of Māori students. This report identified that they were three times more likely to be suspended or excluded from school and leave school earlier with less formal qualifications, with obviously a lower proportion of students enrolling in tertiary education. This in turn impacted on higher levels of unemployment, and the prospect of being employed in vocational or low paying employment.

The Nga Haeata Matauranga Annual Report on Māori Education shows that in 2009, 32.8% of year 11 Māori students left school irrespective of whether they had a Level One NCEA qualification or not (Ministry of Education, 2010). The significance of this statistic reveals there is still a high number of Māori students disengaging from our education system and remaining at school only until they reach the legal age requirement of 16. Retention rates for 17.5 year old Māori students was 47% compared to 72% for non-Māori and highlights two further areas of concern. Firstly, a decline in the retention of Māori students in years 12 and 13 impacting on their opportunity to attain higher levels of NCEA and successfully complete their secondary education with a nationally recognised qualification. Secondly, an increase in young Māori school leavers with little or no opportunity to continue further education or compete in a national and global market where educational qualifications are acknowledged and connected to personal and professional status.

Studies show there is a correlation between being uneducated and unemployed that increases the likelihood of youth being involved in crime. Internationally, New Zealand has the third highest rate of incarceration per capita and once again Māori are over-represented at 50.9% of the prison population as at September 2010 (Department of Corrections, 2011).

It is argued that the issue of on-going social, economic and political disparities primarily faced by Māori is still a major challenge for education in New Zealand and requires urgent attention by educators, leaders and government. Until these disparities are reduced and the achievement gaps closed, Māori will continue to generally be negatively viewed and represented from a social and economic perspective in our society (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2009).

The Education Review Office (ERO) reviews the performance of schools, the achievement of students and provides information to the education sector to support government policy. A key priority in their reviews is the success and achievement of Māori students. ERO has identified that after two years of the implementation of *Ka Hikitia*, the engagement by schools with the strategy and document varies considerably, ranging from some considering and using the document to a number that have not yet even discussed it. Accordingly, the secondary schools that had made changes to practice as a result of utilising the document had statistically significant improvement in outcomes for Māori students. Secondary schools who showed no improvement in engagement or achievement of Māori students had not introduced new initiatives since their last review (Education Review Office, 2010).

The findings of ERO in their 2010 report on Māori student achievement would appear to support my views in relation to my proposed research on the capacity of senior leaders to strategically and explicitly effect school wide change to raise Māori student achievement.

RESEARCH AIMS AND QUESTIONS

Aims

- To understand the attitudes and beliefs of senior leaders towards improving Māori student achievement;

- To determine how cultural competence influences leadership and supports Māori student success; and

- To investigate how senior leaders develop and guide explicit strategic direction for improved Māori student outcomes.

Research Questions

1. What are the expectations of senior secondary leaders in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?

2. What are the challenges for secondary senior leaders in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?

3. What values and attitudes do senior secondary leaders espouse in relation to improving Māori student learning outcomes?

4. How do senior secondary leaders put their values and attitudes into practice?

5. How does the rhetoric of school policy documents reflect the intent to improve Māori student learning outcomes?

Thesis Overview

Chapter One outlines the research study providing the research aims and key questions, and introduces the rationale.

Chapter Two examines the literature from New Zealand and international research with regards to government reports from The Education Review Office and Department of Labour, as well as government initiatives, specifically; Kiwi Leadership for Principals; Ka Hikitia; Tātaiako; and He Kākano. Cultural competence for leadership, and strategic leadership are also discussed.

Chapter Three identifies the research approach in terms of research design, methods, sampling and data analysis used in the study and validates the qualitative approach undertaken. Ethical considerations are discussed and research validity and reliability in regards to triangulation are assessed. Limitations of the two methods used are discussed.

Chapter Four presents the research findings of the senior leader interviews and document analysis. The findings are organised according to the identified themes.

Chapter Five discusses the findings in relation to the identified themes and integrates the literature from chapter two.

Chapter Six presents conclusions and recommendations that may influence senior leader practice and identifies any other limitations of the research process.

Chapter Two

LITERATURE REVIEW

INTRODUCTION

This literature review provided a conceptual framework from which the attitudes, beliefs and expectations of secondary senior leaders could be investigated. The intention was to examine relevant documents to gain an insight into government initiatives to provide guidelines for senior leaders to improve Māori student achievement.

The purpose of understanding the attitudes and beliefs of senior leaders is to ascertain to what extent their personal bias impacts on their ability to initiate and lead change to raise and support Māori student achievement. This would be reflected in their commitment to providing equal opportunities in partnership with the Treaty of Waitangi and as articulated in the National Educational Guidelines. The key areas covered in this literature review are: Government Reports; Government Initiatives; Cultural Competence for Leadership; and Strategic Leadership.

GOVERNMENT REPORTS

This section of the literature review examines Government Reports from Te Puni Kokiri, the Education Review Office and the Department of Labour.

Te Puni Kokiri

The report of the *Māori Youth Council*, June 2011 discussed the need for school leaders to find ways in secondary education to positively engage with Māori students and their whānau, to help them learn and succeed as Māori, by addressing the high levels of disengagement and the low levels of further education. A study done between 2004 to 2008 plotting the educational pathways of 100 Māori secondary students showed 60 of the students had dropped-out of school before age 17.5;

eight were removed through early exemption, expulsion or exclusion and only 18 graduated with a university entrance qualification (Te Puni Kokiri, 2010).

Education Review Office

Evidence provided by Education Review Office (ERO) reports and other New Zealand research would suggest that in many of our schools senior leaders are still disregarding the importance of culture, race and language for Māori student engagement and learning, and in doing so, implicitly encourage assimilation. We often hear leaders and teachers talk about treating everyone the same, intentionally desisting from being culturally sensitive to, or aware of the explicit needs of their Māori students as they espouse to taking a multi-cultural approach.

Some of the characteristics linked to the poor progress of Māori students in mainstream education included a lack of leadership and school-wide acknowledgement and understanding of educational issues for Māori together with the inability to increase staff cultural awareness and confidence through professional learning and development (Education Review Office, 2010).

The May 2010 ERO Report on *Schools' Progress to Promote Māori Student Success,* identified 56% of the 60 secondary schools investigated had made no changes to improve the outcomes of their Māori students. They also found that despite the availability of data, the majority of secondary schools did not undertake adequate analysis of their Māori student achievement information. It also highlighted that whilst there had been an increase in the number of Māori students gaining University Entrance from 2004 to 2008, unfortunately the gap between Māori and non-Māori gaining the same qualification has widened (Education Review Office, 2010).

ERO have provided schools with a document, *Evaluation Indicators for School Reviews*, to outline the evaluative questions, prompts and indicators used in their education reviews developed on the six dimensions of good practice and based on current national and international research as a resource to inform and clarify the judgements used to review the performance of schools:

- Student learning: engagement, progress and achievement;
- Effective teaching;
- Leading and managing the school;
- Governing the school;
- Safe and inclusive school culture; and
- Engaging parents, whānau and communities.

In dimension 3, *Leading and managing the school*, the document poses key evaluative questions in terms of professional leadership, practices, policies and direction stating that research shows successful self-review is led from the top by the principal as the evaluation champion or advocate. A self-review should be informed by evidence of students' progress and achievement and evaluation of the quality of teaching linked to student learning, teaching programmes and interventions. Evidence gathered through a self-review should establish the quality and relevance of the school's policies, procedures, programmes and practices, together with monitoring the progress towards targets and goals and to continue to plan for improvement (Education Review Office, 2011).

The ERO (2012) report, *Evaluation at a Glance: Priority Learners in New Zealand Schools* identifies the key issues which evidence suggests is obstructing schools from improving their practice to raise the achievement of priority learners. Priority learners are students who historically have not experienced success in the New Zealand schooling system and many of these students are Māori. ERO emphasise the importance of culture and for teachers, school leaders and trustees to have a good understanding of *Te ao Māori*, Māori world view, and the aspirations Māori

have for the success, progress and achievement of their young people, irrespective of the number of Māori students on the roll.

Department of Labour

Statistics continue to show the disproportionate number of Māori who are unemployed, working in low paying employment or incarcerated. According to the Department of Labour March 2011 Quarter Report, Māori rates of unemployment for the year ending September 2010 are over two times that of non-Māori (Māori 11.2% compared to 4.7% for non-Māori). More alarming is the highest rates of unemployment for Māori at 23.1%, are those aged between 15 and 24 years. Whilst Māori represent 12% of the workforce they are over-represented in unskilled or low-skill occupations and under-represented in high-skill or professional occupations. The report highlights the continuing problem with Māori youth disengagement from formal learning and or employment (Department of Labour, 2011).

GOVERNMENT INITIATIVES

This section of the literature review examines four Ministry of Education initiatives and strategies explicitly promoting improved leadership, teaching, and cultural responsiveness. They are: *Kiwi Leadership for Principals, Ka Hikitia, Tātaiako, and He Kākano.*

Kiwi Leadership for Principals

Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) document presents a model of leadership that reflects the qualities, knowledge and skills required to lead New Zealand schools into the future together with an approach that is suited to the distinctive contexts of this country. The model reiterates the need for responsive and committed leadership to challenge and address the disproportionate number of Māori students who are not achieving to their potential within our current education system, and leaving school without the necessary qualifications to be more successful in life. The document

provides guidelines and a framework for leaders in terms of a commitment to on-going professional learning, receptiveness to new evidence, and ability to effectively relate and communicate with their students and school communities (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Kiwi Leadership for Principals document outlines how The Treaty of Waitangi is central to New Zealand's national heritage, identity and future. Commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi is not only fundamental to an equitable education system but is the expectation of all educational leaders to ensure excellent education outcomes for Māori. The New Zealand education system is distinctive from many other education systems and some of these characteristics relate directly to Māori as tangata whenua, the indigenous people of this land (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Ka Hikitia Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012

The release of *Ka Hikitia, Managing for Success: The Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012* (Ministry of Education, 2008) identified the four main focus areas for senior leaders and schools:

- Foundation years (early childhood education and the first years at school);
- Young people engaged in learning (focus on Years 9 and 10);
- Māori language in education; and
- Organisational success (primarily for the Ministry of Education and other education agencies);

The four focus areas emphasise a collective responsibility and accountability on all sectors of our education system to ensure Māori are enjoying educational success as Māori, with the clear intention that Māori will have access to an education system that is equitable and one that supports their heritage, culture and language, allowing them to live and contribute as Māori in their own communities, nationally and globally. The four focus areas have clearly identified goals and targets addressing

the areas where significant change should be made to improve the educational outcomes for Māori students.

For the secondary sector this translated into specific targets for improved engagement in years 9 and 10 with priorities of increasing the effectiveness of teaching and learning and increased student involvement in decision-making about their future education pathways. In terms of leadership, the priorities for effective and accountable professional leadership focuses on improved Māori student presence, engagement and achievement, as well as strengthening school planning and reporting processes. There continues to be a focus and priority on developing constructive whānau-school relationships.

Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners

Tātaiako, Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners (Ministry of Education & New Zealand Teachers Council, 2011) has been released to further promote and encourage personalised learning for and with Māori learners, their whānau and iwi. It has been developed by the New Zealand Teachers Council to provide a link to both the Graduating Teacher Standards and Registered Teacher Criteria. The five competencies below, although they are not formal standards or criteria, are designed to establish practice focused on knowing, respecting and working with Māori learners, whānau and iwi. The competencies are:

- Wānanga – participates with learners and communities in robust dialogue for the benefit of Māori learners' achievement;
- Whanaungatanga – actively engages in respectful working relationships with Māori learners, parents and whānau, hapu, iwi and the Māori community;
- Manaakitanga – demonstrates integrity, sincerity and respect towards Māori beliefs, language and culture;

- Tangata Whenuatanga – affirms Māori learners as Māori – provides contexts for learning where the identity, language and culture (cultural locatedness) of Māori learners and their whānau is affirmed; and

- Ako – takes responsibility for their own learning and that of Māori learners.

Mātau (knowledge and understanding) is considered a priority focus for school leaders – which means "being able to lead and engage others in validating and affirming Māori and iwi culture". Whilst the expectation is to provide specific competencies for improved teaching and engagement of Māori students, there is also an expectation that school leaders will value the intent of these competencies and will plan accordingly and provide professional learning opportunities to ensure the competencies become embedded into practice at the different stages of a teacher's teaching career.

He Kākano

In July 2010 the MoE accepted a joint proposal from the University of Waikato and Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiarangi to commence the *He Kākano* programme. This is a school-based professional development programme to support up to one hundred secondary schools and their leaders to strategically focus and improve culturally responsive leadership and teacher practices to enable Māori learners to enjoy educational success as Māori. The programme with an interpretive approach works with leaders to build cultural and contextual responsiveness and create ways for leaders to effect change for Māori students.

School leaders work with the *He Kākano* team to familiarise themselves with central Māori contexts and leaders are asked to consider their own cultural being and cultural experiences to reflect on the way they think and act as leaders. School leaders do some of their learning in a bi-cultural context guided by tikanga Māori, a Māori way of doing and thinking. The programme proceeds from 2010 to the end of 2012 with school leaders attending five wānanga (forums) within that period (Ministry of Education, 2010).

CULTURAL COMPETENCE FOR LEADERSHIP

The purpose of determining cultural competence is to establish senior leader capacity in relation to cultural awareness and inclusiveness and how it is developed and encouraged in the wider context of the school. Questions that need to be considered are: Is there disconnect between espoused theory and practice?; Has the school moved beyond cultural tokenism, believing a whānau class (extended family group that does not necessarily represent blood relationships) or kapa haka (Māori performing group) is adequate in providing a commitment to Māori student achievement? This theme examines how school leaders create a culturally inclusive environment for Māori students and how this is manifested in the culture of the whole school to support improved Māori student achievement.

Cultural competence is supported by Cross, Bazron, Dennis, and Isaacs (1989) who developed a six point inclusion continuum which challenged professionals to rank themselves in regards to their cultural capacity and ability to work effectively in cross-cultural situations. This continuum provides a framework for secondary school leaders to measure their level of cultural competence and to identify their strengths and weaknesses. An overview of the six points of the continuum are:

1. Cultural destructiveness: those who believe or engage in behaviours that reinforce the superiority of one race or culture over another, resulting in oppression of the group who are viewed as inferior;
2. Cultural incapacity: those who have less actively destructive beliefs or behaviour but are paternalistic and lack the skills to be effective with individuals from diverse groups;
3. Cultural blindness: those who profess that culture, race and/or language make no difference and explicitly or implicitly encourage assimilation;
4. Cultural pre-competence: those who accept the need for culturally competent policies and procedures but do not proceed beyond tokenism or searching for ways to respond;
5. Cultural competence: those who accept and respect differences and implement policies that support these beliefs and commitments; and

6. Cultural proficiency: those who seek to refine their approach by learning more about diverse groups through research, dissemination and fully inclusive practices.

This is further supported in a New Zealand context by the writings of the following Māori academic authors.

Durie (2011) assesses the journey and future for Māori combining the themes of navigation and discovery. This is a journey that does not discount the past but recognises the search for new destinations with new levels of achievement, new technologies, new alliances and new economies. "Leaders will need to take charge of the future without racing into the future with just simply messages of hope and good intentions". In his book *Ngā Tini Whetū: Navigating Māori Futures* he examines Māori achievement and the learning environment discussing the outcomes from the first Hui Taumata Mātauranga and the framework this provided with 107 recommendations for considering Māori aspirations for education. The three key goals were:

- to live as Māori;
- to actively participate as citizens of the world; and
- to enjoy good health and a high standard of living (p. 126)

Durie (2011) in the fourth Hui Taumata Mātauranga in September 2004 focused on the views of rangatahi surveying a large number of young people still attending secondary school together with the views of two panels, one of young adults and the other of kaumātua and kuia to discuss and consider the important aspects of their years at school. Despite the diversity in age they shared similar aspirations wanting the best for themselves and those who would follow, they knew the importance of education but were concerned about the learning process. Of the number of themes explored, five emerged with particular emphasis:

- relationships for learning;
- enthusiasm for learning;

- balanced outcomes for learning;

- being Māori; and

- preparing for the future (p.137)

The three groups were unanimous in regards to relationships for learning and identified these as relationships with teachers, peers and whānau with an atmosphere conducive to seek help and ask questions, acknowledging that isolation, fear or ridicule and narrow thinking were not compatible for the best educational outcomes for Māori. For many the relationship with teachers had not always been positive and whilst they recognised the professional roles of teachers they identified positive relationships with teachers to be ones where aspirations connected and were shared, where teachers could engage with learners at a personal level showing interest and respect beyond task and information transfer (Durie, 2011).

Macfarlane (2004) expands on the danger of treating all children the same, seeing this as the dominant culture's attempt to intentionally or unintentionally ignore the different outlooks of Māori, their world view, and the impact this has had on marginalising individual differences, cultural identities and culturally preferred values and beliefs. "This has been the outcome for many Māori over more than a century of state education in New Zealand" (p.12).

According to Macfarlane (2010) critical factors in the under-achievement, marginalisation and exclusion of Māori students in mainstream education environments and supported by a number of research observations, is the lack of recognition of a Māori world view, and perceived cultural deficits by the dominant culture. There should be a stronger intention by schools to provide better understanding of the concepts and strategies that offer culturally responsive pedagogy and develop culturally informed professionals who offer authentic services.

Bevan-Brown (2008) discusses the many complicated combinations of factors in education that are influenced by cultural values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions and raises the issue of educators needing to gain a better understanding of how Pākehā (white New Zealand) culture influences our education system and the effect it has on minority ethnic groups. As the majority of our educators and administrators come from middle-class Pākehā backgrounds it is obvious that these will be the predominant values, beliefs and experiences that are not only reproduced but also reinforced in our schools.

Fundamental to this mode of thinking and practice is how this impacts on the performance of students from the non-dominant culture. For many of these students they sacrifice their cultural identity and language "leaving these at the school gate and enter to learn in environments where the dominant culture often imposes a deficit ideology that counteracts cultural inclusiveness and academic success" (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavanagh, & Bateman, 2007).

Webber (2008) asserts that the implications of ethnic and individual identity become more prominent in adolescence. It is during this time that students are more conscious of their peers, of themselves as social beings and their self-perceptions are highly dependent on affirmation and acceptance by others. During secondary schooling, awareness of the politics associated with ethnic identity, prejudice and ethnic hierarchies becomes more obvious. She endorses that the priority for educators should be about understanding how young people identify and connect with belonging to their inherent ethnic groups. Cultural identity has a significant bearing on the under-achievement of Māori as they continue to face racial stereotyping that often unjustifiably associates being Māori, with being anti-intellectual and/or of low academic ability.

