# The Next Generation of School Leaders: Are They Being Prepared For The Role?

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# ABSTRACT

This research set out to examine ways primary school principals identify, develop and support the next generation of school leaders. This research also involved examining first-time principal's perceptions and experiences of coaching and leadership development.

A qualitative methodology was employed for this research. Twelve primary school principals were interviewed using a semi structured interview format. Six of the principals had been in the role of principal for a minimum of four years. The remaining six principals were first-time principals who had been appointed to the role of principal within the eighteen months prior to the interview. The first-time principals were interviewed to determine their experiences of coaching and leadership development prior to being appointed to their current role.

The findings of the research revealed that in growing the next generation of leaders a number of aspects need to be considered. These include identifying potential leaders and creating opportunities for leadership, providing support for developing leadership skills and demonstrating confidence in the potential or aspiring principal. All the principals considered coaching had benefits in an educational setting. The first-time principals all mentioned that you are never as prepared for the role as you think you are.

To ensure that the next generation of primary school leaders are prepared for their future role consideration must be given to whether there should be mandatory training pre and post appointment. Further research into the preparation of the next generation of school leaders could incorporate the findings from the proposed external evaluation of the national pilot for Aspiring Principals and an examination into the impact of the Kiwi Leadership for Principals.

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# INTRODUCTION

**Introduction**

While recognition of the importance of leadership is widespread, recognition of the need to specifically prepare aspiring leaders has not been so apparent until fairly recently (Bush and Jackson, 2002). There are indications internationally and within New Zealand that there is a need to identify and develop school leadership to meet the present and future leadership requirements of schools. The perceived view in many jurisdictions is that over the past decades there has been a failure to invest in leadership identification and preparation (Fink, 2005). Internationally programmes have emerged that focus specifically on developing school leaders of the future. A programme of professional learning designed to prepare aspiring principals is being piloted in New Zealand this year.

In primary schools in New Zealand there are those who aspire to principalship who have not been involved in the pilot programme nor are they engaged in attaining a formal school leadership qualification. To ascertain what measures are being taken to prepare these aspirant leaders this investigation examined the current situation with regard to principals developing and coaching the next generation of school leaders. Principals may perform a fundamental role in the establishment "of a culture which fosters leadership development" (Brundrett, 2008, p. 17). In order to understand what factors influence principals developing and supporting potential and aspiring principals it was necessary to establish how leadership potential is identified in primary schools.

The notion of schools growing their own leaders is rapidly emerging in the United Kingdom (Rhodes and Brundrett, 2005). Southworth (2007) argues consideration should be made concerning the way in which tomorrow's leaders are being grown. As educational leaders today face a range of divergent challenges the next generation of school leaders will no doubt encounter different challenges. This

research, therefore, involved determining to what extent schools are growing leadership from within.

**Rationale**

In New Zealand appointment to principalship is currently not contingent upon any formal educational qualification, training or leadership experience. The Education Review Office (2001) reported that the majority of first-time principals had not undertaken any specific study to prepare them for managing and leading a school. They had relied on the experiences they had gained as classroom teachers or members of senior management teams and training they had received from professional development opportunities. According to Fullan and Mascall (2000) "there is little direct preparation for the role or systematic professional development on the job" (p.53). These views were influential in the decision to investigate whether potential and aspiring primary school principals are being provided with opportunities to develop their leadership skills. In recent time there has been an increased awareness of the need to prepare the next generation of school leaders. However, despite this heightened awareness educational research literature concerning the preparation of potential and aspiring principals is limited.

There has been a negligible amount of research undertaken to ascertain how potential leadership is identified. Leadership potential identification, for example in the United Kingdom, has traditionally relied on the implicit knowledge of the educational professionals (Rhodes, Brundrett and Nevill, 2008). The means by which leadership potential is assessed, the desired attributes and how potential leaders are made aware of their perceived abilities have attracted little research and consequently there is a lack of literature concerning the identification of leadership potential. It was this gap in the literature that instigated the examination of leadership identification in the primary school sector.

**Context**

This research on ways that aspirant primary school principals are being developed was motivated by my own experiences as an aspiring principal. I consider myself fortunate that my current principal and to some extent previous principals have

provided me with opportunities to develop my leadership skills. I was identified as having leadership potential and have been encouraged to take on roles which have ensured my leadership growth. I have received support and reassurance in my endeavours to acquire knowledge and skills related to educational leadership and management. Whilst consulting with other primary school senior management team members it became apparent that my experiences of leadership development were in some cases quite dissimilar to what others were experiencing. The inconsistency between my experiences and the experiences of others invoked my interest in what preparation, if any, aspirant principals were receiving. This research has enabled me to investigate whether the next generation of school leaders are being prepared for their future roles as primary school principals.