There is a need for educators to be agents of change focussing on the process of transformative outcomes and to ask critical questions relating to different schooling approaches to meet the needs and aspirations of indigenous people. Within the

transformation there also has to be a revival of accepting and encouraging a Māori world view, which has been suppressed by colonisation processes and the influence of the dominant society. "One of the common faults of previous schooling interventions has been the inadequate attention paid to the aspect of supporting the maintenance of Māori culture and identity" (Smith, 2003, p. 6).

The concerns raised by the above Māori authors have been echoed by other theorists. According to Nuthall (2007) there is no doubt that there are significant differences in the educational achievement of students from different ethnic and cultural backgrounds and this needs to be a serious consideration for teachers and school leaders. The difference in attainment and success arises from the experience these students have therefore the problem can be located to the culture of teaching. This is also supported by Petty (2009) who believes many educators assume that by setting and expecting the "same" they are providing equal opportunities, yet this is not an accurate assumption to make. Students have different needs, so therefore need to be treated accordingly.

Indigenous ethnic minorities have been shown to display unique learning and cognitive patterns as compared to European students. These unique learning preferences should be supported by culturally responsive teaching methods as opposed to the typically used instructional methods consistent with patterns that apply to the dominant culture (Sherman, Rasmussen, & Baydala, 2004).

Milne (2009) in her report on cultural identity and learning in school discusses the importance for schools to ensure Māori students develop positive self-identities during their schooling experiences and that for many this is being stripped and lost. For schools to equip Māori students for the future they need to examine their definitions of success and achievement and develop learning models that allow Māori students to feel secure in their identities.

Petty (2006) believes effective schools do not mistake common practice for best practice, are not just about improving systems, but should prioritise their focus on improving teaching and learning and student experiences. Included within this framework is culture management to foster and develop positive values, beliefs and expectations of both staff and students. Staff have to believe that their actions can make a difference in order to act effectively. Petty also notes that two cycles of culture management include the *'virtuous cycle'* which has a focus on improvement and action based on positive values and beliefs; as opposed to the *'vicious cycle'* of believing that success is dependent on factors outside of the school's control which engenders a lowering of expectations and acceptance of poor performance for some students.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP

This theme investigates the practice of senior leaders in terms of planning and implementing explicit strategic vision and direction, in order to effectively promote and initiate whole school improvement, develop collaborative working environments and build future sustainability.

Fullan (2008) states that leaders when addressing complex issues need to create conditions for success by having sound strategies linked to clear outcomes, a cohesive focus and conditions that value peer interaction, which he refers to as "connecting peers with purpose", rather than individuals at the top working alone to develop strategic plans that the rest of the organisation are unable to connect to or value.

Smith (2008) explains that to be strategic is not just about developing elaborate plans with cleverly crafted goals and objectives. It should more importantly involve an action plan that is contextual and flexible with the ability to take decisive and

deliberate actions. This entails knowing the first steps and how they will lead to subsequent actions.

This is a view shared by Razik & Swanson (2001) linking strategy with change and development that guides the course of action to provide the organisation with direction - how things should be done. Goals and targets need to be explicit in their wording, and over a period of time, success can be measured by the consistency of behaviour. Developing a statement of beliefs as part of the strategic process examines the personal values and assumptions that often guide the operation of an organisation. In doing so, attention moves from an individual focus to a broader investigation of the organisation as a social system. Focus shifts to the unacknowledged keystones that guide the behaviour, decisions and culture of the organisation in an attempt to establish a formal expression of fundamental principles to describe the organisation's moral character and ethical code to represent a unified connection and partnership.

Morden (2007) also describes the process of strategic management and planning as inter-related and inter-acting, each informing and influencing the other. The preparation of strategies and plans are the prime responsibility of leaders in all organisations and the establishment of these formalises the systematic process of key decision making to reveal the objectives, purpose and goals of the organisation, and to produce policies and plans of action to achieve the goals and targets. Strategic management identifies the character and direction of the whole organisation now, and projects how it will progress towards the future. This determines the purpose and provides a framework for decision making in terms of leadership, staffing, resourcing, professional development and time frames, to name a few. Implementation takes place within two contexts – the internal structure and constraints of the organisation in terms of leadership, resources, knowledge, experience, capability and culture; and the external constraints of political and competitive environments where strategic choice is influenced by the partnerships and relationships with external organisations.

Cardno (2001) endorses the concept of a whole school approach to support and reflect chosen strategies with decision making and formulation of plans connecting from senior leadership level, to middle management level, through to teaching staff. Strategies need to be practically aligned to the availability of resources and expertise together with a strong commitment from all levels of the school organisation. The inclusive process of strategic thinking and planning at all levels of a school can develop a positive learning environment for all stakeholders.

Bandura (1993) agrees with an inclusive process defining effective principals as those who excel in promoting and encouraging their staff to work collaboratively with a strong sense of purpose and belief in their own self-efficacy to overcome obstacles to educational attainment. This style of leadership promotes a collective instructional efficacy and creates a positive atmosphere towards academic success.

Leading Whole School Improvement

Robinson (2006) has noted a shift from generic leadership to educational leadership progressing away from a predominant focus on business skills established as part of the eighties' and nineties' movement to school self-management. Senior leaders were more focused on the numerous tasks and responsibilities of running a business and creating a vision rather than sound educational theory and practice. The more recent shift for senior leaders has been to increase the emphasis of leading teaching and learning and distributed leadership. "It was assumed that, as experienced teachers, principals had sufficient knowledge of teaching and learning, and that much of the work of instructional leadership would be delegated to senior staff. Principals' priorities were to get on with being good generic managers, through the development of a vision, excellent communication with all stakeholders and wise use of resources" (Robinson, 2006, pp. 5-6).

Improving Student Outcomes

According to Smith (2008) high levels of student success are not necessarily the same as student achievement. Success should be measured by social and emotional growth; awareness and understanding of social justice; teamwork; problem solving and critical thinking and not just academic achievement.

Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) discuss how leaders who believe their capacity is inherent, when they are faced with difficulties and challenges, start to experience a diminishing sense of efficacy and ability to problem solve, leading to lower expectations for individuals and groups (other leaders, teachers and students) within their school, which in turn leads to a decline in performance across the whole organisation. This is in contrast to leaders who believe their capacity to be more effective comes from acquirable skills to expand their competence, continue to set challenging goals for themselves and their colleagues and collaboratively problem solve in order to predict high levels of organisational performance

Day, Sammons, Leithwood, Hopkins, Gu, Brown & Artaridou, (2011) consider professional values, ethics and educational ideals are integral to what, why and how leaders adapt their practice to fit the varied contexts in which they work. The ability to strategically translate their values, beliefs and ethics into their vision, purpose, strategies and practice and then ensure these are widely communicated, clearly understood and supported by staff, students and their local community, will have an effective impact on improving successful student outcomes.

Day et al., (2011) found in their three year research project conducted in England on the *Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes,* almost all leaders had a core set of practices but for these to be effective, depended on the way in which they were enacted in context to the situations leaders found themselves in. This was also significantly dependent on the values and qualities of the leader and on the level of skill the leader had to understand the fundamental causes of the problems they

encountered. A leader's understanding and disposition strongly influenced the way in which they interpreted challenges and how they would respond. The leaders' characteristics would then influence how others respond and is dependent on relational trust. They found a difference in primary and secondary schools with primary school teachers having higher levels of collective efficacy which translated to higher levels of teacher confidence in their ability to organise and implement educational initiatives for students to attain higher levels of achievement.

The four core set of practices identified by (Day et al., 2011) were closely correlated to the five dimensions of school leadership that impact on student outcomes (Robinson et al., 2009). These five dimensions are a broad set of leadership practices emerging from 12 studies nationally and internationally and all recognise both the task and person (relational) aspects required to lead improved student outcomes:

1. Establishing goals and expectations – setting, communicating and monitoring of learning goals, standards and expectations, and the involvement of staff and others in the process so that there is clarity and consensus about goals;
2. Resourcing strategically – involves aligning resource selection and allocation to priority teaching goals. Includes provision of appropriate expertise through staff recruitment;
3. Planning, co-ordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum – direct involvement in the support and evaluation of teaching through regular classroom visits and the provision of formative and summative feedback to teachers. Direct oversight of curriculum through school-wide coordination across classes and year levels and alignment to school goals;
4. Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development – leadership that not only promotes but directly participates with teachers in formal or informal professional learning; and
5. Ensuring and orderly and supportive environment – protecting time for teaching and learning by reducing external pressures and interruptions and establishing an orderly and supportive environment both inside and outside classrooms (Robinson et. al, 2009, p.95).

School Self Review

Day et al. (2011) in their analysis of these five dimensions found leaders of high performing schools gave greater emphasis to setting, communicating, monitoring and reporting school goals, particularly student achievement, and worked directly with teachers, departments and middle leaders. They were more likely to provide evaluations that teachers found useful and ensured student progress was monitored and the results used to improve teaching. Teachers in these schools reported that their leaders were initiators who were actively involved in professional learning, giving valuable pedagogical advice, and were able to discuss changes and support them as they modified and fine-tuned their programmes and practice.

The two attributes that are associated with change and define a leader, is his/her ability to identify issues and influence action in critical self-reviews. This is supported by Fink (2005) who describes the importance for leaders to make connections by developing sound knowledge and understanding of the contexts of internal and external educational issues that impact on their students. Any major educational reform movement all identifies leadership as the impetus for change.

According to Sutton (1994) school self-reviews are generally motivated by two main sources related to performance - *intrinsic*, from within where school leaders are wanting reassurance of students receiving the best possible learning opportunities and to ascertain how well they are achieving; or *extrinsic* - from beyond where there is an expectation of accountability and responsibility which is subject to external and public inspection.

Bonnici (2011) emphasises the distractions of public inspection, administration, political demands, testing and measuring, often impact on a school leader's ability to focus on what is really the first priority, the education of children. Successful student achievement is dependent on professional staff who care about students, understand and are committed to good teaching and leaders who are role models to both students and staff. Formal documents that define roles and clarify procedures assists the establishment of an operational framework, however, the vision, strategies and plans of school leaders are meaningless if they are not shared and

actively implemented by the teachers. Competent school leaders continually design professional development and learning opportunities to ensure staff understand their contribution to the education and well-being of students.

SUMMARY

The literature presented in this chapter supports the research aims and questions of this thesis by providing an overview of the government's acknowledgment of its obligation as a Treaty partner, and how it has attempted to initiate and motivate change in educational outcomes for Māori students. There has been an earnest endeavour at an official level to provide guidelines for all secondary principals. These initiatives are supported by leading Māori academics who convey the significance of culturally responsive pedagogy and practice, also advocated by non-Māori academics, highlighting the necessity for effective leadership and teaching, and recognition of cultural differences and world views. This requires senior leaders to develop, implement and review formal strategic plans to ensure that they articulate explicitly, the vision and direction for whole school change and sustainability.

Government Reports have identified the low levels of achievement of Māori students in New Zealand secondary schools. Consequently there has been Ministry of Education initiatives to improve leadership, teaching and cultural responsiveness in New Zealand school sectors. These initiatives have provided guidance and a framework for senior leaders to enhance cultural competence, improve student outcomes and lead whole school improvement.

Chapter Three

METHODOLOGY

INTRODUCTION

The researcher selected a qualitative research methodology to explore the issues and develop a deeper understanding of the leadership practice of secondary school senior leaders. Qualitative research aims to gather information on human behaviour and questions the why and how of decision-making presenting analyses of society as opposed to quantifying and applying measures to social life, and can be used to test theories.

Briggs & Coleman (2007) endorse using a qualitative research methodology to examine the complexities of school leadership and management structures. Schools that are more focussed on collaborative and distributive leadership will often have individuals that are a leader in one context but a follower or team member in another. Therefore it is important to recognise and acknowledge these complexities without adopting a simplistic view of school leadership. With this in mind, it can be difficult for a researcher to connect the informal aspects of leadership and management activities directly to improvement in student learning.

Guba and Lincoln (2005) view qualitative research in terms of reflexivity. This is the process of critical reflection and human inquiry and what they refer to as "human as instrument" (p. 210). Reflexivity is consciously experiencing "self" as both inquirer and respondent, teacher and learner and suggests that we have many "selves" that we bring into different contexts including historic, socially and personally created stand-points, and situational selves. They discuss how the inquiry process is entering an age of greater spirituality with an emphasis on ecological values, respect for non-western communal forms of living, integrating the sacred with the secular to promote freedom and self-determination.

The perspective of those being studied is seen as important and significant, and provides the point of orientation. The researcher has close involvement with the participants of their study to enable a genuine understanding of their world view with concept and theory elaboration emerging throughout data collection. Qualitative research investigates people in their own environment and is therefore more attuned to the connections and interactions between participants. Contextual understanding of behaviour, values and beliefs plays a significant role and can produce rich data. It is invariably unstructured and more flexible to ensure participants' meaning and perspective is enhanced during data collection, or as events unfold (Bryman, 2008, pp. 393-394).

Keeves (1997) views educational research as an opportunity to probe into the complex nature of educational problems, stating that it is rare for educational issues to be reduced to only two constructs or variables, and that more commonly there are many factors operating jointly that will influence outcomes. It is necessary for the researcher to provide accounts of the "whole" in order to understand the interrelations of the different parts, providing a systematic approach of studying the patterns and elements considered to be interdependent and inseparable. This leads to an investigation of factors that influences both in-depth learning and change over time.

INTERPRETIVISM

There are still too many secondary school leaders failing to identify and acknowledge the explicit issues and barriers for Māori students to achieve at the same level as their non-Māori counterparts. This has led me to adopt an epistemological position of interpretivism, which is an examination of the interpretation and understanding of the social world by its participants using qualitative research strategies. The research aims and questions have been developed to investigate, examine and understand the values, beliefs and behaviours of senior leaders in secondary schools to action change for improved Māori student achievement.

Differing epistemological positions in educational research have evolved over time. In the early 1970s educational researchers Cronbach (1974) and Campbell (1974) reacted against the traditional positivist quantitative methods in favour of alternative methods of inquiry. In their view, the advancement of computer technology had significantly assisted researchers with complex calculations and greater statistical techniques opening the possibility for more qualitative research. This led to research in teacher-pupil interactions, teacher effectiveness and the social aspects of teaching and learning. During the 1980s and 1990s alternative research strategies to incorporate naturalistic observation and descriptions of individual's behaviour within their own environments to better understand school failure and hidden curriculum became more widely used (de Landsheere, 1997).

Interpretivism is a detailed observation of people in their natural setting used to gain a deeper understanding of how people create, exist and maintain their social worlds with conclusions drawn from particular facts or examples. The researcher prior to beginning their study already has their own theory and rather than reducing complexities into isolated components, develops their findings to show the connections and inter-relations. Values are an integral part of interpretive social research and assists the researcher to identify how people develop understanding of their own worlds (Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

According to Denzin & Lincoln (2005) qualitative research is a set of multiple interpretive practices based on an inquiry of socially constructed reality, relationships and situational constraints. The researcher deploys a wide range of interconnected practices in order to gain a better understanding of the subject matter. The practices form a series of interpretive representations and a naturalistic approach to the subject world, studying things in their natural settings to make sense of the meanings people bring to them having an emphasis on qualities of entities and focuses on processes and meanings that are not experimentally examined or measured.

Cohen, Manion, & Morrison (2007) state that people attempt to comprehend the world around them by using three types of reasoning: deductive – a sequence of formal steps of logic; inductive – where a study of individual cases leads to a hypothesis and eventually a generalisation; and a combination of inductive-deductive – a back and forth process from observation to hypothesis to implications (pp. 6-7). An interpretive view focuses on an inductive-deductive reasoning in an attempt to describe and explain human behaviour in an anti-postivist approach by seeing knowledge as personal, subjective and unique. The principal concern is to understand ways in which individuals create, interpret and modify their world views and by understanding the stand-point of individuals who are part of the on-going action being investigated.

An interpretive paradigm places emphasis on behaviour with meaning and is future oriented analysing social episodes in terms of participants and how they construe their world, while probing into their accounts of their actions. A criticism of interpretivism is the power of others to impose their own definitions of situations upon participants, and the risk that interpretive approaches become sealed from the world outside the participants' theatre of activity placing artificial boundaries around subjects' behaviour (Cohen et al., 2007).

SAMPLE SELECTION OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

The decision to gain participation from three schools in both the Northland and Auckland region was to ensure a good cross-section in terms of Māori student numbers and senior leadership teams. Northland schools generally have a higher number of Māori students on their rolls and there could be some interesting comparative data in terms of leadership perception and practice from outside the Auckland area.

The shared commonalities of the three schools is that they are all English medium state schools and all have a Māori student population over 12%. Their senior leadership teams consisted of a principal and at least two deputy principals. Consideration was also given to the decile ratings of the schools involved and selection was based on low to mid range, decile 1 to decile 5. Decile numbers are a way in which the Ministry of Education allocates funding to schools and decile 1 schools represent the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities as opposed to decile 10 schools who are in the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of low socio-economic students. The decile rating of a school does not indicate the overall socio-economic mix or measure the standard of education delivered (Ministry of Education, 2011).

PROFILES OF PARTICIPATING SCHOOLS

	School A	School B	School C
Institute Type	Secondary Years 9-13	Secondary Years 9-13	Composite Years 7-13
Location	Northland	Northland	Auckland
Authority	State	State	State
Gender	Single Sex	Co-educational	Co-educational
Roll Size	1184	386	1068
Decile Rating	5	1	1
Senior leadership structure	Principal Deputy Principals x3	Principal Deputy Principals x2	Principal Deputy Principals x2
Percentage of Māori students	34%	85%	20%
Ethnic composition of student population	NZ/European 56% Pasifika 1% Asian 3% Other 6%	NZ/European 11% Pasifika 2% Asian 1% Other 1%	NZ/European and Other 3% Cook Island Māori 11% Pasifika 63% Asian 3%

Source: (information provided independently by each participating school)

INTERVIEW SAMPLE

Epistemological positions in social research concern philosophical questions around what is regarded as legitimate knowledge, however, people from different ethnicities and cultures will often have very different ontologies (differing world views), and epistemological assumptions based on their own values and belief systems. This is an area that I wanted to investigate further to determine how personal values and beliefs could contribute to personal bias and impact on professional decision-making.

As this research is focussed on secondary senior leaders I decided to interview two members of each of the participating schools' senior leadership team. Secondary school senior leadership teams usually comprise of a principal, deputy principals and or associate and assistant principals, often a mix of titles and roles dependent on the size of the school and team. The senior leadership team is in charge of setting the strategic direction for the whole school aligned to their charter, mission statements and Ministry of Education national foci, with members of these teams usually having individual areas of responsibility across the school to ensure strategic goals and targets are met annually.

Principals were selected because they have the over-riding authority on the strategic direction of the school and have a direct responsibility to the board of trustees for the community they serve. The other members of each team were selected by the principal on the basis of their area of responsibility primarily teaching and learning and or student achievement. In both the Northland schools, deputy principals held this role and in the Auckland school the college director participated. An unexpected limitation was the unavailability of a second senior leader from School B. This provokes the idea that there could be some resistance to the current changes being implemented by this school principal.

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS SAMPLE

The second part of the research was to analyse the documents schools were developing to strategically identify, plan and address Māori student achievement and to action improved outcomes. Schools provided their charter and strategic annual plans. School B, provided an additional self-review document conducted over a term, written by the various leaders responsible for specific areas of the school in consultation with their staff and aimed to promote student learning and achievement, together with reporting on legislative requirements.

These documents have been established to guide the strategic direction of the whole school – senior leadership team, middle leaders in charge of curriculum and pastoral care and teaching staff, with specific goals and targets focussed on improved teaching and learning to raise student achievement. The documents provide middle leaders and teaching staff with explicit goals and objectives in a number of key areas incorporating a projected timeline of action to meet specified targets within each key area. It is an expectation that middle leaders throughout the school, particularly curriculum leaders responsible for student achievement collaborate with their staff to implement programmes aligned to the strategic goals and targets, developing reports at certain times of the year to identify and discuss the progress being made.

This provides the senior leadership team with school based comparative data that is used to measure the success of specific key factors within the strategic plan and to further assist with identifying the use of school and community resources as well as the development of staff professional learning programmes.

RESEARCH METHODS

Interviews

Qualitative research often uses interviews as a form of systematic inquiry where the purpose is to obtain a rich in-depth experiential account from the participating respondents. There is an inherent reliance on the accurateness of the responses from the interviewees and that the information gathered has not been unduly biased by the relationship that often evolves between the interviewer and interviewee during the interview process (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

The first research method used was one-to-one interviews. This method was selected because the aim of this research was to investigate and understand the attitudes and values of secondary school senior leaders in relation to improving Māori student learning outcomes. To do this would require gathering in-depth information based on their personal and professional account of their role and responsibility as a senior leader on a potentially complex and controversial subject, depending on their ontological position.

Bryman (2008) regards interviews as a reconstruction of events probing interviewees to reflect on a number of aspects and explain how they have evolved in relation to a current situation. Allowing a more flexible response to questions and adjusting the emphases as significant information emerges permits the respondent to answer as they see fit and decreases the potential for the interviewer to adopt or include their own personal bias. Adding face-sheet questions that provide general information such as the interviewee's position and number of years employed in the position is useful for contextualising responses.

A semi-structured interview process was used whereby a set of pre-determined questions were established and presented to all participants. Structured and semi-structured interviews are similar in that both approaches ensure that each interview is conducted with exactly the same questions in the same order. A semi-structured interview differs as it is generally more flexible and allows the interviewer to ask new questions to expand on information that has been introduced by the interviewee during the interview and to further explore the framework of themes developing.

An interview schedule was developed with a set of 11 questions presented in a logical sequential order and aligned to the themes being investigated to provide a standardised script to base each interview on. The schedule was emailed to participants a week prior to their interview taking place to enable interviewees to reacquaint themselves with the research topic and consider the content and context of the questions posed. All participants were asked the same set of questions irrespective of their position in the school. The only variance adapted was in the principal's interviews where they were asked an additional four questions related to the school documents being provided for documentary analysis. The same four questions were asked to investigate authorship, intended audience and contributing documentation (Fontana & Frey, 2005, p. 702).

Hinds (2000) discusses the importance of developing consistent procedures to ensure results can be effectively measured to establish whether the research tool is effective and the aims of the research are being achieved. This applies even more so when interviews are being conducted in a specific environment like a school

where the research topic is relative to that school and is expecting to verify the effect of specific thoughts and actions, particularly when procedures are being repeated in order to obtain comparative results.

All interviews were conducted on-site at the school campus of the respective participating schools to eliminate the need for interviewees to travel unnecessarily and to also enable participants to feel more comfortable and relaxed within their own working environments. An audio recorder was used to tape each interview producing a digital audio file that was uploaded onto a computer for ease of transcription, as well as taking notes on key points to remember particular individual responses.

Wilkinson (2001) explains the necessity for interviewees to have autonomy in making their own decisions in terms of participation. All the senior leaders had the opportunity to ask questions regarding the research either personally, via email or phone prior to, during, and at the end of data collection, including the right to withdraw from the research at any stage. A transcription of their interview was emailed confidentially to each participant and they were given 14 days from receipt of the email to make amendments and verify the content of the interview for use in this thesis.

Documentary Analysis

The concept of conducting a document research was to have the participating schools provide written evidence of how they were addressing the complexities of improved Māori student learning outcomes and to ascertain what was guiding their strategic decision making and school-wide action. School policies provide an additional in-sight into the culture of the organisation and how it functions, and when used in research can complement the other methods being used. Another benefit of document analysis is that it can be used to compare the rhetoric of the document with the perspectives of the people being interviewed to determine whether the espoused values and practices match.

The 1989 education reform known as Tomorrow's Schools focused on operational and managerial autonomy within tighter accountability frameworks separating public sector policy and operations. There was also a desire to increase the home-school partnership, and to improve educational opportunity and achievement for disadvantaged groups, particularly Māori children. This substantial shift in practice redeployed the responsibility for managing schools to elected boards of trustees and delegated more responsibility to principals. It permitted greater freedom and independence in terms of self-governance, strategic management and policy development (Butterworth & Butterworth, 1998).

Fitzgerald (2012) discusses the notion of documents occupying every facet of our personal and professional worlds providing narrative proof of our existence in numerous contexts. Documentary analysis is an interpretive research method entailing the collection, collation and analysis of empirical data to construct theoretic explanations to describe and interpret a series of events. Educational institutions generate a number of policies and documents providing valuable information as well as the opportunity for researchers of educational leadership and management to read between the lines of the bureaucratic dialogue.

Authenticity of the origin and authorship contributes to the validity and credibility of the document. The majority of the documents were constructed by the principal in consultation with their senior leadership teams and boards of trustees. Depending on the multifaceted structure and composition of the document it can be difficult to decipher a single objective meaning and often meaning and understanding is a matter of interpretation and will depend on the intention of the author and the perspective of the reader (Wellington, 2000).

Documents are generally considered secondary sources of data because they are usually subjected to a certain level of interpretation and analysis during their construct. One of the main benefits of using secondary data is that the contextual

work has already been carried out preventing the researcher from having to spend too much time in the initial phase of collecting data. Qualitative documentary research is not just the analysis of pre-existing data, but rather a process of re-contextualising and re-constructing data that can assist in establishing the epistemological view of the author.

DATA ANALYSIS

Data analysis is the transformative process of taking raw data gathered during the data collection stage using systematic procedures to sort data into categories and themes to develop findings. The inductive nature of qualitative research places the researcher as central to the analysis process. The analysis of their work cannot be done alone by computers or other parties not directly involved in the research (Lofland, Snow, Anderson, & Lofland, 2006).

Bryman (2008) discusses the wide use of grounded theory as a framework for analysing qualitative data. The two central features of this method is the development of theory out of data and the repeated connections between data collection and analysis.

The three dimensions of data analysis are data reduction (coding); data display; and conclusion and verification. According to Miles & Huberman (1994) the three processes below are interwoven occurring before, during and after data collection in parallel form.

- The data reduction process of selecting, simplifying and abstracting field notes or transcriptions should be occurring continuously throughout the life of the research project in order to have the correct information that tells the evolving story without stripping data from the context in which it occurred;

- Data display organises the assembly of information to permit conclusion, assisting understanding or whether other action is required based on new understandings evolving. The most common form of display is field notes or text, but should include matrices, graphs and charts to organise information into an accessible and compact form; and

- Conclusion drawing analysis should be occurring right from the beginning. Deciding what things mean, noting regularities, patterns and explanations. This would take the form of light conclusions however vague or simplistic at first, developing to more explicit conclusion as the study reaches its' final stages (pp. 10-12).

Coding is one of the key tools for data analysis in interpretivism and integral to both the methods of data collection used in this research study. Data is broken into component parts or themes and is treated as potential indicators of concepts, constantly compared to see how they best fit.

Analysis of Interview Data

The use of an interview schedule with a set of pre-determined questions made it relatively straightforward to code the information collected from each participant. The questions were used to separate the data into corresponding themes (questions are discussed individually in chapter four) and this was done in two groupings:

- Group One – Principals
- Group Two – Deputy Principals

This information has been used to compare the similarities and differences of participants in each group and then to further identify whether there are differences in opinion, understanding and commitment to improve Māori student learning outcomes between the principal and deputy principal in each senior leadership team.

Documentary Analysis

Principals were asked four additional questions in their interviews to determine the process used to compile and write school policies related to improved Māori student learning outcomes and to ascertain if this was standardised practise in all their schools. The charter and a planning document outlining the strategic intent and direction of the school to improve Māori student learning outcomes was analysed. The themes used to categorise the information were:

- Authorship and contextual framework: background information;
- Processes to guide development: use of data, other documents, consultation and discussions;
- Purpose and rationale: motivation and objectives; and
- Implementation: presentation and communication - putting it into practice

This information has been used to identify the key factors guiding the three schools in their strategic decision making, goal and target setting, and the depth to which their planning addresses a school-wide commitment to implement change and lead improvement. Furthermore, does the rhetoric of the documents match the disclosed practice of the senior leaders who are responsible for leading change and improvement?

RELIABILITY OF RESULTS

Miles & Huberman (1994) argues peripheral sampling or sampling too narrowly creates issues with validity and reliability of information. It is recommended that researchers also talk to people who are not necessarily central to the study but are related or connected to obtain contrasting and comparative information. When coding and looking for repeated regularities and patterns, the researcher must not lock too quickly into a pattern without fully understanding it. They also discuss the merits of developing conceptual frameworks and staying within the research questions and aims as fundamental to ensuring validity and reliability of information.

The questions developed for the interviews were specifically worded to ensure the aims and rationale of this research study remained uncompromised. The same schedule of questions was used at each interview and this has produced reliable comparative data on the values, beliefs and behaviours of the participating senior leaders. The three principals were asked the same four additional questions at their interviews related to the construction of the documents they were providing for document analysis.

Participating schools were asked to provide documents that identified their strategic planning in relation to whole school achievement and improved Māori student outcomes. Although the title and format of the documents for each school is different fundamentally the documents that have been provided demonstrate the strategic intent and direction of the school over a one year period and this has aided effective comparative data analysis.

Triangulation

Davidson & Tolich (2003) state that strengthening validity of qualitative research is done by triangulation, which refers to the use of different research methods to present perspectives from two or three different angles. Whilst the results may not be easily generalised, if they are presented accurately to reflect the opinions or behaviours of the people in the study, and the different sources of information are saying the same thing, then the researcher can have greater confidence in the validity of their results.

Triangulation in this research study has been achieved by using two research methods. Firstly interviews, with participation from two senior leaders from the same senior leadership team and secondly, document analysis. School policy documents were examined in the context of other sources of data and used as a method of triangulating interview data. The two methods adopted enabled the researcher to

check the authenticity of the rhetoric in school documents with the practice espoused by the senior leaders interviewed. This is echoed by Fitzgerald (2012) who noted the significance of establishing the credibility of the documents by interviewing the authors.

The rhetoric of the school policy documents on student achievement and Māori student outcomes were compared with the perspectives of the senior secondary leaders interviewed. Triangulation in a single investigation could include a number of methods of inquiry and sources of information during the research in order to ensure different perspectives are obtained to strengthen the validity of relationships and findings recorded (Keeves, 1997).

ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The research study was approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC: 2012-1013) and was in accordance with the Unitec New Zealand Policy and Procedures.

Wilkinson (2001) discusses the importance of the researcher's integrity and application of ethical reasoning to ensure the research can be adequately justified in terms of the benefits the study might offer and the burden it could impose on others, illustrating the importance of gaining permission by way of informed, voluntary consent. This means research participants must voluntarily agree, making their own decision without coercion and manipulation, and given all the necessary and relevant information in a genuine and honest attempt, to ensure they know and understand what the research project entails and what their participatory role will be.

Organisation consent was sought from the participating school principals and board of trustees by way of a formal letter providing a detailed outline and explanation of the research aims and questions. Schools were given the option for the researcher

to attend a board meeting or senior leadership meeting to discuss the aims and rationale of the research directly with them. As the research was focused on improving Māori student learning outcomes, schools were offered the opportunity to have the research discussed with their school kaumātua. Neither of these two options was pursued.

On receiving written permission from the school all individual participants received a written agreement and consent form to complete. Participants were ensured of their anonymity and confidentiality during and after the research project. Research that focuses on studying people requires considerable respect for the values and beliefs of the people participating in the project (Wellington, 2000).

Ethical issues cannot be ignored and arise at a variety of stages throughout the research, and not just prior to starting the project. Concerns particularly arise in the four areas of harm to participants, invasion of privacy, deception and informed consent (Bryman, 2008, p. 113). In order to maintain anonymity some data was not used or concealed so that any potentially distinguishing features remained unidentifiable. This included aspects of senior leadership structure and gender of participants.

Chapter Four
FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this research is to provide an overview of the opinions of secondary senior leaders in relation to their professional perspectives and strategic leadership towards improving Māori student learning outcomes. It is anticipated the findings will contribute new knowledge in this area and develop a better understanding of the experiences of senior leaders to effectively lead school-wide change and improvement in what can often be a controversial and challenging area of school leadership. Covered in this chapter are the key themes from the interviews: Senior Leadership Roles; Raising Awareness and Shifting School Culture; Requisite Attributes and Knowledge; Strategic Leadership and Action; Connecting and Consulting with Māori Communities; and Affirming Māori Student Identity. A Documentary Analysis of the three school Charters and Strategic Action Plans is also included.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP ROLES

Question One: What is your position in this senior leadership team and how long have you held this position?

The first two questions were generic in design in order to ascertain the level of experience and tenure in the position, and to provide an insight into the participants' potential knowledge and understanding of the school and community. The second question was to identify what they considered was their main role and leadership foci as either a principal or deputy principal.

The principals of schools A and C have been in their positions for five plus years and felt confident with the knowledge they had of their schools and the community it

served. This also became more evident during the interviews as they reflected on where they had initially started as the new principal of their schools, to where they had progressed to, and what still needed to be accomplished.

The principal of school B had been in this position for half the amount of time compared to the other principals. Throughout this interview it was evident he was still in a phase of significant change management particularly in terms of establishing leadership protocol and structure, within the senior leadership team and across the school. Although he was still relatively new to the school, he was not a first time principal.

All three principals identified resourcing as a major emphasis in their role, irrespective of whether it was related to finance, property or staffing and saw this as integral to the successful operation of their schools. They all identified student learning and achievement and linked this back to the importance of human resourcing, having the right teachers, suited to their school communities and philosophies of the school. This is raised again and discussed throughout the interview.

The two other senior leaders interviewed have held their positions in their schools for five plus years. Their roles and responsibilities were diverse particularly in the case of school A, as opposed to school C where this senior leader's role had a very specific focus on improving Māori student learning outcomes.

> *I lead the initiative of raising Māori student achievement – what influences the way we teach, our relations, our facilities and all the decisions we might make in terms of success for Māori students to ensure it permeates through all areas of the college and it is right at the forefront of everything we do. (Senior Leader SLC)*

RAISING AWARENESS AND SHIFTING SCHOOL CULTURE

Question Two: What are the expectations of you as a senior leader in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?

Principal Perspectives

Principal A saw her role as being a facilitator and mentor, liaising closely with staff, providing the resourcing and impetus for staff involvement and commitment. The school was involved in academic coaching and the principal saw this as another means of keeping student achievement as the focus.

Principal B believed he had a personal expectation and obligation to improve the position of Māori and this was reflected in their school charter and aligned to government goals and legislative requirements of the NEGs and NAGs.[1] This included ensuring there are specific expectations in terms of educational achievement supported through the collection of data and the monitoring and development of appropriate schemes. He also saw his role as a mentor to staff and to provide professional development and learning opportunities specifically related to improving Māori student achievement. This would encompass seeking extra resourcing and ensuring an inclusive whānau and school relationship.

The senior leadership team at School C is participating in the He Kākano initiative to develop their knowledge and skills as relational and pedagogical leaders and to improve their capacity to lead their school in building educational success for and with Māori learners. They have always utilised research into what makes a difference for Māori students and their learning and have actively measured their Māori student achievement. The principal strongly advocated using inquiry to build on what's working and always questioning what needs to be improved.

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[1] Ministry of Education legislative requirements - National Education Goals and National Administration Guidelines

To Lead Whole School Improvement

As far as Principal A was concerned their efforts to improve Māori student learning outcomes was a whole school approach. Departments were required to undertake robust self-reviews with heads of departments meeting regularly with members of the senior leadership team and they had to be prepared to answer hard questions. It was not enough to present some information, they had to be able to articulate explicitly why or why not, then use this information to continue improvement.

> *This is a whole school approach we work together as a team and not in silos. (PA)*

Principal B acknowledged that when he first came into the position at this school the organisation and culture of the school was operating on low expectations shared by the teachers, students, whānau and the community. This has encouraged a whole school drive in student achievement and excellence in using Te Reo. Senior students were now winning Mana Kōrero speech contests, and the establishment of Year 9 and 10 classes in the medium of Te Reo for Science, Mathematics, Social Studies, Physical Education and a language were starting to exhibit some positive results for students. In the principal's first year at the school, one of the heads of faculty told the principal Māori students can't and will never achieve. Apparently this person no longer has this view.

> *They don't have the same view now it was based on a learned helplessness and to some extent colonisation that equals their feelings of being disempowered, not really their own view point. (PB)*

Principal C believed for whole school improvement and progress, the senior leadership team had to be effective and share the same vision and sense of purpose. Recruiting the right people into the right positions was also important to ensure continuity and this correlated to how they marketed themselves in terms of ensuring the staff and community understood what the school stands for and what they are wanting to accomplish.

Senior Leader Perspectives

It is significant that in School B the two other senior leaders declined participating in the interview.

The Deputy Principal of School A had responsibility for school wide assessment and there was an expectation to have a specific focus to produce statistical data in a format that could be used by the teaching staff and various departments. This information would be used as part of departmental reporting, based on whether they are meeting school goals and objectives in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes. This included meeting and working alongside the different heads of departments she supervised.