This research was a small scale investigation carried out in twelve New Zealand primary schools. The investigation involved the principals from these schools. Six of the participants were established principals having been in a position of principalship for at least four years. The remaining six participants were first-time principals having been in their current position for a maximum of eighteen months. Conducting the research with the two groups of principals allowed for any differing perspective to emerge. I initially considered that the first time principals, having been aspiring principals quite recently, might have different perspectives in regard to strategies that were used to develop their leadership skills and the way that they identify leadership potential. Whereas, the established principals having been in their roles for longer period of time may have different perspectives concerning strategies to develop leadership and the identification of leadership potential. Carrying out the research with the two different groups of principals allowed for a greater depth of data analysis to occur.

**Research aims and questions**
The overall aim of this research was to examine ways in which primary school principals coach and develop the next generation of school leaders. Three research aims were proposed for this investigation. There were:

1. To examine ways primary school principals identify the next generation of school leaders.

2. To establish what primary school principals are doing to develop and support these potential leaders.

3. To examine first-time principals perceptions and experiences of coaching and leadership development.

The questions that guided the research were:

1. How do primary school principals identify leadership potential in their school?

2. What models, strategies and processes do primary school principals use to develop senior staff?

3. What are the experiences of first-time primary school principals of coaching practices?

4. What are the implications for the ongoing professional development and training of school leaders?

**Thesis organisation**

This thesis is set out in six chapters. Chapter One provides an overview of the research project by way of the rationale for conducting the research, the context of the research and the aims and questions which guided the research.

Chapter Two consists of an overview of the current practice and policy in New Zealand schools. The themes highlighted in the literature are also considered. These themes include leadership training and preparation programmes - pre and post appointment to the role of principal, the role of the principal in growing the next generation of school leaders, educational leadership skills and knowledge,

leadership development, the identification of potential and aspiring principal and coaching in an educational setting.

Chapter Three examines the methodological framework and data collection method which were applied to this research. The rationale for the selection of the methodological approach and the research method employed are explained. The chapter concludes by taking account of the importance of reliability, validity and ethical issues in research.

Chapter Four presents and analyses data collected through semi-structured interviews with the twelve principals who participated in this research. The emerging themes are identified.

Chapter Five discusses the research data and links it with the literature base from Chapter Two. The significant themes from the analysis are brought together to provide an overview of how the next generation of school leaders are being prepared for their future role as principals.

Chapter Six contains recommendations and concluding comments based on the research questions. The identified benefits of coaching are presented. The implications for ongoing professional development and training of school leaders are discussed. The limitations of this research are explored. The chapter concludes with suggestions for further research.

The following chapter reviews the literature in regard to the path to leadership, leadership training and preparation programmes, leadership development, identification of potential leaders and coaching in an educational context.

# CHAPTER TWO

# LITERATURE REVIEW

**Introduction**

In an educational context there is a lack of knowledge surrounding who become leaders and how prospective leaders prepare for leadership (Ribbins 2003). Hargreaves (2005) alleges "few things in education succeed less than leadership succession" (p. 163). Despite "the sheer proliferation of leadership theories, styles or approaches" (Harris & Day, 2003, p.90), there has not been the same attention paid to the development of potential or aspiring principals. This observation is supported by Rhodes and Brundrett (2005) with the claim that "information concerning leadership succession and succession planning within the educational research literature is sparse" (p16). There has, however, been an increasing recognition that preparing and developing potential or aspiring principals should not be left to chance (Bush and Jackson, 2002).

This chapter overviews New Zealand's current policy and practice involving the pre and post development of school principal, with comparisons to other countries practices. Practices from other countries are compared to New Zealand's practices to establish whether New Zealand's approaches are similar or significantly different to other countries. The intrinsic elements of leadership development and leadership identification are identified and consideration is given to how they influence emerging leaders. The role coaching plays in developing potential and aspiring principals is examined.

**An overview of current policy and practice**

The introduction of *Tomorrow's School's* reforms by the New Zealand Government in 1989 essentially changed the nature of the principal's role. Deemed the Chief Executive Officer of the school principals discovered it was necessary to have knowledge in financial, property and human resource management. Billot (2003) claims "the role of school principals has changed markedly since the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* for whilst being expected

to be leaders, it is acknowledged that principals have the responsibility for managing their schools within the oversight of a governing body" (p.33). Robinson, Irving, Eddy and Le Fevre (2008) agree and would add that "they [the principal] and their Boards were now responsible for the financial, property, human resource and health and safety aspects of their schools as well as the usual educational aspects" (p.156). The 1989 *Education Act* heralded a significant structural change with the disestablishment of the Department of Education and its replacement with the Ministry of Education (MOE). The MOE purpose related principally to the development and effective implementation of policy rather than administration (Varnham, 2001). Individual schools "became the basis for all educational administration" (Varnham, 2001, p.79). The *Education Act* 1989 gave school's board of trustees "complete discretion to control the management of the school as it thinks fit" (Government, 1989.section 75).

Principals had traditionally tried to balance leadership and management responsibilities but "the reforms have forced educational leaders to pick up many more managerial responsibilities …the complexity of the management role has usually severely cut into the time available to principals to act as educational leaders in staff and school development" (Williams, Harold, Robertson and Southworth, 1997, p.631). Eddy (2007) further asserts that *Tomorrow's Schools* meant principals were "set a massive learning agenda when many of the usual principal support and advisory systems had been either disrupted or dismantled" (p.44). Principals did, however, appreciate "the freedom to be able to make decisions and to implement change at the local level without a lot of central bureaucratic interference… [This] is an acknowledged benefit of the education reforms. However, this responsibility also places further demands on principals" (Williams et al.,1997, p.630). The demands on principals are meaning that there are "signs that the continued high and intensive workload is taking its toll on principals' energy, and may be making the principalship less attractive to teachers" (Wylie, 1997, p. iii).

**The path to principalship**

Prior to 1989 there was a comparatively structured path to the position of principal for aspiring principals. This was based on teaching and/or management experience, grading and seniority (Brooking, 2005). Currently in New Zealand there is no grading system and where once seniority or experience were determining factors in appointing a principal these two factors are not necessarily taken into consideration any longer. Brooking (2005) considers that the unpredictability of "planning a career path and the whole appointment process a huge gamble for many would-be principals" (p.1).

In New Zealand at present, there is no mandated requirement for those aspiring to be principals to have had any prior leadership experience or to have any leadership qualifications. Currently a board of trustees can and does appoint a trained and registered teacher to the role of principal, irrespective of their training. New Zealand has "no national system to monitor who becomes a principal, and no national initiative to ensure and supply a pool of quality leaders under the self-managing model" (Brooking, 2007, p.3). Consequently, an applicant could be appointed who has had no guidance or relevant professional development in regard to leading and managing a school. The Education Review Office (ERO) (1996) reported that "on the whole principals learn to do what they are required to do on the job and from their peers" (p.21).

In the most recent study carried out by Education Review Office (ERO) regarding principal appointments, *The Appointment of School Principals (2001),* found that boards of trustees were "faced with an almost impossible task in trying to access candidate's knowledge through interview" (p16). The report went on to say that this undertaking would be "made considerably easier if applicants for the position of principal had to hold an appropriate qualification in school management and leadership that proved that they had adequate knowledge of all aspects of school management" (p17).

**Leadership training and preparation programmes**

In countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Australia, training is not a prerequisite to the appointment of principal. This is not the case in England where the need for aspiring principal preparation has been recognised in recent years. With the establishment of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), in 2000, along with the mandated National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) since 2004, this demonstrates the importance the current English government has placed on leadership preparation and growth. In the United States, where accreditation has had a longer establishment, a formal structured university degree programme is a requirement before applying for principals' and vice principals' positions in the majority of states (Bush and Jackson, 2002).

There are a number of initiatives for leadership in various countries such as Canada, Sweden, Singapore and Hong Kong, and as mentioned England and the United States. Leadership initiatives from these countries "reflect local culture and needs, and vary in balance between government, local authorities and academics, there remains similarity in the reasons for current interest and in the content" (Bottery, 2004, p.1).

In New Zealand training is not a prerequisite to being appointed to a principalship. It would appear that Bush and Jackson (2002) do not consider this to be a concern when they suggest "there is still an (often unwritten) assumption that good teachers can become effective managers and leaders without specific preparation" (p.418). A report from the ERO (1996) would disagree with this assumption when they report that "teacher training and successful experience as a teacher are, however, not enough. Primary school principals need to have access to high quality education and training to prepare them for this complex and important role" (p.21). The view that teaching qualifications and experience would provide adequate preparation for principalships is being replaced by the awareness that the role of principal is a specialist role and requires a different set of skills from those of a classroom teacher. While recognition of the importance of leadership is widening Bush and Jackson (2002) would argue that "recognition of the need for

specific preparation for aspiring and practicing school leaders… has been slower to emerge" (p.418).