The senior leader interviewed for School C was Māori and valued the school's commitment and focus to improving Māori student learning outcomes. The staff in the school had high expectations of him and this was important in his role as a senior leader.

> *I am Māori, so it sits with me as Māori and in my role as a senior manager. They see me as Māori, the one to make the connections with the community and being spiritually located. (SLC)*

To Lead Whole School Improvement

The senior leader of School A spoke positively about the team approach of the whole senior leadership team. Regular staff meetings, meeting with the principal and heads of departments contributed to the development of a collective and collegial understanding and awareness of what needed to be done across the whole school. In her role presenting an overview of NCEA results at the beginning of the year to all staff facilitated discussions focussed on the improvements that had been made in Māori student achievement, or, if there hadn't been any in some areas, delving into why not and where to next.

The template I produce is to lead department reviews – to ensure the quality of information we receive improves annually. (SLA)

The senior leader of School C discussed the importance of making use of the literature that is available on improving student achievement and particularly anything researched and focused on Māori students to support a pedagogical approach to leadership. He had the same positive response in relation to the way their senior leadership team worked together and believed the model they used was both co-operative and distributive. Leadership was distributed down from senior management, through to middle management and down to staff incorporating the voice of all their people at the same time, including student voice and community voice. In his opinion, all their staff were in the wāka on the same journey, and they are taking everybody with them.

Whakawhanaungatanga – the process of establishing relationships and relating well with others, ensuring we are making the right decisions. This is the fundamental model for whole school improvement. My view of whakawhanaungatanga is that we are inclusive of all people, it has to fit for everybody. What is good for Māori might work for others, we don't make that assumption but we ask people, like our Tongan community, we would ask them, does this set of practices fit and how would they like to adapt it. (SLC)

Question Four: What do you consider are the challenges for a senior leader in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?

Principal Perspectives

Principal A discussed the importance of knowing where to start first and then accessing the most appropriate data and information to determine what to do next, perceiving this as a potential issue and challenge when you are initially starting this journey. Although this school already has a few initiatives in place the principal felt it was often difficult to know or measure which initiative was producing the best results. Financial resourcing to support initiatives was important and without it, it would be more difficult to build future sustainability. She acknowledged teacher deficit thinking

and tokenism as one of the biggest challenges, believing this had an impact on the ability of some teachers to engage Māori students effectively.

> *We can see improvement in Māori student achievement but it's not always easy to actually say why. (PC)*

Principal B believed his own self-belief was integral to improving the culture of the school. Others had to see that he believed and had high expectations for Māori students. The challenge was to raise teacher awareness and develop their self-belief, that Māori students can learn and it is possible for them to achieve. In his opinion, he considered the problem to some extent was prejudice coupled with teacher power in terms of their perceived authority.

Principal C believed the real challenge is establishing what is going to make the biggest difference. There are always initiatives and countless possibilities to consider but getting the right components to enable Māori students to achieve is difficult. Progress is often slow because shifting beliefs and perceptions based on relationships and school culture cannot suddenly be changed purely by initiatives alone.

> *Steadfast beliefs require nurturing, rethinking, redevelopment and redefining. It is leadership by example – I take personal responsibility for tracking our position. (PC)*

To Lead Whole School Improvement

Although School A had not been involved in Te Kotahitanga[2], the principal acknowledged support for the principles of the project stating she had adopted some of the principles and adapted them to their way of doing things across the whole

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[2] Research and professional development programme for teachers to improve Māori student learning and achievement.

school. In her opinion, the "one size fits all" model was what she disliked about the initiative particularly once the financial resourcing was reduced or ceased.

A problem with participating in projects and initiatives, once the funding goes it is difficult to sustain particular components, schools end up dropping things which reduces momentum – how can that be a success! (PA)

School B, had been involved in Te Kotahitanga for seven years, although the principal felt that in practice the initiative had not worked in terms of improving Māori student achievement across the whole school. Despite the schools participation in the initiative, results were well below the national average and only slightly around the expected average of decile 1 schools, and he believed this identified people as the underlying problem.

I call it paternalism. The relationship is about student comfort and teacher comfort and works in opposition to student achievement, with the focus on improving relationships, but no emphasis on improving student achievement. Nurturing a young person onto the benefit is not to teach. (PB)

While School C had not been eligible to participate in Te Kotahitanga, the principal commented that the expectation for schools to comply with raising Māori student achievement is difficult when you don't always have the right tools. Therefore whole school improvement relies on using the best of what you have got at the time and piecing it all together. In his opinion, senior leadership teams have to know how the school is doing, be able to identify what is making the difference and then share this with the whole staff – everyone has to be aware of the school's position and remain focussed.

Don't get side-tracked by too many things – government agendas, politics, property. It's a complex interplay of events particularly in the current national climate of the microscope on schools. (PC)

Senior Leader Perspectives

In the view of the senior leader of School A, the biggest challenge was diminishing the culture of deficit thinking and blame – ie. blaming a student's home life or lack of attendance. Teachers needed to move past that frame of thinking and focus more on what they can do in their roles to improve Māori student achievement.

The senior leader of School C believed for Māori to be successful required senior leaders and teachers to learn and have an understanding of Māori kaupapa and of what Māori value. The biggest challenges were communication and knowing how to take teachers forward using the principles of āko – the notion of reciprocal teaching and learning, teachers and students together.

> *There is a Māori whakataukī that says - if you don't take the people with you, you stand alone. The challenge is, "so what are our values and in what way do we communicate these values". (SLC)*

To Lead Whole School Improvement

This year there has been a real focus on student attendance and the senior leader of School A has been extra vigilant in pursuing teachers and middle leaders in charge of pastoral care to maintain and monitor attendance records. There had been an improvement in Māori student attendance in the first part of the year and she believed it could be due to the monitoring and discussions coming from this drive and the sense of someone watching, taking notice and willing to have hard conversations with all stakeholders.

In the view of the senior leader School C, he was adamant that it had to start from the top and be led from the front – "*not do as we say but do as we do*". All the senior leadership team had to be on board and heading in the same direction and he believed this was the case for their senior leadership team. He believes it is important that you don't assume that everyone is on board, but that it is approached from the angle of taking a journey of discovery and finding out together.

REQUISITE ATTRIBUTES AND KNOWLEDGE

Question Five: As a senior leader what qualities, knowledge and skills do you consider are important to improve Māori student learning outcomes?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A believed senior leaders have to be genuinely passionate about wanting to make a difference for Māori students, having an open mind and willingness to learn together with the ability to form strong relationships. In her opinion, the senior leadership team had to be strong role models and demonstrate their genuine belief and commitment.

> *If the sincerity is not genuinely in your senior leadership team you will really struggle to get it elsewhere in the school. (PA)*

In terms of knowledge, in her opinion senior leaders must be prepared to find new knowledge and answers, give things a go and keep things going even though it is challenging or not going quite the way it was first intended. Engaging with Ka Hikitia and the latest research to be aware of strategies to improve Māori student learning outcomes was also valuable.

She also considers the most important skill is communication. This included having difficult conversations, asking the right questions and challenging deficit thinking. She wanted to see this extended further in the school with middle leaders doing the same thing in their departments.

The principal of School B considered cultural competence as a necessary quality for senior leaders and explained this in terms of believing that a student is not limited by their genetics and environment. In his view the ability to build relationships was important and would assist in establishing a successful pathway to student achievement but was not an end in itself.

Establish rapport with your students and expect more of your teachers. A young person in the right environment with barriers removed can bring their own dreams into reality and with the right support they can fly – that is the whole purpose of a school. (PB)

He classified knowledge as the ability of knowing and being able to identify what best practice is in relation to leadership and teaching. He spoke about utilising the Best Evidence Synthesis documents and keeping well informed with current research on what is making a difference. In terms of skills, he regarded the ability to prioritise, strategically plan and effectively manage the whole process surrounding school-wide improvement as an essential aspect of a senior leader's role.

The principal of School C believed it was necessary to have a cultural understanding of what it is like for Māori students and their position in society, and in his view this was an essential quality for senior leaders. He also felt senior leaders had to genuinely believe that schools can make a difference and school leaders have to be passionate about finding new alternatives and flexible to work in different ways.

Believing that what we have done in the past is not good enough. I see improvement in context of class structure and social development which has been on-going and a struggle for as long as time probably. (PC)

He shared the same opinion as the principal of School B, that senior leaders need to know what good teaching looks like, and further expanded on how this was articulated in the recruitment of teachers. He also interpreted knowledge as being able to clearly see the vision of your organisation and the influences that would enable Māori students to participate and succeed. In his opinion, good quality teachers were more skilled and willing to participate in professional development and personalise teaching for specific cultural contexts.

If you don't have good teachers to start with, no amount of cultural discussion or engagement will transform the person into a good teacher for Māori students. (PC)

His view on necessary skills was related to being able to utilise the good teaching that was occurring in the school and transferring this into a deeper understanding of what works best for Māori students. He spoke in-depth about the importance of teachers understanding the impact they had on student success, about their commitment to hard work and ensuring they were receptive to students by providing timely feedback on their work.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A expressed the importance of staff relationships and the necessity for senior leaders to be approachable and non-judgemental in their discussions with teachers. She believed there had to be a genuine acknowledgement of student voice and the concept of ako, reciprocal teaching and learning.

In her role of leading school wide assessment, she considered having a thorough understanding of the schools NCEA[3] results and the expectations of the local community as critical knowledge. She explained this further in relation to Māori student achievement, as having a holistic view of success and not just academic, by knowing and acknowledging what Māori students are having success with.

She also agreed that communication with staff is one of the most important skills for a senior leader and explained this in relation to working collaboratively and motivating staff to be fully committed and involved in the schools vision and strategic action plans. As a senior leader she also believed she had an obligation to continue to keep up-skilled and needed to have the ability to be analytical, always investigating ways to move forward. This required her to be able to present information to staff that was both helpful and supportive of the goals and targets to improve Māori student learning outcomes.

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[3] NCEA – National Certificate of Educational Achievement – National qualification for New Zealand secondary school students

The senior leader of School C, believes empathy is a quality that enables further discovery of what key values are needed in order to be responsive and guide improvement. This was explained in terms of the way assemblies and hui were held and the way in which communication was made with whānau. In his opinion, successful relationships had to be learning relationships, therefore it was vital that staff knew their Māori students, what their values were and how they saw the world. School C has spent a whole year focussing on relationships as part of their staff professional development and learning.

He discussed knowledge in terms of providing explicit recognition towards the school's responsibility to improve Māori student achievement. He described how their charter provided a holistic view of student success related to attendance, retention, engagement and achievement. He believed senior leaders have to have knowledge of te ao Māori (the Māori world), discovering the research and literature available and listening to what your Māori community is telling you.

According to him, a skill for senior leaders is to be able to identify who on staff has the best skills to lead specific areas of improving Māori student learning outcomes to ensure the right people were involved in the process. Along with this, he viewed it was important for senior leaders to be able to manage the distribution of those responsibilities to maintain momentum and to continue to make progress.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

Question Six: How does your senior leadership team make decisions and plan for improved Māori student learning outcomes and what data is collected and analysed to assist with planning?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A commented on the whole school having responsibility and therefore the opinion was that everybody worked as a team. Specific reference was made to moving away from the model of designating someone as being in charge of a particular area related to improving Māori student learning outcomes in favour of a whole school approach with high expectations of everyone, including students. In

particular she identified middle management as a specific focus in terms of their ability to make the biggest difference within their own departments. The whole school continually self-reviewed, monitored and reported regularly against identified goals and targets.

The senior leadership team in School A utilised their attendance, retention and e-asTTle[4] data together with comprehensive department reviews of NCEA results. They are also involved in an academic coaching initiative and she considered this was effective in providing the opportunity for learning conversations between coaches and students, producing some good anecdotal feedback.

The principal of School B discussed the importance of strategic alignment and establishing consistency of goals and direction. Members of his senior leadership team had specific roles – one deputy principal was in-charge of the curriculum goals and the other in-charge of key competency goals. The deputy principals worked with deans and the various heads of faculties to produce achievement plans, both school wide and department specific. These consisted of self-review reports for each area of the school on a term by term basis including year level meetings to review individual student achievement.

The principal of School B discussed using data as a leverage to encourage student achievement across the school. This was based on producing credit averages for each class ranked by their average, and teachers could look at each other's class credit average. By having credit averages per department he believed this motivated and encouraged teachers into having conversations on improving student achievement. Student credits were placed on the hallway notice board every five weeks for everyone to view. Data is then used for comparison against other schools in their area, same decile rating and nationally with graphs produced to show their position. Data on both Pākehā and Māori student achievement was compared and analysed annually.

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[4] e-asTTle is an online assessment tool, developed to assess students' achievement and progress in reading, mathematics and writing.

In schools it is easy to blame everything or everybody else. A person training for a 5000 metre run would keep a record of how they are doing each lap – in schools we don't seem to do that, but I have tried to do that here. Last year our level two Māori students achieved 88% in comparison to our Pākehā students on 80%. (PB)

The principal of School C explained the three levels of strategic planning within his organisation. The four directors meet once a week and this was considered to be a high order interface of discussion and reporting to the board. At another time of the week, there was a college executive meeting which included middle managers and the directors focussed on school direction in terms of what was currently happening and then projecting for the following term. The other regular meeting was for all senior management, deputy directors included, to establish the following week's school plan.

The senior leadership team in School C is also participating in the He Kākano initiative and the principal believed their involvement was timely and effective in assisting to lead in different ways. In his view, their leadership team consisted of a diverse group of people with relevant experiences who did not hesitate to question both direction and or philosophies, encouraging positive debate that produced a resolve to make decisions, although sometimes this could slow the process.

Decision making was generally by consensus to a degree and this assisted in motivating other people in their leadership, however, there were times when the principal said he would make the final decision on what would deliver the best outcome due to the varied and competing wants and needs across the organisation.

He commented on the large amount of data that was available, and the challenge was to be able to convert the data into information that would be useful and meaningful. Analysis of data included the different year levels, identifying what methods of tracking were working or weren't working and where things were going

wrong. Data was critiqued and made public to both staff and students and this provided on-going strategic and learning conversations at senior leadership level. The principal mentioned his personal commitment and involvement in managing an inquiry project specifically targeting year 13 student improvement.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A discussed how decision making was done collaboratively within the senior leadership team. The team analysed results and data annually to inform the strategic plan and annual goals, and this information was presented to staff in a consultative way to provide feedback as well as to make any appropriate changes from their input. At the end of June the senior leadership team monitor internal assessment results on a monthly basis and share this information with their academic coaches and the teacher in-charge of gifted and talented education. This is to support the adaptation of programmes for students who are under-achieving and as risk of failing. Their academic coaches provide sessions for students three times a year to assist them with their understanding of their progress and what needs more work.

She was familiar with the use of academic results produced by NCEA and other school assessments together with monitoring and analysing attendance and retention data. This data was used at various levels of the school not just the senior leadership team, and there was an expectation that department reviews and reports incorporated data of this type.

The senior leader of School C identified one of the biggest challenges in terms of strategic planning was shifting from a theoretical approach of how it looks on paper and then transferring this into how it should look in practice. He believed senior leadership teams should be drilling right down into all aspects of the school and be prepared to have some difficult conversations about things that aren't good enough at all levels of the school. There was an expectation that their staff had to be able to explain both the theory and the practice of their data, ie. 80% attendance data looks

relatively good but what does it actually mean and what is still missing? He also considered the senior leadership team's involvement in He Kākano was a positive influence and assisted in refining strategic practice.

School C uses the acronym AREA – attendance, retention, engagement and achievement. Data is collected and analysed in relation to these areas and linked to inform decisions from a holistic perspective. Māori student voice is collected to learn more about their experiences at the school in terms of their learning and what was generally happening across the whole school. Data from whānau meetings is analysed to investigate what Māori parents expectations are and what they considered important for their rangatahi's learning.

> *In the Māori world you don't look at a part of a person, you look at the whole person that is why strategically AREA is important, it doesn't just distinguish one thing. (SLC)*

Question Eight: What level of engagement has your senior leadership team had with Ka Hikitia?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A talked about Ka Hikitia as being a great strategy to focus on improving the teaching and learning experiences of Māori students from a theoretical stance, yet she was critical of the strategy's lack of practical assistance in terms of application. In her view it was nothing that she hadn't read before, and they were using the principles as their guide. She knew what they wanted to achieve and they were already doing this. She believed teachers at the school were aware of the strategy but wouldn't necessarily talk about Ka Hikitia when they discussed or reported on improving Māori student achievement, but certainly the principles of the strategy would be there. She would like to see documents like Ka Hikitia presented in a more useable format providing practical suggestions of how to get started and the best use of data.

If you are not in the position we are currently in, then getting started is where you need the most help. It can be very daunting – great to have wonderful ideas but where is the, How To? (PA)

The principal of School B mentioned that in the later stages of 2010 the school had the assistance of an external facilitator via a professional development and learning programme to work alongside the heads of faculties to develop their knowledge of Ka Hikitia and provide practical ideas of implementation. This had been useful, however the external organisation were unable to continue with that contract the following year and this had stopped some of the momentum. He had therefore developed a robust self-review process within the school and commented on the addition of data providing more rigour. The school's involvement in Te Kotahitanga provided the emphasis around relationships although the principal considered this to be a soft option. He believed they were starting to see some positive success with their level two NCEA results so they were aware that something was happening but couldn't categorically attribute it to Ka Hikitia.

The principal of School C talked about how improving Māori student achievement had been their number one priority for several years and Ka Hikitia had been useful in reinforcing their original beliefs and for identifying what is making a difference. His view was that if something is working, 'keep doing it and continue to refine what you are doing, but if it's not working, then don't'. Ka Hikitia had also provided staff with a common language which assisted in developing their cultural competency and understanding, and this had been their focus in staff professional development and learning sessions.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A explained how the principles of Ka Hikitia had been used and adapted to fit with what they were already doing in the school and this was the foundation of their staff meetings and the expectation of how things were to be done. She considered the emphasis for them now was to try and embed this as part of their school culture.

The senior leader of School C discussed how Ka Hikitia had provided the mandate for explicit focus, as well as reinforcing what they were already doing. The principles of Ka Hikitia were listed in the school charter and these provided the platform to discuss and identify the most vulnerable years for Māori students, done by the whole staff at the beginning of the year. The senior leadership team periodically did classroom observations and he believed they could see evidence of Ka Hikitia in teaching practice. Head of Departments analysed their data using the goals and targets of Ka Hikitia, meeting twice yearly to discuss their findings and what they would do to continue improvement.