The lack of leadership preparation in New Zealand was recognised by the ERO (2001) when they commented that, "little attention had been paid to the need of primary school principals to increase their professional understanding of broader concepts of primary school management and leadership" (p.16). The report continued by claiming that "there should also be incentives for aspiring principals to gain high-level qualifications in school management before they were appointed and to continue to undertake appropriate training and education after appointment" (ERO, 2001, p.16). ERO reports in 1996 and 2000 also indicated concerns surrounding principal pre and post appointment professional development. In 1996 ERO recommended that there should be a qualification or courses available that focused on leadership and management. The ERO 2000 report made the recommendation that a national requirement for qualifications and training be a stipulation for those applying for principals' positions in schools. These ERO reports are identified by Cardno (2003) when she discusses how pre-employment preparation is not mandatory but points to "a pattern of international policy development and strong recommendations from ERO suggest that government intervention is likely to change the status quo" (p.5).   Hence, there appears to be a concern surfaced with the pre-appointment and post-appointment of school leaders in New Zealand.

In order to address the problem of post-appointment training since 2002, the University of Auckland, in partnership with the Ministry of Education has offered a non compulsory national induction programme for first-time principals, First-time Principals' Programme (FTPP).  All first-time principals are eligible to participate in the FTPP. The focus of the FTPP is on leadership of teaching and learning. The Leadership and Management advisors and the Ministry of Education's School Support Services provide support to assist new principals meet their management and compliance responsibilities (Eddy, 2007). The FTPP induction programme initially was spread over one year but is now delivered over eighteen months, in response to feedback from participants. The programme is

voluntary and as Eddy (2007) notes "this is unusual in the international context of highly developed countries. Despite this, almost all first-time principals enrol in and complete the programme" (p.46). This programme is in its sixth year of operation.

The FTPP has a similar structure to the NCSL programmes. Both the FTPP and the NCSL programmes have residential workshops, the use of online learning and support and self assessment. The NCSL programmes refer to coaching whereas the FTPP refers to a mentoring programme. The FTPP mentoring programme, by description, would appear to encompass more than the coaching component of the NCSL programmes (Eddy, 2007; Hobson, 2003).

A national pilot for Aspiring Principals (NAPP) is currently being trialled in New Zealand. The pilot is a programme of professional learning designed to prepare those aspiring to be principals. It would appear that the Ministry of Education is concerned with the supply and quality of applicants to principal positions as the policy rationale for the NAPP is "to improve the supply and quality of applicants for principals' positions in all types of New Zealand schools" (MOE, 2007).

NAPP is a year long programme. There are five main aspects to this programme. The participants will learn about leading learning, developing self, future-focused schooling, managing change and understanding the role of a principal. The programme will include study, coaching, an online competent and an in-school leadership project. The learning will be personalised for aspirants based on their needs. Their needs maybe contextual or be based on their previous experience. The in-school leadership project will not only provide a practical component to the programme but it will require the support of the school principal (MOE cited in The Education Gazette, 2007; MOE cited on Leadspace, 2008a).

In February this year, 2008, a new professional development initiative was launched. The draft Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP) document was sent to school for feedback on the proposed model of leadership. The final KLP document was sent to schools in August. KLP focuses on principals as

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educational leaders. The approach to school principalship described in KLP "is specifically suited to the distinctive contexts of Aotearoa New Zealand" (MOE, 2008b, p.6). The development of KLP took into consideration international and national studies concerning principal leadership. The main intent of KLP is to introduce a model of leadership. The model reflects "the qualities, knowledge and skills required to lead New Zealand schools from the present to the future" (MOE, 2008b, p.6). Four qualities are one of the elements of the educational model.   The KLP document claims that "effective school leaders demonstrate these four qualities" (MOE, 2008b, p.13). The role the principal has in encouraging leaders to 'step up' is described in the KLP document under one of the four qualities. This quality is identified as awhinatanga: guiding and supporting. The importance of creating opportunities for the development of leadership skills for growing and sustaining leadership capacity is highlighted in the document (MOE, 2008b).

 As mentioned the main purpose of KLP is to introduce a model of leadership that will guide New Zealand schools from now and in years to come. Adoption of the model would appear to rely on present and future principal's commitment to the model for its implementation into schools. It is to be hoped that principals will realise the role they need to play in identifying, guiding and supporting leadership potential in their staff.

The programmes and initiatives discussed are the beginnings of providing professional development for principals and aspiring principals. However these programmes are not mandatory and consequently there could still be principals being appointed who do not have the requisite skills and knowledge. A dilemma, in New Zealand, is whether or not training for principalship should be pre-employment or post-employment or a combination of the two. A further dilemma is whether or not pre-employment training for principalship should be mandatory (Brundrett, Fitzgerald and Sommerfeltd, 2006a; Cardno, 2003)

Pre-employment programmes for potential and aspiring principals could take into consideration the complexity of the principal's job and the contextual nature of it.

The ways that individuals have until recently been developed "are no longer adequate to the challenges we face now and in the future" (Southworth, 2007, p. 181). A significant challenge that has been highlighted is how to deliver a programme that meets the individual learning needs and diversity of the participants (Robinson et al., 2008). These authors consider it is particularly relevant to New Zealand's situation because principals from all school sectors and all types of schools "from all sector groups (primary, secondary, area, intermediate, middle and composite schools), as well as from independent and state-funded special character (integrated) schools" (Eddy, 2007. p.45) participate in the same programme.

**The principal's role in growing leaders**

Although principals provide the key to a school's success there is "little direct preparation for the role" (Fullan and Mascall, 2000, p.53). In preparing for principalship the knowledge, skills and experiences gained as a deputy or assistant principal are fundamental to the perceptions held of the principal's role. ERO (2001) reported that "the majority of those gaining a principal's position relied on the experience they had gained as teacher or deputy principal" (p.16). The context in which the aspiring principal works will have an influence on how they view leadership.

However, the approach that a principal takes in managing the development of their aspirant leaders is likely to be informed by their own experience of being developed (Middlewood and Lumby, 1998). In contrast Southworth (2007) maintains that "those who are doing the job feel differently about the role from those who see it from the outside" (p.180). This would imply that until they are in the position of principal an aspirant does not fully appreciate the complexity of the role.

If principals model a commitment to ongoing professional development for themselves the likelihood is that an aspiring principal will see the need for and the relevance of professional development. School leaders should regard professional

development as a lifelong practice. "All leaders have the responsibility to keep on learning throughout their careers" (Robertson, 2005, p.24).

Even though leaders will be at various stages of their careers they still need the opportunities to as Robertson (2005) describes "renew, refresh, and redirect their leadership practice" (p.24). Principals having the opportunities to further develop their leadership skills will ensure they are more informed about current leadership practise. It will also demonstrate to potential and aspiring principals their commitment to being a learner. Unfortunately because a principal is aware of the need to further develop their own skills it may not mean that they will find the time to develop those of an aspiring principal. Most principals will admit to spending too much time in meetings and not spending enough time developing people (Clutterbuck, 1998).

If the development of potential and aspiring principals is left to chance, how prepared will they be for the role of principal? With the role of principal becoming increasingly more complex and demanding there seems to be an even greater need to address the issue of the pre-employment training of the next generation of school leaders. Thus, it would appear that it is behoven on current principals to develop their potential and aspiring principals. Robertson (2005) supports this in her assertion that "one of the most important roles for effective leaders … is developing leadership in others" (p.41). Dimmock (2003) also agrees when he makes notes that "one element of successful leadership may itself be a commitment to enhancing the leadership skills of others" (cited in Brundrett, 2008, p.17).

**Educational leadership skills and knowledge**
The literature that describes the skills and the knowledge that leaders require to successfully lead and manage a school is extensive. There is an emphasis in the literature that skills and knowledge are developed over time. Robertson (2004) supports this observation "effective leadership is a learned process over time" (p.2).

There appears to be certain amount of debate in the literature about the role and responsibilities of a principal. The debate fundamentally centres on whether principals are leaders or managers of their schools. Alvry and Robbin (1998) consider the principal's role is that of an instructional leader while acknowledging that managerial responsibilities cannot be overlooked. Day (2003) supports the notion that principals are required to be more than the manager of their school "heads [principals] are not recognised and rewarded solely for their managerial skills. Now they must be 'leaders of curricular change, innovative and diversified instructional strategies, data-driven decision making, and the implementation of accountability models for students and staff" (p.46). Brundrett et al. (2006a) identify how the findings of Hay Group's research (2001) group the skills and knowledge needed for a principal in the areas of "educational leadership, strategic and operational planning, working with the Board of Trustees, building community relationships and staff management, finance property and administration" (p.11). This list is very general in its description and consequently as each of the areas is examined in more depth the list of skills and knowledge expected of a principal would be extensive. In its report *Professional Leadership in Primary Schools* (1996), ERO noted "all primary school principals are expected to undertake a number of management responsibilities in areas such as personnel, finances and property" (p.20). ERO (2001) found, however, that most New Zealand principals had not had specific training to prepare them for the role and the responsibilities.