Question Nine: Are you familiar with the document Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners and how do you intend to use this document school wide?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A was familiar with the Tātaiako document and had read it and commented that their journey was well underway and the principles of the document were what they were already trying to address. In her opinion, the document provided a good cross reference, nevertheless, schools end up with so many different documents that it could be easy to lose sight of the important things you need to be doing for Māori students. At the time of the interview the principal had not decided on the intended use of this document with their middle leaders and or teaching staff.

The principal of School B was very familiar with the document and the Tātaiako competencies had been incorporated into all job descriptions across the school. The competencies were used to assess teacher observations with an expectation that teachers collected evidence aligned to the competencies as part of their portfolio for appraisal and teacher registration purposes.

According to the principal of School C, he and the senior leadership team were familiar with the document and liked the structure it provided, believing it would also offer a philosophical direction of how the school is operating in a cultural sense and

further develop a deeper cultural understanding. The Tātaiako competencies were going to be used as part of the appraisal process to ensure cultural competency was being transferred from paper to practice.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A was not familiar with the Tātaiako document. She commented that another deputy principal in their senior leadership team had been involved in Māori leadership and this was possibly going to be part of their focus and role in the future.

The senior leader of School C was very familiar with Tātaiako and said he was making good use of the document. He discussed how the competencies had been integrated into the school's strategic action plans and targets to improve Māori student engagement. From a whole staff perspective, Tātaiako had been incorporated into their annual staff professional development and learning programme and formed the basis of developing a culturally responsive teaching profile to identify the expectations of an effective teacher at their school.

Question Ten: What other government initiatives or policies to improve Māori student learning outcomes are you familiar with? Have any of these been implemented within the school?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A was well aware of Te Kotahitanga and the principles of the programme but said the school had not been involved in it. This was also the case with He Kākano. The school is currently involved in another initiative Ngā Taitamariki, supported by Ngāti Hine Health Trust. The aim of this initiative is to provide a collaborative approach between government agencies, iwi, schools and community groups to improve the educational outcomes for Māori in Northland. The school's involvement in this programme allowed them to share best practice and develop important connections with Māori organisations. They received a small amount of financial support to develop their own initiatives and programmes in the

school and their goal was to strengthen the whānau group of Mana Kaitiaki (discussed later in this chapter).

The principal of School B discussed the school's involvement in Te Kotahitanga and he believed it had been implemented with some success. He said they were integrating the Ministry of Education documents focussed on improved Māori student outcomes and like School A, were also involved in the Ngā Taitamariki initiative. He viewed this programme as extremely supportive in mentoring and engaging Māori students, and the school's project was focussed on academic mentoring aligned to Starpath, together with a focus on improved whānau engagement. They would receive a small amount of funding to assist with the implementation.

The principal of School C was also well aware of Te Kotahitanga and said he was initially disappointed that they had been ineligible to participate in the project because of their high number of Pasifika[5] students. He commented that he had followed the progress and the struggles of the project. In his opinion, it was a *"rich"* model in terms of resourcing and this had proven to make it unviable for all schools to participate, and in his opinion it appeared to be unsustainable for many schools once funding and resourcing concluded.

He believed if senior leadership teams examined the research that supported the project and unpacked what appeared to be working and making the difference for Māori students, then it was possible to find similar ways of doing things within your own school. School C was part of the AIMHi (Achievement in Multicultural High Schools) group of schools, and the principal talked positively of the professional learning community that had been developed with this group of schools, particularly the survival of the initiative when a lot of other things had discontinued. The school is also involved in Starpath and found the directives and expectations of this initiative beneficial in assisting with the transferral of data into valuable information. Their senior leadership team is currently involved in He Kākano.

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[5] Pasifika – terminology used by government organisations and agencies in reference to Pacific Island people.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A was unable to recall anything else related to this area of the interview.

The senior leader of School C was well aware of Te Kotahitanga and talked about the school's ineligibility to participate in the project. He discussed briefly the school's involvement in Starpath and the benefits the programme provided to assist with data analysis, commenting on the importance of critiquing the usefulness of initiatives, for students and staff, before committing.

CONNECTING AND CONSULTING WITH MĀORI COMMUNITIES

Question Seven: In what ways do you consult and engage with your Māori community?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A acknowledged that this was an area they had really struggled with and that they had not always had great success and the senior leadership team were always looking for new opportunities and ways of connecting and relating to their Māori community. The school's hosting of Te Tai Tokerau secondary schools cultural festival earlier in the year had provided an opportunity to work closely with a whānau support group and this had been one of the strongest connections to be made in some time. In her view, the challenge now was to maintain and build on this connection and she hoped the Mana Kaitiaki initiative they had developed would also assist in forming a stronger relationship with whānau.

She also believed she had taken a risk utilising a visit from Dr. Pita Sharples, Member of Parliament for the Māori Party, Minister of Māori Affairs and Associate Minister of Education, (as Northland is a strong Hone Harawira, Member of Parliament for the Mana Party electorate) to talk to students and staff as an educationalist and not a politician, about Māori education, but it had been well received by both groups. The presentation was repeated in the evening to whānau, it was well attended and his message was strong and clear that whānau had to take

responsibility and ownership of education. The principal spoke about the influence and impact people like Dr. Sharples and other Māori have in terms of being able to speak candidly about issues to their own people, whereas she knows from past experiences how difficult it is for Pākehā to do this, and was pleased she had utilised the opportunity when it had presented itself.

The principal of School B acknowledged this was an area he would like to make better progress in, however for their school the biggest challenge was to do with the complexities of the Māori community. The school community had a variety of iwi, which continued to increase in terms of their identity. This also created some other issues around establishing a kaumātua group and there had been a history of this group being dominated by a couple of iwi and hapū, with other kaumātua not having recognition and resulting in a series of tensions. The establishment of Te Reo classes had created other opportunities for regular whānau meetings and further comment was made in regards to not 'having a hui just for hui sake'. He explained that the school would only organise a hui when it was for something of specific relevance and importance. The principal often connected and communicated informally with whānau at tangi and at sporting events, and expressed the desire to make further connections with other iwi and hapū in the area, and to facilitate meetings with kura kaupapa.

> *When we talk about Pākehā we expect a variety of communities, but we expect a unified position when we talk about Māori – Māori are not like that. (PB)*

The principal of School C acknowledged the benefit of having a member of the senior leadership team who is Māori and the expertise this person had in understanding the school's Māori community and other Māori communities. The school had a small whānau group who met regularly with a focus on improving Māori student achievement, utilising this group as part of their consultation process for strategic planning. Where possible, informal connections were made at sporting events and in general conversations on report evenings. Additionally, he commented on taking the opportunity when you have parents and whānau into the school for

other reasons, even if it is about behaviour and discipline, to discuss ideas and ensure issues are being resolved adequately in open dialogue.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A acknowledged that connecting with their Māori community had been a challenge for the school in the past but believed this was improving due to the change in leadership within the Māori department a couple of years ago. She believed the new leader was proactive in assisting the school to make better connections and build stronger relationships. The school encouraged whānau to provide input and feedback on the school culture and development of the curriculum, and this was often done utilising short surveys. The senior leadership team had changed the format of their parent interviews so that they met with only the form teacher instead of all teachers, and since doing so, attendance had increased to around 85 per cent. She also agreed that hosting the Te Tai Tokerau festival had also improved their connection with whānau and the community.

The senior leader of School C candidly discussed his position as Māori and the importance for him of taking responsibility for all things Māori. He considered effective communication was the key to establishing relationships with whānau and the wider Māori community, in his view, keeping in touch even when it is difficult. He described the importance of being prepared to start at the bottom and to continue to build and create your own foundations, as well as providing the opportunity to have hui with the various groups to discuss strategic direction. This is currently something the school does twice a term. He commented about the structure and relevance of hui and the way in which information gained from a hui was valued and utilised to inform areas of improvement. Whole school hui provided an opportunity for every ethnic group to meet but this could sometimes create problems in terms of some ethnicities not feeling comfortable to talk, and this also applied to Māori. To counteract this, they would often organise the hui arranging the different ethnic groups to meet separately to discuss the same issues. He shared the opinion of the principal of School B, that a hui has to occur for something important, not just to check the box and say you have consulted with your Māori community.

It is about the how, how you have a hui. Parents need to feel like they are important, not us. We treat our parents as the most important people in our community because they are the ones who influence our young people. (SLC)

AFFIRMING MĀORI STUDENT IDENTITY

Question Eleven: What other ways does the school acknowledge and support Māori cultural identity?

Principal Perspectives

The principal of School A was both proactive and extremely supportive of finding opportunities to affirm Māori cultural identity. The school's hosting of the Te Tai Tokerau secondary schools cultural festival had provided a strong platform for their kapa haka group and she was determined to build on this success. The festival had motivated staff to learn waiata and students in the kapa haka group volunteered to teach staff during staff professional development sessions. The principal commented that on the day of the festival it was not mandatory for students to attend, they could have the day off, yet about 800 students attended supporting the school and the cultural significance of the festival. She talked enthusiastically about their own school initiative called Mana Kaitiaki, which is student lead and driven, explaining how a year 11 Māori student visited her at the end of last year with an idea to improve Māori student achievement, which the school has embraced and is supporting.

Students and staff of School A have volunteered to be involved in the project and they have formed the nucleus of this group. The rationale is to improve the learning experiences of Māori and decrease deficit thinking. The principal has been amazed at how well this group of students have articulated what they believe makes a difference for Māori students. Those students who want to be involved in the project have to involve their whānau as well and have to be active participants in the whānau group. The group applied to the Ministry of Youth Development for financial assistance and received $3000 which they have used as part of their launch, funding a trip to Auckland to visit the museum, connecting with the past, and then to the University of Auckland to connect with the future, raising student aspirations.

According to the principal the next phase is to establish senior student mentors to support younger Māori students. She also mentioned another Māori student in year 12 also, is leading a project against child poverty which has now gone to a national level. The principal has brought both leaders together to join forces because she believes both groups are wanting similar things but are using different approaches. Both girls have joined each other's group and work collaboratively.

This principal of School B described some of the opposition he had met from staff in supporting Māori cultural identity, referring to this as the world culture model versus a bicultural model. The school had approximately fifteen overseas trained teachers from European or North American countries and in his opinion, they were often unable or unwilling to understand or connect with education's priority and obligation towards Māori as Treaty partners. He is encouraging Māori language and promotes this by starting every term with a whakatau, including karakia at the beginning and end of staff meetings and special assemblies. Every day at 9am there is a taumata on the school marae mostly for the year 9 and 10 students involved in the Reo Ruahia (te reo medium classes) but anyone who is able to, can participate. The principal mentioned the school had 35 prefects, and commented on this being a large number for a school their size, however this was a deliberate attempt to provide student leadership opportunities and promote strong cultural leadership, particularly for students who would miss out if the number was a lot smaller.

Furthermore, the principal of School B spoke of his thirty year experience in working in schools with high Māori rolls and his commitment to improving Māori student achievement, reiterating language as the key to Māori cultural identity and success, and students should be encouraged to learn it. In his opinion, leaders and teachers had to believe that they could eliminate the things that create barriers for Māori student success.

> *I won't differentiate negatively to Māori, and I won't just pay lip service. There has been intense pressure at times to not have Te Reo spoken in the staffroom or a karakia, I have been deaf on that issue – if I was going for consultation or a democratic model, it wouldn't exist. The human position and Māori position is the same, to grow and be somebody. (PB)*

School C has a kura tuarua (Māori medium secondary school) on site and now, as opposed to the past, the two campuses work together to provide the best possible pathway for Māori students, and not just NCEA, right through to tertiary. The principal commented that the school now offers the kura's students access to subjects and teachers that they might not have in the kura, strengthening their relationship and ensuring they work together and not in isolation. He did acknowledge that there had been friction as times in the past, and now with the significant growth of both parties, this had placed them in a stronger position. He believed that by providing mainstream Te Reo classes within the school and not just relying on the kura to deliver, and also the development of their own kapa haka group, offered other experiences for their students and developed credibility in providing Māori students with more opportunity.

Senior Leader Perspectives

The senior leader of School A also spoke positively in support of the Mana Kaitiaki programme currently in the school reiterating the importance of student voice and how the project enabled that to happen. She further commented on hosting the Te Tai Tokerau festival, how it had been an inclusive experience school wide and she believed this had positively influenced the school culture. In her view, Māori culture was continuing to grow in strength and this was evident by the fact that the school's kapa haka group were not the only ones to perform powhiri, whatever class was in the whare at the time were capable of doing it.

The Māori students in School A competed competitively in Manu Korero competitions (national secondary school speech contests for Māori students) and national kapa haka festivals and this was regularly celebrated. The senior leader believed this also had a positive influence on acknowledging Māori cultural identity providing additional opportunities for Māori students to be leaders and role models. Furthermore, she mentioned having recently read an article in the New Zealand Herald newspaper about Pasifika students achieving "soft" credits as opposed to achievement standard credits, and how this was creating barriers in their progression to higher education.

We have a limited number of unit standard based courses and there is an expectation that Māori students will be in achievement standard courses and will be successful. (SLA)

The senior leader of School C discussed the NCEA study retreat the school trialled last year prior to the external examinations. A group of teachers took 80 students off-site away from the distractions of home to focus purely on studying. In his view, this had been extremely successful and the school was committed to repeating the retreat again this year. He acknowledged the benefits of participating in the annual secondary schools Polyfest (cultural festival) and also the disadvantages in terms of the amount of preparation prior to the festival that often resulted in a decrease in learning time that historically frustrated teachers.

To overcome this problem and to give the event the respect it deserved in terms of providing opportunities for cultural identity, the school have developed a programme that proceeds throughout the whole year for Polyfest teaching and practice, instead of it just happening in term one every year. In October, Term Four, the school has a spring festival and this leads into the preparation for the Polyfest the following year. The senior leader believes this programme recognises culture as important and removes tokenism. Furthermore, he commented on the importance of having a deliberate strategic approach, and investing in up-skilling senior leaders to develop expertise that would ultimately influence the practice of teachers.

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS

The participating schools gave consent for the researcher to examine their school charter, strategic action plan and other relevant school policy documents associated to Māori student achievement. The intent of this part of the study was to investigate the processes used by senior leadership teams to define and articulate the schools strategic direction, and how this was then transferred into action plans to promote improved learning outcomes for Māori students across the school. Equally, does the rhetoric of the document reflect the espoused practice of secondary senior leaders.

In the principal interviews, they were asked a separate set of four questions designed to establish the authorship and contextual framework used in the composition and development of their documents. Schools provided their charter and a strategic action plan. The four guiding questions were:

1. Who wrote the document(s)? The position of the person in the school and when it was written.
2. What prompted the writing of the document?
3. Who is the intended audience for the document?
4. What other documents or sources were used to assist with writing?

SCHOOL CHARTERS

School A Charter

The charter for School A was written predominantly by the principal, with input from the senior leadership team, and in consultation with the board of trustees. The charter is a one page document displaying the school's name, logo and motto. The document is categorised into three sections – mission, aims and values. There are no dates to identify when the document was written or last updated. The simplistic layout of the document allows ease of reading and the three self-explanatory headings and sections provide a straightforward list of concepts.

> *The document was created to provide information and evidence to the Ministry of Education, it is an expectation that schools have a charter. It assists to inform school self-review and planning processes and the document provides information to the community on the vision, purpose and direction of the school. (PA)*

The document provides evidence of compliance to the Ministry of Education and provides information for staff and the community. There were no other references to other documents.

Key Themes in the Document

The charter displays a clear emphasis of the school's intent to foster improved Māori student outcomes. This is acknowledged in the rationale of the aims section where it is stated "*the focus is to develop a strong learning community in a bicultural environment*". Within this section is a sub-section focussed on realising the potential of Māori students. This part of the document lists what this would entail and includes points related to effective teaching and evidence based continual improvement, with a focus on literacy and numeracy, and providing Te Reo Māori and tikanga. The notion of supporting student's families to encourage learning is also included.

The values section of the charter discusses the values students will be encouraged to endorse as part of their learning experience. There is an emphasis on setting high expectations and the ability to persevere despite adversity, together with self-respect, respect for others and human rights. Valuing and appreciating the diversity of cultures, language and heritage ensues the themes of developing cultural awareness and competency.

School B Charter

The charter for School B is first drafted by the principal and then discussed with the senior leadership team, and from this meeting the document may be restructured to incorporate any new ideas resulting in a second draft being created. The next edition of the draft goes out for consultation with both staff and the community, and could also undergo further restructure. The principal commented that usually there is very little change to the second draft and it is then submitted for approval by the school board of trustees.

The charter is incorporated into an A4 fifty two page spiral bound document which also comprises the strategic plan. The first eight pages of the document are assigned to the specifics of the charter, and the structure of this document is clearly displayed and easy to follow. Within the charter specific areas of interest are highlighted by distinct headings and the context of the document follows a logical sequence. The school's values statement is produced in a diagrammatic format of a flow chart. The date of issue, school name and logo are identified on the front and

throughout the document. The school motto is displayed in Māori and underneath translated into English. NCEA results, department and student achievement data are all utilised in some capacity to assist with the structure and emphasis of the document.

Key Themes in the Document

The first two pages of the charter provide the reader with comprehensive background information on the school, the community and the philosophy of the school. Within this information is a clear acknowledgement of their Māori community identifying the different geographical areas that their Māori students come from. Another statement highlights the inclusion of Māori culture and the notion of celebrating diversity within unity. The document expresses a belief in challenging students to reach their full potential and providing a curriculum that encourages high expectations and achieving personal excellence. This is also reflected in the school's mission statement and motto.

The values statement displayed in the format of a flow chart identifies an increase in achievement can be derived from increased expectations based on respect. The chart places self-respect as the central focus and connects this to having respect for achievement, responsibility, the environment and others. Following on from this is a page outlining the five year strategic goals associated to the improvement of the delivery of the curriculum, explicitly referring to meeting the needs of Māori students and identifying how this will be done – teaching through the medium of Te Reo in years 9 and 10 and promoting Māori cultural values in terms of language, identity and heritage. The final three pages of the charter outline specific goals aligned to the NAGs and priorities for building development.

School C Charter

The principal of School C has provided the structure of the charter and commented that it had been a five year process, changing the format to a success factor model in order to clarify what was meant by success. Authorship was shared and developed through consultation with the senior leadership team and board of

trustees, and to a slightly less degree, staff. The school's Māori community had also been included in the consultation process.

The charter for School C is a twenty seven page document comprehensively outlining the school's background, national responsibilities, approach to planning, values and vision, critical success factors and procedural information, presented as an A5 coloured booklet. The school's name, logo and motto are on the cover of the booklet, and the school's name appears in a footer on every page. A date to identify the time frame covered by this charter (2012-2014) is also identified on the cover and throughout the booklet. The school's motto is in Māori and translated into English beneath the quote. The document contains a lot of information and this is categorised by providing a table of contents and using coloured headings to identify the main sections. Some information is in small print and provided in tables, and the self-review process is represented in both a numbered list and cyclical diagram. The only other documents used in the composition of the charter are NCEA results which were used to guide some of the decisions in terms of critical success factors.

Key Themes in the Document

The charter starts by providing background information on the school, governance and ethnic composition of the school (based on 2011 numbers), and within this information there is recognition of the Māori community and obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi. In the section titled national responsibilities, there is acknowledgement of the aspirations of Māori parents and how they have been consulted in relation to the development of the charter. Further recognition is given to the principles of the New Zealand curriculum and the school's capacity to include Te Reo Māori and tikanga.

The values section focusses on providing quality learning, working in partnership and respect. This is explained in more detail related to excellence – having high expectations, perseverance and pride. Respect is specified in terms of self-respect, responsibility, acceptance of diversity, and respect for others. This section also defines the scope and focus of developing the key competencies for learning – thinking; participating and contributing; managing self; relating to others; language,

symbols and text. The rest of the document outlines the strategic and procedural information that guide the school's operation.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLANS

School A Strategic Action Plan

The annual plan for School A is written by the principal in consultation with the senior leadership team and middle leaders. The annual plan is a nine page document presented in a simple table format identifying the school's name and year of representation. The document is categorised into five individual specific goals displaying the objectives, outcomes, action and resources required for each one.

The principal of School A commented on the use of hard evidence generated throughout the year with the majority of this information developed from NCEA results and other statistical evidence collected in terms of attendance, retention, stand-down and suspension data. She also mentioned that a change of class structure within the junior school was being monitored and evaluated to provide additional evidence and the school's involvement in the Starpath project is assisting with tracking.

Key Themes in the Document

The annual plan for 2012 for School A has five explicit goals:
- Goal 1: Increasing the number of students who obtain NCEA at all levels;
- Goal 2: Continue to improve Merit and Excellence endorsements for all NCEA levels;
- Goal 3: Māori students achieve at the same level as their non-Māori counterparts;
- Goal 4: Deliver and review the New Zealand Curriculum to ensure students are at the centre of teaching and learning, experiencing a curriculum that engages, is inclusive and affirms New Zealand's unique identity; and
- Goal 5: Financial resourcing to achieve effective and efficient school operation

Goal three identifies the school's focus to improve Māori student achievement with the objective of this goal specifying raising achievement to achieve parity between Māori and European students. From this objective the intended outcome is to have Māori students leaving school with a year 12, Level 2 NCEA qualification or higher.

There are a number of actions planned to support the goal and objective, and assist in accomplishing the intended outcome. The first action is specific to the implementation of the principles of *Ka Hikitia*, to improve student presence, engagement and achievement along with the school's own Māori student initiative, Mana Kaitiaki. The resources to support these two actions are the *Ka Hikitia* document, *Engaging Taitamariki in Learning* programme, including a reporting template for departmental use to monitor and evaluate progress.

Attendance has been identified as a target and the action is for early notification of all intermittent absences with a particular emphasis on non-attendance. *KAMAR*, the school's administration and student management software program has been recognised as the main resource. The program is used school-wide to record all the pastoral and academic information for every student, can be accessed by all staff, and a feature of this program is to assist with tracking and developing reports at all levels of the school.

There are five other actions within this goal which relate more specifically to teaching and learning. The targets focus on teachers knowing their Māori learners and using evidence based inquiry to develop programmes and strategies that best meet their needs, setting high expectations and addressing barriers caused by deficit thinking. There is provision for a mentoring system to be established but there is no other information to suggest how or when. The school is involved in Starpath, and there is a target for teachers and academic coaches to assist Māori students to achieve their academic goals. Within the resource section of the goal, professional development based on what works for Māori, and Māori department and community are acknowledged.

Finally, there is a target of establishing a closer relationship with the Māori community and this has been explained in terms of encouraging engagement in the

life of the school with regular whānau evenings and parent, teacher, student conferencing sessions. In the resource section, board representation is stated.

School B Strategic Action Plan

The annual action plans for School B form the second section of the same fifty two page document that contains the charter. The first five pages of this section displays the school wide strategic goals from 2010 and 2011. Next follows the 2012 strategic goals leading in to the 2013 strategic goals. As an appendix to this document, the last twenty fives pages are individual achievement plans representing specific areas of the school including the various faculties, specialist teachers, student year levels, attendance, professional development, library, IT network, careers and Starpath, and numeracy and literacy. Each individual plan is presented in exactly the same template and format, and the author is displayed in the footer.

School wide achievement plans are written by the person in charge of the specific area, so this could be a senior or middle leader. If the author is a middle leader, then their action plan requires final approval by the appropriate senior leader who oversees that particular area of the school. The individual year level and head of faculty (HOF) plans have been done in consultation with the teachers they work with. The principal takes responsibility for appraising and editing submissions prior to final print and commented that editing is minimal and mainly occurs when the author has become side-tracked and is including irrelevant information. All data analysis is done by the principal and the principal's nominee. The main sources used to compose this document come directly from NCEA results and internal department and student achievement data.

Key Themes in the Document

The strategic plan for 2012 has four main goals:

- Goal 1: Students at the school will learn to be present, engaged and achieve;
- Goal 1b: Improving Māori educational achievement – specifically 75% of students achieving Level 2,
- Goal 2: Support structures – buildings, grounds, equipment, IT; and
- Goal 3: Self review at every level.

Prior to the strategic goals are two other pages which present an over-view in diagrammatic form of the school wide programmes. The first diagram refers to implementation of 15 plus academic success with the expectation that all students will achieve 15 credits per subject. This diagram shows the links to the various faculty NCEA Achievement Plans and Key Competencies Attendance Achievement Plan relative to the whole school. The other diagram refers to attendance, Kaupapa Whakanui implementation. The links are provided between the NCEA Achievement Plan which is school-wide, and the Key Competencies Attendance Plan based on a pastoral focus and specific to the Deans of the school.

The four goals in the strategic plan for School B are presented individually in table format with a list of bullet points detailing the other contributing components to the goal. Connections are made to the two diagrams mentioned above. Each table is divided into three categories – review, process and action. Goal 1b is explicitly aimed at improving Māori educational achievement with a specific target of 75% of Māori students achieving Level 2 NCEA.

The contributing factors to accomplishing this goal are presented in bullet points and refer to the use of data, development of appropriate achievement plans, mentoring, professional development, extra funding, closer whānau school relationships and the celebration of success. These concepts are not elaborated on. The table identifies five main targets within the goal and these are presented in the review column.

The first area for review is the strategic plan for Term One and this is linked to the process of the school charter and department plans. Action for this target is based on school wide achievement plans that include a focus on improved Māori student achievement, policies and procedures applicable to student needs and an expectation of term reporting.

The curriculum review area has a very strong focus on NCEA results, the development of department achievement plans and schemes. This is expressed in terms of the focus on students attaining 15 plus credits, reports on credit averages specific to Māori students and the incorporation of tuition through the medium of Te Reo Māori.

The pastoral review looks at attendance and composition of the whānau class groups. The connection is made to the diagram on implementation of Kauapapa Whakanui programme targeting a reduction in Māori student attendance with a specific target of 90% attendance and no T's (T's are recorded for student attendance where there is no justified explanation for the absence and implies the student is truant).

The fourth review is leadership and accountability and this is presented in relation to staffing and leadership structure. The target is to promote the leadership of the Head of Faculty (HOF) for Māori and associated Māori department with a view of their leadership influencing the whole school. The principal has been identified as the mentor to the HOF with recognition of support from the whole senior leadership team.

The last review area in this goal is directly related to the relationship of the school with their community. The targets focus on the school's profile in the community and a review of their branding, establishing a policy to formalise the status of the school Marae and its use, as well as a group formed from the Māori community to support the learning of young Māori.

The individual action plans submitted by each department are contained within the whole document, and all include goal 1b, improving Māori educational achievement. This is a generic statement listing the contributing factors, ie data collection, presented in a separate box at the top of the achievement plan. Only four achievement plans made any further connection to this goal expanding on what that would entail. Two of these plans were related to school wide programmes such as professional development and NCEA, one was the Māori department and the other the achievement plan for year 12 submitted by the dean.

School C Strategic Action Plan
The principal of School C in consultation with the senior leadership team and board of trustees have developed the school's strategic action plan. The separate charter document already discussed has been instrumental and forms the basis of this document. The annual action plan is a ten page coloured document clearly

identifying the school's name, logo and motto, together with the year the document is representing and a date showing when it was last critiqued and reported to the board of trustees.

The second page of the document displays the school's values, the main strategic focus, AREA (attendance, retention, engagement and achievement), along with six additional categories – learning, relationships, leadership, culture, community and resources, with a brief statement explaining the intent of each one. These six categories form the basis of the annual plan's goals. Page three is titled *Strategic Status Report* and gives an outline of the intended direction and action planned, along with a colour key used to monitor outcomes in relation to specific goals. The final section of the document provides an individual plan for each of the six categories, each presented using the same template and format, and each category has been colour coded.

The charter contributes to the writing of this document. The principal commented that the senior leadership's involvement in He Kākano has been useful in terms of focussing on the best ways to review and track data relating to their Māori students and has provided a process of critical reflection for the whole team.

Key Themes in the Document
The annual plan is divided into six strategic goals:
- Learning;
- Leadership:
- Relationships;
- Culture;
- Community; and
- Resources and Environment

There is not an explicit goal to acknowledge the specific needs of Māori students. Within the six individual plans, three of the goals, leadership, relationships and culture have an action relating to Māori students. The copy of the plan used for the document analysis is part of the June review and report to the board of trustees.

In the leadership plan, there are six targets and the first one is raising Māori student achievement. Next to the target is an area called key milestones and this provides a little more detail in terms of the intent of this target together with an estimated completion date. Four of the key milestones relate directly to teaching and learning and specify the development and implementation of a staff professional development plan and the inclusion of the He Kākano project and Ka Hikitia risk areas for years 9 and 10 students. The staff professional development plan was prioritised for 1st May with the inclusion of He Kākano and Ka Hikitia prioritised monthly. The outcome indicators are marked in green to signify that at the time of the review and report to the board of trustees, these two milestones are on track.

The other two milestones that can be linked to teaching and learning are related to the implementation of evidence based strategies and development of Te Reo and Tikanga Māori pathways. The first one was due for completion by 1st June and the second one by 1st December. Outcome indicators signify these are both on track also.

The fifth and final key milestone aligned to the leadership plan and target of raising Māori student achievement is the implementation of whānau and Māori student hui and connects with the notion of relationships and community. The completion date suggests this occurs every term and the outcome indicator identifies this is also on track.

Within the goal relationships, there are four action areas. The first action area is called learning focussed relationships which has a key milestone involving the professional learning from He Kākano, due for completion by 1st March and marked as on track by the outcome indicator.

The only other goal that refers to anything specific for Māori is entitled culture. One of the actions of this goal is diversity themes, with acknowledgement given to promoting Māori Language Week during the month of July. None of the other three goals have an explicit action or key milestone associated to improved Māori student outcomes despite two of the goals having titles such as learning and community.

SUMMARY

The data reveals that the role of senior leaders is multifaceted, and this is conveyed in the perspectives of all the senior leaders. New Zealand state secondary schools are faced with a number of complex expectations and challenges to improve the educational outcomes for Māori students and this is highlighted in the demands from the Ministry of Education, and often the limited support or guidance available to assist senior leadership teams. The findings also reveal that Principals and Senior Leaders are attempting to meet these expectations and challenges through clearly articulated strategic planning, on-going professional learning and innovative projects to promote and support Māori students.

Chapter Five

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the significant findings of the research topic on senior secondary leaders' efforts to improve Māori student learning outcomes, arising from the data reported in chapter four. The discussion will incorporate literature from chapter two with the thematic findings under the following headings: Leadership position and role clarification; Raising awareness and shifting school culture; Strategic leadership to improve Māori student learning outcomes; Connecting and consulting with Māori communities; and Affirming Māori cultural identity. This discussion will contribute to expansion of knowledge in the area of senior leadership and improved Māori educational outcomes in New Zealand secondary schools.

SENIOR LEADERSHIP ROLES

All the senior leaders interviewed were experienced principals and deputy principals who had been in their positions for a substantial period of time and were well aware of the complexities of their roles. The principals all shared the same view regarding the importance of resourcing, identifying it in terms of human, financial and property, but also acknowledged student learning and achievement as a priority. New Zealand research carried out by Robinson (2006) identifies a recent shift from the business model of the eighties and nineties to a greater emphasis on teaching and learning in schools.

The two other senior leaders interviewed had very different roles within their schools and this could be attributed to the structure and focus of their senior leadership teams. In School A, the deputy principals shared a range of specific duties some of which were more task oriented and in the view of the deputy principal interviewed, sometimes mundane, like school uniform. In School C, the position of the senior

leader was titled director and although there was an element of task related duties associated to daily operations, there was a pedagogical focus centred on Māori student achievement and effective teaching and learning. This is supported by the concept of *mātau* in the *Tātaiako* document, Ministry of Education (2011) where leaders actively lead and engage others in affirming Māori culture and identity.

RAISING AWARENESS AND SHIFTING SCHOOL CULTURE

The three principals shared similar opinions in terms of the expectations they faced to improve Māori student learning outcomes. It was interesting that again resourcing was mentioned although this time it was directly linked to finances and discussed in relation to finding innovative ways to fund projects and or, to sustain implemented initiatives, particularly government endorsed strategies. All the senior leaders viewed setting high expectations of students and staff as a priority, a finding confirmed by Petty (2006) where he discusses culture management, the development of positive expectations and actions that will make a difference. The senior leaders aspired to promote a collaborative working environment across the whole school where everyone clearly understood the strategic vision and direction of the school and were supported in the on-going journey.

This was also validated in all three of the school's charters provided for document analysis and corroborated by Fullan (2008) where he discusses the importance of connecting staff with purpose. Documents stated:

> *Effective teaching focussed on realising the potential of Māori students. Students encouraged to value excellence and perseverance to aim high. (PA)*

> *Students challenged to reach their full potential. Increased achievement from increased expectations. (PB)*

> *Partnership, respect and quality learning. High expectations and striving for excellence. (PC)*

All of the senior leaders believed their main challenge was to reduce the deficit thinking of staff and improving teacher belief and accountability, a finding substantiated by Macfarlane et al. (2007) and Webber (2008) where the dominant culture often imposes a deficit ideology and racial stereotyping. This led to knowing where to start with data and other evidence and understanding what really does make a difference for Māori students. This finding was highlighted in the Education Review Office (2010) report on undertaking adequate analysis of data and information specific to Māori student achievement. From knowing and understanding, it was then about the how. Ministry of Education documents and strategies, *Ka Hikitia* (2008) and *Tātaiako* (2011) were perceived to be helpful, however they were often distributed to schools with little or no back-up associated to practical application. Standalone concepts were not going to have the greatest impetus on improving educational outcomes for Māori students, there had to be provision for practical support and knowledge to deepen understanding.

They all agreed that promoting change had to start from senior leadership level, a team effort that was modelled. To be more culturally responsive explicitly for Māori students required a shift in their school cultures, challenging teacher beliefs and assumptions, a theory asserted by Macfarlane (2010) who identifies deficit perceptions as a critical factor in the marginalisation of Māori students.

> *Removing the blame mentality and focussing on what we can do in our roles as leaders and teachers. (SLA)*

> *Often it is prejudice coupled with teacher power. Teachers have to value and want Māori students to succeed. (PB)*

> *Everyone aware of the school's position and not getting side-tracked, staying focussed. (PC)*

The knowledge and qualities senior leaders required to be effective in their roles and to advocate improved educational outcomes for Māori students, revealed a number of similarities in perceptions. Knowledge was considered in two respects. Firstly,

willingness to attain new information to enrich learning and utilising current research on what works for Māori students to inform and guide best practice. Secondly, knowing your Māori learners and acknowledgement of Te Ao Māori – Māori world view. This is supported by several authors (Smith, 2003; Bevan- Brown, 2008; Milne 2009; ERO, 2012) who all raise the concern that traditional approaches to main-stream schooling inadequately recognises and supports Māori knowledge and identity.

> *Knowing your Māori learners, finding new knowledge and answers and perseverance. (PA)*

> *Knowing what best practice is in terms of leadership and teaching and what genuinely makes a difference for Māori learners. (PB)*

> *Knowing what good teaching looks like and the influences that enable Māori to participate and succeed on their own terms. (SLC)*

Senior leader qualities were viewed in terms of personal values and beliefs. There was unanimous agreement around the necessity to genuinely believe and want to make a difference. This was then translated into cultural competence and a leader's capacity to build learning relationships based on ako, reciprocal teaching and learning, for both students and staff. This can be substantiated by Cross et al. (1989) research and development of a cultural competence continuum for leaders and educators to critically rank their own cultural competency to acknowledge where they are positioned and where they may need to improve.

School B has been involved in the Te Kotahitanga project (Bishop, Berryman, Tiakiwai & Richardson, 2003) which has a strong focus on relationship building. However, the principal of this school did not consider relationships as the only essential factor for improving Māori student achievement.

Non-judgemental relationships, staff and students, and using Māori student voice. (SLA)

Ability to believe genetics and environments do not limit students. Relationships are important but not the be all for student achievement. (PB)

Cultural understanding of Māori students' position in society and genuine belief that schools can make a difference. (PC)

Kiwi Leadership for Principals document, Ministry of Education (2008) reinforces leader's commitment to the Treaty of Waitangi and acknowledges the distinctiveness of the New Zealand education system and Māori as tangata whenua, a bicultural partnership. The first recognition of this is demonstrated in the charters of School's B and C, where the school motto appears first in Māori and is then translated into English directly underneath. The relevance of this, a school's motto is frequently used for marketing and promotion and distinguishes the character of the school. School A's motto is in Latin, which can be attributed to the school's historic origins, although with a Māori population of 34% and the main aim of their charter stating – *developing a strong learning community in a bicultural environment,* attention to what might seem a minor detail, would assist to emphasise the position of Māori.

STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP AND ACTION

Communication and planning was acknowledged as a necessary skill for senior leaders, along with identifying the expertise and skills of all staff irrespective of position, and managing the distribution of responsibilities by deliberately deploying the expertise to effectively lead targeted areas within the school. This is also confirmed by Bandura (1993) and Leithwood and Jantzi (2008) who define this as leadership that promotes collective instructional efficacy and collaborative problem solving to encourage high levels of organisational performance.