**Leadership development**

Once again Barth's (1998) question asked previously can be asked but in a different way - how does one develop their leadership skills and knowledge? Hartle and Thomas (2003) would suggest that "developing leadership potential over time requires placing individuals in a variety of roles, with an expanding range of responsibilities and accountabilities" (p.41). There are a range of options proposed in the literature for developing leadership skills and knowledge these include   taking courses, observing mentors, learning on the job, talking to other principals, by reading about it, coaching, mentoring, and using a critical friend, work-shadowing and workshops (Barth, 1998; Brundrett, Rhodes & Gkoliac,

2006b). Research carried out by Hartle and Thomas (2003) identifies four broad categories of specific experience that would appear to have the most development potential. These categories are on-the-job assignments, working with other people, hardships and set backs and others, which include formal programmes and non work experiences. Other strategies that schools could and do employ, to develop leaders, are networking and tertiary programmes. Webber and Robertson (2004) believe that "educational leaders should engage in ongoing professional networks that extend beyond their own cultures so that they can understand themselves in relation to the larger world" (p.272). Networks have the potential to be powerful sources for leadership development (Hartle and Thomas, 2003). Fink (2005) maintains that "one of the most important aspects for potential leaders' is their support network" (p.152).

Some ways in which schools may further develop growing the next generation of leaders are put forward by Brundrett et al. (2006b) "leadership distribution, coaching, career planning and an active developmental relationship between the head [principal] and deputy [ potential or aspiring principal]" (p.266). Southworth (2005) asserts that distributed leadership is essential for the growth of leadership and "ensuring there are lots of leaders enables us to create pools of talented leaders. From these pools of talent we can draw and grow tomorrow's leaders" (p.162).

Within the education sector there are a range of professional development opportunities available to aspiring principals. The problem is determining what will have the most relevance for the participant. Investing in multifaceted professional development that is intellectually stimulating and demanding in terms of educational thinking maybe more beneficial than short one or two day courses that focus on specific skills in isolation from context and theory. Then again this kind of professional development may not be the most appropriate for a potential or aspiring principal as most of these programmes tend to be "off-the-job" (Woodall and Winstanley, 1998) training. The main disadvantage of off-the-job training is its appropriateness for the specific requirements of the individual and the transferability of the learning to their context (Rudman, 2002). It might

be more beneficial for a needs based professional development programme to be developed for the individual. In this way the professional development can be on-the-job and off-the-job depending on the individual's specific needs.

A benefit of professional development occurring on-the-job is that the participant is able to apply their learning to a context they are familiar with. This should incur a more positive outcome for the individual. Southworth (2004) illustrates this notion when he refers to "research and experience show that most school leaders believe they learned how to lead by being given opportunities to lead and through on-the-job learning" (p.345).   Professional development that allows for positive motivation rather than negative oppression and is proactive rather than reactive (Middlewood and Lumby, 1998) is necessary for the development of the next generation of school leaders.

If potential and aspiring principals are to have success in the role of principal they need to receive preparation for the role. Rhodes et al. (2008) would agree that there is a need "to identify and develop a pool of talent able to meet present and future leadership requirements in schools" (p.313).

**Identification of potential leaders**

There is little known about how potential leaders are identified. There has been little research undertaken on the identification of potential leadership.  There is an absence "of any systematic understanding in the literature of how individuals get to be leaders" (Gronn & Ribbins, 1996, p.455).

In Singapore the Ministry of Education ascertains who should train for leadership roles. They determine the candidates through an ongoing assessment procedure. Research in the United Kingdom (UK) has been more concerned with the barriers to leadership succession and has not focused on potential leadership identification. The UK government has recently introduced an initiative to identify individuals who demonstrate leadership potential. These individuals are measured against a number of competencies and values (Rhodes et al., 2008).

In a decentralised system, such as New Zealand's, succession planning is a more uncertain affair (Bush, 2008). In New Zealand, where schools are self-managing, the initiative has been with the individual to put themselves forward for leadership roles. There are indications that, traditionally, potential and aspiring leaders have indicated their interest in leadership roles by applying for an advertised position (Fink, 2005). However, potential candidates wanting to participate in the NAPP this year were either identified by their principal or self nominated. Potential applicants applied to participate by completing an application which required their principal to support their application.

Schools have a responsibility to identify and develop the potential in their senior staff members. Southworth (2007) notes that "the climate should promote leadership development and a sense of shared responsibility for bringing on the next generation [of school leaders]" (p.191). But what is it that these impending leaders need to demonstrate to alert the principal to their potential. Do principals consider that because a staff member is an effective classroom teacher they would be able to transfer their skills to a leadership role? A challenge in identifying potential leaders is to determine who would be able to make "the leap from successful 'doers' to accomplished 'negotiators' who hold the lives of other adults in their hands" (Fink, 2005, p.146). Just because a classroom teacher demonstrates exemplary skills in the classroom it is not a guarantee that they will have the skills to work with adults. The competency required to be a successful teacher can be quite different to those needed in a senior leadership role.

A principal needs to be aware of individuals displaying leadership potential in a range of ways. Brundrett et al., (2006b) suggest "pro-activity in the development of leadership successors requires the recognition of potential leadership talent in others" (p.260). Once potential leadership talent has been identified the school then has a responsibility to "find ways to attend to their development (Fink, 2005, p.148). Care, however, needs to be taken to ensure that the needs of the individual are being met. Southworth (2005) claims "we should avoid adopting a 'one size fits all' approach to leadership identification and development" (p.166). The undertaking of developing potential leadership can be made more difficult if the

identified individual lacks the confidence to take on a leadership role. The principal then has the task of building up their confidence. This could merely entail giving the individual opportunities and support so they gain confidence. To ensure the aspirant leaders confidence is developed "senior leaders need to actively and purposefully support leadership development that encourages staff to take on new roles and to aspire to leadership positions" (Brundrett et al., 2006b, p. 266).

It is important for the development of potential and aspiring leaders to be given the opportunity to lead the school (Southworth, 2007). Principals and schools who are aware of "the value of career succession planning will create opportunity for staff with potential to understudy roles to which they aspire" (Cardno, 2005, p. 303). It is important, however, that when they do have these opportunities that it builds their confidence rather than demoralises them (Southworth, 2007). Hartle and Thomas (2003) point out that to grow leadership talent principals need to provide their staff with opportunities to take risks with leadership responsibilities however they do emphasise that principals also need to back the staff member taking the risk.  If potential or aspiring leaders are given opportunities, with support, they will gain invaluable experience for future leadership challenges they may encounter.

Educational leaders need to be able to work with people with the issues and concerns they face daily. Leaders must be challenged to recognise and reflect on how changing their practice can make a difference (Robertson, 2005).  One way of providing this challenge is through coaching.

**Coaching and mentoring**

The terms coaching and mentoring are frequently confused and referred to interchangeably. Clutterbuck (1998) makes the observation that "coaching, mentoring, tutoring the language of helping others to learn is replete with words and phrases that seem to overlap and that have widely different meanings to different people" (p.vii). The literature regarding coaching and mentoring does however attempt to provide definitions for each term.  Blandford (1997) defines

mentoring as being "the positive support offered by staff with some experience to staff with less experience" (p.234). Mentoring is referred to by Zeus and Skiffington (2002) as a way of passing on knowledge to others "by someone who is usually older and wiser with broad life experiences and specific experiences" (p.17). Mentoring involves the mentor sharing their experiences with the mentee. Mentoring can, for this reason, be perceived as the mentor informing the mentee this is the way to do it.

One of the main distinctions between coaching and mentoring is the assumed view of mentors being the more knowledgeable. As Robertson (2005) explains in her definition of coaching "[it is] a learning relationship, where participants are open to new learning, engage together as professionals equally committed to facilitating each other's leadership learning development" (p.24). Reiss (2007) agrees as she defines coaching as "an alliance between two people: the coachee, who wants or can benefit from coaching, and the coach who is skilled and experienced in listening deeply to what the coachee wants and what's in the way of achieving it" (p.12). Although Reiss (2007) would further controversially argue that "it is not necessary for a coach to have content knowledge or expertise in the field of the person he or she is coaching" (p.13). This is not the view of Clutterbuck (1998) who feels "coaching does demand some practical experience - been there, seen it, done it - if not of the actual task, of tasks sufficiently similar to transfer understanding" (p.11).