Communicating and presenting information to clearly articulate and support the journey. (PA)

Prioritise Māori student achievement and communicate the process for improvement. (PB)

Knowing where the best skills are within your senior leadership team and the rest of the school to effectively lead change. (SLC)

Strategic planning was identified as occurring in a number of areas of the school. Initially it started at the senior leadership level where the strategic goals and targets were established, and then progressed directly to middle leaders and the rest of the school. This is noted by Cardno (2001) in her endorsement of a whole school approach to develop a positive learning environment for all stakeholders.

In all three schools, middle leaders had a responsibility for departmental self-reviews aligned to the specific goals and targets of the school's overall strategic direction for improved Māori student achievement. This corresponds with one of the theories by Sutton (1994) that school self-reviews are often motivated by leaders wanting reassurance related to performance. There were scheduled regular meetings between senior leaders and middle leaders to critically discuss progress or lack of, and this information was articulated to teachers either via department meetings or whole staff meetings.

Ensuring there is a middle leader focus and regular whole school self-reviews. (PA)

Term by term self-reviews at department level and working with middle leaders to plan to meet both department and school wide direction. (PB)

Having three tiers of leadership meetings – senior leadership team and middle leaders. (PC)

It was commonly believed that at senior leadership level, all being on the journey together, valuing and taking responsibility for improved Māori student outcomes increased the likelihood of collaborative decision making, and this is reinforced in the study *Impact of School Leadership on Pupil Outcomes* conducted by Day et al. (2011), that effective leadership was dependent on the core set of practices, qualities and values of the leader and how these were widely communicated. The principal of School B admitted that this was still a challenge in their team and was substantiated by the unwillingness of the two deputy principals to participate in this research project.

Smith (2008) defines strategy as contextual planning and taking decisive deliberate action, and this connects with School C's involvement in the He Kākano project. Both the principal and director commented on the positive assistance the project was providing in relation to refining strategic planning and practice focussed on explicit Māori student learning outcomes.

All three schools used data to assist with setting strategic direction and to inform practice. There was a clear understanding of the importance of undertaking a holistic approach to utilising data incorporating and connecting achievement data with retention, attendance, stand-down and suspension data. A strategic process of planning and management that is inter-related and informs and influences each other is supported by Morden (2007). School C uses the acronym AREA (attendance, retention, engagement and achievement) as their focus for gathering data and information and integrates data from whānau meetings and Māori student voice. School B utilises data as leverage, publishing student credits every five weeks to encourage student motivation, and the department term by term self-review reports displaying each learning areas progress, in an attempt to challenge and inspire teacher motivation.

Engagement with *Ka Hikitia, Māori Education Strategy* was explored to determine the level of understanding and to what extent the principles, goals and targets were included in the strategic planning process. The principles of *Ka Hikitia* appeared to be understood and discussions were formulated around the delivery of staff professional development. Both Schools A and B positively described the practical assistance they had received via external facilitation and were disappointed that through the restructuring of the government's professional development contracts, this support had been withdrawn. School B believed the momentum that had been achieved had stopped to some degree. Schools A and C discussed how the principles reinforced their beliefs and practice as well as providing a mandate for professional accountability, as identified in dimension 3, *Leading and Managing the school*, ERO (2011).

For all schools, *Ka Hikitia* produced common language and ideals that assisted in developing better understanding for staff. The strategic action plans submitted by Schools A and C identified the inclusion of the principles of *Ka Hikitia,* with School C specifically identifying the vulnerable years in education for Years 9 and 10 Māori students. These findings support the intention of the strategy, Ministry of Education (2008).

> *We are already doing a lot of what Ka Hikitia espouses but if you weren't in the position we are in, the lack of the how to, in terms of practical application, then it would be difficult to know where to start. (PA)*

> *Our Level 2 results are improving but this is not necessarily attributed to Ka Hikitia. (PB)*

> *Māori student achievement has been our number one priority for several years. Ka Hikitia has helped us to identify the vulnerable years for Māori learners and have whole school discussions. (PC)*

The study reveals a mixture of responses and understanding towards the release of *Tātaiako, Cultural Competencies for Māori Learners* in 2011. In School A, the principal was aware of, and had read the document but had not formally incorporated the document into strategic planning or staff discussions. The deputy principal from this school had no familiarity with the document and commented that they were relying on another member of their senior leadership team to lead this initiative. In School's B and C, they were very familiar with the document and were able to discuss how they had incorporated the concepts of the initiative into their practice.

However, both School B and C had included the competencies into their appraisal systems and expected to observe the theory in practice through classroom observations and in the development of a culturally responsive teaching profile. They believed the document's alignment to the New Zealand Teacher Registration criteria provided momentum towards teacher accountability and development of deeper cultural understanding. The *Tātaiako* document, Ministry of Education (2011) substantiates this finding in its' specific expectation of school leaders to ensure the competencies become embedded into teaching practice.

Finally in the area of strategic leadership, schools were asked to comment on any other initiative or policies for improved Māori student learning outcomes that they were aware of and were incorporating into their planning and practice. All three schools commented on Te Kotahitanga, although only School B had been involved with this project and in the opinion of the principal, had had some success. School C had not been eligible to participate in the project because of their high Pasifika student population and although initially disappointed, understood from other participants the resourcing was high and difficult to sustain. Schools A and C both mentioned their interest in examining the literature that was produced from the project and felt it was useful for increasing their understanding of what was making a difference for Māori students. *Kiwi Leadership for Principals*, Ministry of Education (2008), reiterates the requirement for leaders to be receptive to new evidence and to be committed to on-going professional learning.

The study identified that all three schools have had some involvement with the Starpath academic coaching project led by The University of Auckland in partnership with the New Zealand Government, and spoke positively of the support and assistance they were receiving. The aim of the Starpath project is to address the high rate of educational inequality for Māori and Pasifika students, and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.

The two Northland schools were both actively involved in the Ngā Taitamariki school projects, supported by the Ngāti Hine Health Trust. Funding provided through the trust enabled both schools to innovatively develop projects specific to their own school needs.

STRATEGIC ACTION PLANS

The three participating schools in their strategic action plans identified that the purpose of the document was to inform the school's self-review process and provide explicit goals to action change that can be regularly monitored and evaluated. As Razik and Swanson (2001) suggest, linking strategy with change develops an organisation's direction and guides the necessary course of action. The main contributing source to assist with the writing of this document was NCEA results and other student achievement data.

Previous studies by Robinson et al. (2009) and Day et al. (2011) corresponding to leadership dimensions and core sets of practice, recognise the incorporation of both task and relational factors into strategic planning to effectively lead improved student outcomes. These are evident in the other elements integrated into each of the school's action plans specified below and as previously identified by Morden (2007), the notion of everything inter-relating and inter-acting.

School A included attendance and retention data to inform the process and commented on the usefulness of the Starpath project with tracking Māori student data. School B also included attendance data and had a focus on monitoring the outcome of their initiative to incorporate tuition using Māori medium at Year 9 and

Year 10. School C incorporated AREA (attendance, retention, engagement and achievement) and their critical success factors from their comprehensive charter.

In School A's strategic action plan, the goal specific to Māori student achievement recognises teaching and learning targets relating to the development of programmes and strategies that are supported by professional development on what works for Māori students. The establishment of a mentoring system connects with the Starpath academic coaching programme currently in place, although there is no other information associated to this target that clarifies what this would entail. Attendance is another specific target for this goal and requests early detection and notification of intermittent absences and non-attendance.

School B's strategic action plan also has a specific goal for Māori student achievement. The targets associated with teaching and learning specify the focus on students attaining 15 plus NCEA credits and Te Reo tuition in the junior school at Years 9 and 10. Within this goal is a target to promote the leadership of the head of Māori studies that positively influences the rest of the school. The principal in their interview explained this was a strategic attempt to give mana to both the leader and all things Māori in the school, reinforcing Māori language and cultural identity. The target related to attendance, kaupapa whakanui, had the objective of reducing absences linked to the motivation of teachers to engage in effective teaching, monitored through the use of data tracking on a term by term basis at a department level, and student aspiration to achieve their 15 plus credits. The individual achievement plans for all areas of the school that were incorporated in the rear section of the strategic plan, only four demonstrated any connection to the main goal of Māori achievement and specifically identified how that was going to be pursued.

The strategic action plan for School C did not have a goal specific to Māori student achievement, however within the six goals there were key themes and identified targets. Included within the leadership goal and plan are targets for evidence based strategies, development of Te Reo and tikanga Māori linked with staff professional development. The relationships goal and plan emphasised learning relationships and utilising knowledge gained through participation in He Kākano. Interestingly enough, within the culture goal and plan, there was nothing specific about Māori

language or cultural identity apart from promoting Māori language week. There was also nothing else pertaining to the improvement of Māori student learning in either the learning plan or community plan.

The individual school action plans although different in their layout and approach, revealed a number of similarities and some comparisons dependent on the distinctive focus or strategic intent. What was clearly exhibited in their documents was the commitment of the senior leadership teams to strategically formalise specific goals and targets to initiate improved educational outcomes for Māori students. This is further supported by Fink (2005), leaders have to ensure they make connections to internal and external educational issues that impact on their students; and Bonnici (2011), leaders formalising documents that establish operational frameworks and articulate vision, strategies and plans actively implemented and shared collaboratively.

CONNECTING AND CONSULTING WITH MĀORI COMMUNITIES

All three schools agreed that making connections with whānau and the wider Māori community can at times be challenging and difficult to achieve. They also agreed that it was an area that in the past had not always been done successfully, but as their cultural competence and confidence grew they were getting better at identifying new opportunities to engage with their Māori community. Studies by Durie (2011) assessing the journey and future for Māori emphasises the importance for schools to develop constructive relationships with whānau, kaumātua and kuia where aspirations are connected and shared in an environment where it is alright to ask questions and seek help. All three principals utilised informal opportunities at sporting, cultural and social events to connect with whānau and other Māori community members.

School A was particularly pleased with the progress they had made this year and attributed some of the success to hosting Te Tai Tokerau festival in term one and the launching of their own Māori student initiative Mana Kaitiaki which requires students to participate with their whānau as part of the project, and this has been initiated by the students themselves. A change in leadership of their Māori department had also

provided a renewed energy and development of some new connections. Their strategic action plan goal for Māori students has a specific target of developing closer relationships with their Māori community and includes organised whānau evenings, board of trustees representation and parent, teacher, student conferences that allow Māori whānau to have a voice. Again Durie (2011) endorses the view that educators should engage with Māori learners and whānau at a personal level showing interest and respect beyond task and information transfer.

For School B the issue was more complex due to the larger number of iwi and hapū in their geographical area. The principal had aspirations of fostering new relationships with other iwi and hapū who had not been involved with the school in the past, but was also aware of the possible tension this could create with current kaumātua and the need to follow correct protocol. This is highlighted by Durie (2011) in his comment that leaders will need to take charge of the future but in a journey that does not discount the past in search of new destinations. The establishment of tuition in Te Reo was providing a number of opportunities to make better connections however, it was vital to ensure hui (meetings with whānau) were arranged to discuss relevant important topics, and not organised for inconsequential matters that could be communicated in other ways. This is corroborated in their strategic action plan under school relationships with the community where there is a specific target of ensuring the Māori community are involved in supporting learning.

> *What Māori community, we have a variety. Māori are not a unified group – iwi and hapū are different and need to be acknowledged as such. (PB)*

School C has been successful in establishing and sustaining a small whānau group whose primary focus is Māori student achievement. This group have regular hui usually each term and the input and feedback generated at the hui is used as part of the consultation process and strategic planning for improved Māori student outcomes. Smith (2003) confirms the notion of transformative outcomes and different schooling approaches to meet the needs and aspirations of indigenous people. Both senior leaders interviewed shared the same opinion as School B, that there had to be a specific relevance for the hui and feedback received was valued and utilised to inform strategic direction. Under the goal of leadership in their strategic plan the

target for whānau and Māori student hui was acknowledged and being evaluated as part of their milestone report to the board of trustees.

> *It is important to listen to your Māori community. Communication – don't give up even when it becomes difficult, perseverance will pay off. Be prepared to start at the bottom and to build your own foundations. (SLC)*

AFFIRMING MĀORI STUDENT IDENTITY

The intent of this section of the study was to investigate what schools were doing, apart from the usual perfunctory actions, to give mana to Māori culture and to affirm Māori learners as Māori. This is reinforced in *Tātaiako: Cultural Competencies for Teachers of Māori Learners*, Ministry of Education (2011) under the cultural competencies of Manaakitanga, ability to demonstrate integrity, sincerity and respect towards Māori beliefs, language and culture; and Tangata Whenuatanga, affirms Māori learners as Māori providing context for learning where the identity, language and culture of Māori learners and their whānau is affirmed.

School A discussed the benefits of hosting a Māori cultural festival for the region and the enthusiasm it had generated with staff and students across the whole school. They believed it provided an opportunity for Māori students to not only share their cultural identity, but to teach the rest of the school, with Māori students participating in staff professional development sessions teaching waiata, protocols and accurate pronunciation. Their own Māori student led initiative, Mana Kaitiaki provided student leadership roles and allowed the opportunity for this group of students to present their Māori world view to the whole school, and to share their aspirations with teachers and whānau. Nuthall (2007) asserts that success is not just about academic attainment, but also arises from the experiences students have that are connected to their cultural background. This is further supported by Petty (2009) in his comments encouraging educators to create equal opportunities by not assuming students all learn in the same way. As the strength of the group has grown, teachers and whānau are becoming more involved with better connections being made in the wider community.

School B's journey has often been contentious and the principal attributes some of this to the number of overseas trained teachers on staff who are enticed to the area for the lifestyle it offers, and in many respects do not understand the obligations to the Treaty of Waitangi, particularly when teaching in a predominantly Māori community. This is supported by Macfarlane (2004) in his expression of concern towards the intentional or unintentional disregard for Māori culture and different world view. The principal has overtly included tikanga (Māori procedures and customs) into staff meetings and as much of the daily operations as possible, forging ahead despite criticism and resistance. In his professional and personal view, language is the key to cultural identity and success for Māori, hence the integration of tuition in the junior school in the medium of Te Reo. A view corroborated by Sherman, Rasmussen, and Baydala (2004) supporting culturally responsive teaching methods as opposed to instructional methods consistent to the dominant culture.

It is the world culture model versus the bicultural model. Overseas trained teachers unable or unwilling to acknowledge Māori as a Treaty partner. (PB)

School C viewed their participation in the He Kākano project as an investment in up-skilling the senior leadership team to develop more expertise in establishing a holistic approach that would ultimately influence teacher practice. This is also noted by Smith (2008) in his comments that student success should not just be measured by academic achievement. The NCEA study retreat that had been successful in the previous year would be repeated this year providing an opportunity for Māori students to develop good study habits and to feel positive about the examination process. As Webber (2008) suggests secondary education often alienates Māori students because of the preconceived ideology that their cultural difference is associated with low intellect. The school's cultural programme that runs throughout the entire year and not just as a lead up to Polyfest, acknowledges culture as being important and removes tokenism.

SUMMARY

This chapter has provided a discussion of the empirical data linked to the literature reviewed in chapter two. The key research themes that emerge from the findings were: raising awareness and shifting school culture, strategic leadership and action, strategic action plans, connecting and consulting with Māori communities, and affirming Māori student identity.

The findings have identified the number of challenges senior secondary leaders face in their attempt to provide an improved and inclusive learning environment for Māori students and their whānau. The expectations mandated from a political agenda, whilst they may be well intentioned, do not always offer the practical support and guidance, or in-depth knowledge to assist with transforming teacher practice, affirming the bicultural position of Māori as Treaty partners and supporting Māori to learn as Māori.

Chapter Six
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

The motivation for this research study is derived from both a professional and personal perspective. Firstly, my professional experience as a deputy principal and Māori student achievement facilitator in New Zealand secondary schools, and secondly from a personal perspective, as a woman of both Māori and Pākehā descent. In openly valuing my Māori heritage but not looking Māori, I have often experienced conflict, particularly in educational leadership where my world view is often considered nonconforming.

As New Zealand education continues to strive for improved outcomes for Māori students the role of senior leaders will become more complex particularly for those leaders who are still struggling to acknowledge and understand educational issues pertaining to Māori and culturally responsive practice (Education Review office, 2010). This study has illustrated the expectations and challenges faced by senior leaders, however it has also provided an insight into some of the ways secondary senior leaders are confronting the issue and are proactively planning and leading improved educational outcomes for their Māori students.

This chapter focuses on conclusions drawn from the study and presents these under the three main research aims: Understanding from a range of perspectives the attitudes and beliefs of senior leaders towards improving Māori student achievement; Determining how cultural competence influences leadership and supports Māori student success; Investigating the processes used by senior leaders to develop and guide explicit strategic direction focussed on improved outcomes for Māori students.

The chapter will also review the limitations of the study and provide recommendations for senior leadership teams in secondary schools, the New Zealand Ministry of Education, Universities and Tertiary Institutes, concluding with recommendations for future study.

CONCLUSIONS

Using a qualitative interpretive approach has generated data from the perspectives of a principal and another senior leader from the same team, as well as data contained in the strategic policies constructed by each school to reveal the school's strategic intent, direction and planning. Conclusions and recommendations have been obtained from data gathered and analysed using the two data gathering methods; one-to-one semi-structured interviews and document analysis. The study will add to the sparse existing literature on secondary senior leaders improving the educational outcomes of Māori students. The conclusions and recommendations may be beneficial to secondary school leaders and the New Zealand Ministry of Education responsible for encouraging improved outcomes for Māori students, as well as the role tertiary institutes could provide to assist with this educational issue.

The findings have shown that senior leaders are responsible for setting the vision and direction of their schools, providing an inclusive and conducive learning environment, promoting and encouraging effective teaching, and ensuring equitable education opportunities for their students, particularly Māori as the indigenous people of New Zealand (Ministry of Education, 2008). Schools are self-managing, therefore the role of a senior leader is multi-faceted and not only involves the daily operational tasks, but more importantly requires a stronger emphasis on what should be the first priority of any school, and that is teaching and learning. The expectation for senior leaders to improve cultural awareness and culturally responsive practice continues to intensify, therefore practical assistance to improve cultural competence is required in order to develop skills and expertise to successfully lead a contentious subject often met with resistance.

Research Questions

1. What are the expectations of senior secondary leaders in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?

2. What are the challenges for secondary senior leaders in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?

3. What values and attitudes do senior secondary leaders espouse in relation to improving Māori student learning outcomes?

4. How do senior secondary leaders put their values and attitudes into practice?

5. How does the rhetoric of school policy documents reflect the intent to improve Māori student learning outcomes?

The Attitudes and Beliefs of Senior Leaders

A person's attitude is shaped by personal beliefs, values and assumptions and is manifested in the way we behave; what we say and do. These are usually influenced through our up-bringing and experiences, education, culture, religion and social contexts we live in. For some, their values, beliefs and assumptions are inherent and deep-rooted so therefore the biggest challenge is to step outside the usual comfort zone and embrace new knowledge, ideas and things that are often foreign to our internal mechanics. For adults this can be both challenging and demanding, however educators have these expectations of their students on a daily basis, with little or no regard for how challenging and demanding this can be for them.

This links directly to one of the foremost requirements identified by this study, that to effectively lead and influence positive change for Māori students, it has to start with the senior leader genuinely believing that Māori students and their whānau deserve better and that schools can make a difference. This then transfers into a willingness to explore new knowledge and concepts, openly encourage non-tokenistic Māori cultural identity, and an attitude that discourages blame and deficit ideologies and promotes wānanga; actively leading staff to engage positively with Māori learners and whānau, supported by (Macfarlane, Glynn, Cavangah, & Bateman, 2007).

The study reinforces how school change requires a collaborative approach starting from the top at senior leadership level and filtering across the school to middle leaders and classroom teachers with everyone working together to identify the gaps and problems and co-operatively looking for opportunities to create solutions

supported by (Cardno, 2001). This requires implementation of a distributive leadership model to identify best practice and utilise the skills and expertise of staff at all levels of the organisation building effective learning relationships based on ako, reciprocal learning and teaching that is inclusive of Māori voice supported by (Durie, 2011).

Cultural Competence to Support Māori Students

The study has also identified that effective leaders acknowledge that they don't always have the cultural knowledge or expertise required but are willing to ensure that they and their staff find appropriate ways to learn from research and from others. This links directly to professional learning, not just the individual acquisition of new knowledge and skills but a school wide cohesive focus and commitment to challenge traditional schooling approaches and to encourage the inclusion of authentic Māori culture and language, supported by Smith (2003).

To do this requires leaders to shift from a multi-cultural approach and connect with the fundamental bicultural principles and obligations of leading a New Zealand state school. It starts by accepting and respecting that Māori cultural identity has a significant place in our education system and that our young people need to have the opportunity to connect with New Zealand's Māori cultural heritage in realistic everyday cultural contexts, supported by (Bevan-Brown, 2008; Webber, 2008; Milne, 2009).

Research from New Zealand and internationally continues to illustrate that students of different ethnic backgrounds learn in different ways and educational success can also be attributed to the experiences they encounter across the school, both inside and outside the classroom, supported by (Nuthall, 2007; Petty, 2009). The study emphasises the necessity of leaders and teachers knowing their Māori learners in order to develop a theoretical and practical understanding of what is making a difference to learning for them. New Zealand based research continues to show that what works well for Māori students works equally well for non-Māori students highlighting that culturally responsive pedagogy influences effective teaching, supported by (Macfarlane, 2010).

Strategic Direction to Improve Outcomes for Māori Students

Throughout the study there has been a distinct emphasis on the necessity for senior leaders and teachers to set high expectations for Māori student achievement and equally important, identify what needs to be improved, as supported by Smith (2008), the ability to take decisive and deliberate action. Setting broad goals and targets that are disconnected and not supported by data and evidence adopts the assumption that Māori are failing in everything. Perhaps leaders should be asking the following questions: Where are Māori students under performing and can it be localised to a particular curriculum area? Why are they under performing in those specific areas, what evidence supports this conclusion and what is realistically going to be done about it? All the senior leaders agreed that senior leadership teams have to be willing to ask questions and have the hard conversations with middle leaders as the driving force of the curriculum and pastoral care, and ensure this filters down into every aspect of the school.

The study has identified that when goals and targets specific to Māori student learning and achievement are clearly articulated into school policy and annual action plans, and are evident in consistency of practice and behaviour, there is greater potential of a positive impact on the rest of the school's ability to engage in deliberate change to improve the educational outcomes of Māori students supported by (Razik& Swanson, 2001).

The findings from the documentary analysis of all three of the participating schools, has revealed that the rhetoric of their strategic documents is consistent with the espoused practice, and that the senior leadership teams are committed to the on-going professional learning of their staff.

LIMITATIONS OF RESEARCH

Initially I had elected to pursue participation from four secondary schools, ideally two in each region, however obtaining consent from a second Auckland school proved to be extremely difficult. A number of Auckland secondary schools were contacted without success and time constraints prevailed. It was also intended to have a mixed cross-section of schools in terms of their progress with culturally responsive practice for Māori students as this would have provided a variance in responses and some interesting comparable data.

Unfortunately time constraints also prevented me from introducing a wider sample and obtaining the views and perceptions of teaching staff in the participating schools, and although they were not central to the study, they are influenced by the practice of their senior leadership teams (Miles and Huberman, 1994). This would have provided additional comparative data revealing any inconsistencies in terms of senior leader perceptions of their own practice and the guiding documents used to articulate the vision and strategic direction for improved Māori student outcomes school-wide. However, it is often viewed that the most useful measure of validity may well be transferability, which asks whether the results are presented in a way that allows other educators to judge if the findings apply in their context (Barnett, 2002).

A limitation of using interviews as a research method is that the relationship between beliefs, opinions, knowledge and behaviour is complex, so therefore the information gathered in an interview does not always represent the whole picture. Participants could embellish responses and deliberately provide the interviewer with the information they think they want to hear, and this can be the downfall of providing too much preliminary information prior to the interview. Interviewers have to be active listeners and desist from evaluating responses being aware of the way interaction with participants can often influence answers and by ensuring questions are phrased properly to encourage rational replies (Fontana & Frey, 2005).

Another limitation may have been interviewing only two members of each of the three school's senior leadership teams. Interviewing all members of each team may have produced comparative data in terms of the views, opinions and practice of the whole team, and perhaps raise some interesting contrasts. The unavailability of a second senior leader from School B to be interviewed provokes the idea that the rest of this senior leadership team are still resisting the changes of the principal.

A limitation of documentary analysis according to Fitzgerald (2012) is that documents can be subjective and may not always be accurate in their interpretation of events, activities or individuals. There is the potential for bias not just in what has been recorded but also in what has been strategically and intentionally omitted. They require methodical analysis which is often extremely time-consuming.

This can be a genuine disadvantage to this type of research method, particularly as schools are mandated to produce specific policies and guidelines on current national educational initiatives and foci, but are unrestricted in their presentation or interpretation of this information. Therefore, school documents that are similar in their fundamental principles, context and intent can be distinctly different in the way in which they are produced. There are no requirements to create mandated documents on standardised templates to assist with defining and classifying information, consequently the clarity and objective of the document is dependent on the level of skill and expertise of the principal and or author.

The principals of the three participating schools were able to provide and discuss the requested documentation without difficulty however the information was produced in a number of different formats and range of document sizes. This made it more challenging in terms of identifying key themes, similarities and noticeable comparisons linked to the aims and objectives of this research study.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are three main recommendations that require addressing; at a school senior leadership level, at a New Zealand Ministry of Education level, and at tertiary education level. Finally within this section, recommendations for potential future study.

Secondary Senior Leaders

There is an intense need for senior leaders to critically reflect and honestly evaluate their cultural competence in terms of genuine awareness and understanding of Māori educational issues and culturally inclusive practice. Effective senior leaders should be aspiring to attain cultural proficiency, whereby they pursue opportunities to continually refine their leadership and extend their knowledge and practice to lead whole school improvement for Māori students, supported by Cross et al., (1989). Acknowledging their own individual cultural competency enables each leader to identify personal strengths and weaknesses together with areas for improvement, and leads to the whole team establishing a collective understanding of the team's professional development requirements and identification of the current availability of skills and expertise.

Principals and senior leadership teams should be considering school wide professional learning at every level of the organisation ensuring a comprehensive stock-take of what is required, when it should occur and who is best to lead. The professional learning must be clearly aligned to explicit strategic goals and targets and create collaborative learning opportunities and interactions so that all staff are involved and connected to the journey, supported by Fullan (2008).

Another recommendation is that senior leadership teams could network with other senior leadership teams in order to share and to develop inter-professional learning communities and support.

New Zealand Ministry of Education

It would appear that schools receive documents from the Ministry of Education (MOE) often with little or no support or guidance on use and implementation, yet there is an expectation that after a period of time progress will be evident. In 2010 after two years of the implementation of the Ka Hikitia strategy to improve Māori student achievement and allow Māori to enjoy educational success as Māori, it was reported that there is still a large inconsistency in secondary leaders' engagement with the strategy and this impacted on their ability to lead the school effectively in this area supported by the Education Review Office (2010).

The MOE should be considering the availability of culturally responsive leadership professional learning for senior leaders across the secondary sector, not just the schools that are fortunate to be involved in the He Kākano initiative. As the impetus for promoting school wide change is the responsibility of the principal and senior leadership team, there has to be some form of practical guidance implemented to assist with developing cultural competency and endorsing MOE strategies. Therefore it is not surprising there continues to be inconsistency in culturally responsive senior leadership in secondary schools. It would be beneficial to develop a mentoring programme utilising senior leaders who already have expertise in leading improvement for Māori students.

Currently there is no formal requirement for senior leaders to have post graduate qualifications in leadership and this is an area that I believe requires more serious consideration. To progress through the ranks of a school, from teaching to middle leadership to senior leadership, without any formal training and up-skilling, implies there is not a great deal of difference in roles and responsibilities and assumes the individual already has the necessary attributes, supported by (Robinson, 2006). In my view, it is not enough to trust individuals will increase their knowledge, understanding and skills through on-the-job training, and realistically due to the complexities of schools, on-the-job training is not necessarily going to generate valuable learning or effective leaders.

Universities and Tertiary Institutes

University and tertiary post graduate courses in school leadership and management provide valuable in-depth professional learning in understanding the theoretical complexities of school leadership and assist with applying theory to practice. What is currently missing is the focus on Ministry of Education priorities, specifically Māori student educational outcomes. As a state education provider, acknowledgement of the bicultural obligations as a Treaty partner together with the development of course modules specifically addressing culturally responsive leadership would not only validate the priority but also assist to increase the development of effective school leaders.

Recommendations for Future Study

- Middle leaders have the most influence in terms of directing student learning and developing culturally responsive curriculum programmes. Investigating the perceptions of middle leaders to effectively lead improved Māori student achievement in a similar study would highlight strengths and weaknesses and provide interesting comparable data associated to leadership perceptions and practice.

- A study investigating the expectations and challenges for classroom teachers to improve Māori student educational outcomes. Regardless of what happens at leadership level, teaching practice and classroom environments directly influence the delivery of the curriculum, student engagement and experiences. Examining the perceived obstacles, and or advantages, might add to current New Zealand research and literature of an effective teacher profile to engage Māori students. This was an area of interest and proposed development in School C.

- A comparable study of the perceptions of teaching staff - their views and experience in terms of senior leader practice to improve Māori student learning outcomes, particularly if it is done in schools who promote progress in this area. This could provide further insight into what teaching staff consider important

attributes for effective leaders and the type of professional development required to assist teachers with up-skilling. This information could also contribute to the literature base of an effective teacher profile and would certainly add to the limited literature base on senior leaders improving Māori student educational outcomes in New Zealand secondary schools.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT

In my view it is not about special treatment, Māori students and their whānau don't want to be singled out, marginalised or made to feel any more different than they already do. It is about professional responsibility and accountability, and a genuine commitment to the Ministry of Education National Educational Guidelines and Māori education strategies, to create inclusive and successful learning experiences for Māori students.

The achievement gap will continue to have long-term negative repercussions for the economic and social well-being of New Zealand. For Māori to participate and contribute in both New Zealand society and globally, then there has to be acknowledgement and respect for New Zealand's bicultural heritage and the position of Māori in our society. Senior leaders must promote and lead educational success for our young Māori people.

Te huru huru te manu kā rere.
E aha to me aka akarere ake a tatou tauira?
Kotahitanga me to ako.

It is feathers that enable a bird to fly.
What enables our Māori students to fly?
Building relationships building learning.

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Appendix A – Interview Information Sheet

> **Thesis title:**
> **Senior Leader Efforts to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Māori Students in New Zealand Secondary Schools**

1. Opening

<u>Background information</u>

The central aim of my study is to investigate and examine the expectations and challenges you face as a senior leader to lead whole school learning to improve Māori student learning outcomes. In conjunction with the interviews being conducted, I will be analysing school policy documents relating to student achievement and Māori student outcomes, in an attempt to get a better understanding of what policies your school has in place to guide strategic planning and practice.

<u>Selection of participants</u>

Secondary schools with a Māori student population of over 12% were selected to participate. There are four in total, two in Auckland and two in Northland. You have been selected because my study specifically requires the participation of two members of the senior leadership team in each school, one being the principal and another delegated senior leader.

<u>Rights of the participants</u>

Your school (principal and Board of Trustees) have given consent for this study to be based in your school. You have also given consent to be one of the senior leaders interviewed. The interview will be audio recorded and transcribed and you will receive a copy of the transcription for verification prior to the information being used in the Thesis. Audio tapes of interviews will be stored in a secure cabinet and transcribed notes and contents of the Thesis will be saved to an external hard-drive, and stored in a secure cabinet. No other people apart from my research supervisor will have access to these files which will be kept for a period of five years. The identity of your school and individuals participating in the interviews will be kept confidential and not shared in any public reports or discussions.

<u>Structure</u>

Interviews are expected to take between 40-50 minutes, and certainly no longer than an hour. Below is a schedule of questions.

Appendix B – Interview Schedule

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SENIOR LEADER INTERVIEWS

1. What is your position in this senior leadership team and how long have you held this position?

2. What are your main areas of responsibility in the school?

3. What are the expectations of you as a senior leader in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?
   a. To lead whole school improvement?

4. What do you consider are the challenges for a senior leader in terms of improving Māori student learning outcomes?
   a. To lead whole school improvement?

5. As a senior leader, what qualities, knowledge and skills do you consider are important to improve Māori student learning outcomes?

6. How does your senior leadership team make decisions and plan for improved Māori student learning?
   a. How often does this occur?

7. In what ways do you consult and engage with your Māori community?

8. What level of engagement had your senior leadership team had with Ka Hikitia?

9. Are you familiar with the document Tātaiako: Cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners?
   a. How do you intend to use this document school wide?

10. What other government initiatives or policies to improve Māori student learning outcomes are you familiar with?
    a. Have any of these been implemented within the school?

11. What other ways does the school acknowledge and support Māori cultural identity?

Appendix C – Documentary Analysis Questions

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS QUESTIONS FOR PRINCIPALS

The information below will be collected from principals during their interview to assist with the document analysis.

Questions:

1. Who wrote the document(s) (position in the school) and when was it written?

2. What prompted the writing of this document?

3. Who is the intended audience for this document?

4. Were there any other documents or sources used to assist with writing?

Appendix D – Documentary Analysis Template

DOCUMENTARY ANALYSIS TEMPLATE

1. Author of the document

2. Purpose of the document

3. Intended audience

4. Other sources used to assist with writing

5. Unique physical features of the document

6. Key themes

Appendix E – Ethics Consent Participant

Unitec
NEW ZEALAND
Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka

Participant Consent Form

19 March 2012

From: Jenny Baber – Post Graduate Student and Researcher

Re: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

Thesis Title: Senior Leader Efforts to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Māori Students in New Zealand Secondary Schools

I have been given and understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my school will be used in any public reports. I also understand that the information I provide in my interview will only be used for the purpose of the project and will not be shared with any other participants including my principal. I will be provided with a transcript of my interview for checking before data analysis is started. I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project up to 14 days after viewing and accepting the interview transcript for final analysis.

I agree to participate in this project:

Signed: _____

Name: _____

(please clearly print first and last name)

Position held: _____

Name of School: _____

Date: _____

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2012-1013)

This study is undergoing approval by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee for research from (March 2012) to (November 2012). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

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Appendix F – Ethics Consent Organisation

![Unitec New Zealand logo. NEW ZEALAND. Te Whare Wānanga o Wairaka]

5 March 2012

Principal and Board of Trustees

(School details removed)

Dear

Thesis Title: Senior Leader Efforts to Improve the Educational Outcomes of Māori Students in New Zealand Secondary Schools

My name is Jenny Baber and I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology and seek your help in meeting the requirements of research for a Thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to investigate and examine the expectations and challenges for secondary senior leaders to lead whole school learning to improve Māori student learning outcomes.

Over the past 18 months I have been a Student Achievement Facilitator, primarily focused on Maori and Pasifika student achievement with *(deleted)* and prior to that, I had been a senior leader in two large secondary schools. Currently I am taking the opportunity to continue my study before commencing a new senior leadership role later this term.

Research will be conducted in four state schools, two in Auckland and two in Northland, of different decile ratings and over 12% Māori student population. I request your participation in the following way:

> I will be collecting data using an interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview both you and one other member of your senior leadership team separately; a Deputy Principal or Assistant Principal. Interviews will not take place until the end of term one, on your school site, at a time that is mutually suitable. Interviews will be conducted in privacy and will be no longer than one hour. Interviewees will be required to sign a consent form prior to their interview.

> I will also be conducting a document analysis of school policies that relate directly to both student achievement and Māori student outcomes, and would require copies of these documents as soon as possible so I can commence analysis prior to the interviews, if possible.

Your school and interviewees **will not** be identified in the Thesis and all information will be kept secure and confidential. I will be recording all contributions and will provide a transcript

for participants to check before data analysis is undertaken. I will also be happy to provide a printed summary of findings once the study and Thesis are completed.

As the central focus of this study is leadership and improved Māori student learning outcomes, I am happy to meet with your Kaumātua to discuss the aims and intentions of the research and would also be willing to attend a Board of Trustees and/or senior leadership meeting to provide the same information. On completion, if you would like me to personally present and discuss the findings with your senior leadership team, Board of Trustees and/or Māori community, then I am willing to organise a time that is mutually suitable.

If you have any queries about the project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

> Dr Jo Howse, Department of Education, Unitec, and she may be contacted by email or phone:
>
> *(contact details removed)*

This study has approval from the Unitec Research Ethics Committee (UREC) and further information on how you can make contact with the UREC Secretary should you have any concerns, can be found at the bottom of this letter.

I do hope that you will find this study of interest and will agree to participate, your contributions will be extremely valuable. **I would appreciate an email response at your earliest convenience to accept or decline participation in the study.**

Should you accept, you will receive ethics consent forms in the post and all you will need to do is fill in your name, sign and then return to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided. I look forward to your response and the prospect of working with you.

Yours sincerely

Jenny Baber

Post Graduate Student

UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2012-1013)

This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (March 2012) to (November 2012). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.