A coach, therefore, has knowledge of the context but may not have encountered the exact situation. They are, however, willing to work along side and support the person they are coaching. The coach encourages and assists the coachee to find the solution or answers without doing the thinking for the coachee. Clutterbuck (1998) maintains that "more modern concepts of coaching emphasise dialogue, ownership of the issue by the learner, and allowing the learner to provide much of his or her own feedback" (p.8). The coachee taking ownership of the issue allows the coach to be the supporter and not dictatorial. The coach can guide the coachee in their thinking by listening, posing questions, challenging their thinking and offering feedback (Reiss, 2007). In this way the coach allows the coachee to

reflect upon and clarify what they are trying to achieve. Clutterbuck (1998) argues that "constructive challenge is one of the most powerful gifts a coach can give to a learner" (p.28). Reiss (2007) would expand on this view by proposing that a coach should "inspire people to get out of their comfort zones to reach their full promise" (p.12).

Another notable difference between mentoring and coaching is that mentoring is often but not always informal and often arises from situations where people work together and establish a relationship. In contrast coaching is a deliberate act, where there is a learning relationship between professionals focussed on developing new learning together (Robertson, 2005). Coaching is beyond mere conversations and is a relationship between peers where they both expect to make gains in knowledge, it is therefore done with, not to.

**Coaching in an educational setting**

As the literature has indicated, coaching normally implies that the coach has the skills, knowledge, experience and expertise to facilitate the learning of the person being coached. Robertson (2004) advocates "coaching allows for the individual needs of the leader to be met as they focus on their issues they are experiencing on a daily basis and take the time to reflect critically on their practices relating to these issues" (p.7). This idea is expanded upon by Reiss (2007) implying coaching helps "people think beyond their daily issues and see a bigger picture" (p.12).

Southworth (2007) agrees that coaching is beneficial for principals. His view is that a coach can "enable individuals to examine their performance, identify development needs and help them unburden themselves of some of their pressing concerns and doubts" (p.188). The peer coaching model, in this case a principal coaching another principal, ensures that the learning is based on "real experiences in the leader's work, reflective observation of those experiences, opportunities to question, problem solve, analyse and develop new ways of thinking and leading, and then trying out new ideas" (Robertson, 2004, p.1). Thus the principal can take responsibility for their learning and take ownership of the coaching process.

Coaching sets in place a structure that can provide leaders with support and opportunities for exercising considered deliberated educative leadership as part of their daily practice (Robertson, 2004). A coach can ensure that a leader has someone they feel they can trust if they are find themselves losing confidence. This could apply to aspiring principals, new principals and more established principals. Other writers (Clutterbuck, 1998; Reiss, 2007; Southworth, 2007; and Zeus and Skiffington, 2002) would agree with Robertson's (2005) statement that "coaching focuses on leadership practice in context" (p.38).

Aspiring principals would also benefit from a coaching structure that provides support and opportunities to carry out tasks they may encounter in a principal role. Robertson (2004) contends that "coaching also provides opportunities for affirmation and validation of practice, which is important in leadership development" (p.7). Aspiring principals could gain valuable knowledge, skills and confirmation of their development if they were coached by their principal. Woodall and Winstanley (1998) write from a business management point of view but what they have to say about development and coaching is equally relevant to an education context. The attributes that they assign to a line manager could be said about a principal "they can counsel, provide insight, give frank feedback and open doors …good coaching involves showing an interest in people" (p.186). Additionally Clutterbuck (1998) claims "effective demonstrators do not just rely on themselves to show how things are done. They create opportunities for the learner to observe other people in action and then work with the learner through what he or she observed" (p.31). In this way the coach can draw on the skills of others to support the aspiring principal's learning. This reinforces the view expressed previously that coaches do not need to know everything. It would, nevertheless, be beneficial if they had a network of individuals who were prepared to be involved in developing the skills of the aspiring principal.

An aspiring principal does need to acknowledge the potential to learn from all those around them (Clutterbuck, 1998). However, one of the most important roles for an effective principal is developing leadership in others. Principals need to be

on the lookout for learning opportunities, at work, for the aspiring and potential principals (Clutterbuck, 1998; Robertson, 2005; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998).

The current literature concerning coaching focuses mainly on principals coaching principals, teachers being coached in regard to their teaching practice and some of the literature makes reference to student coaching. My research however will focus on principals coaching the next generation of principals.

**Conclusion**

The early identification of potential principals will enable the aspirants to gain valuable knowledge and skills required to cope the complexity of the role. Potential and aspiring principals need to be given opportunities to develop their leadership skills in authentic contexts. But in saying this being given opportunities with no support does not appear to be sufficient. The next generation of school leaders need the support and guidance of their principal to develop their leadership skills and knowledge. Concerns for the next generation of leaders linger when questions such as "will they be ready? Can they properly be prepared?"(Hargreaves & Fink, 2007, p.50) are still being asked in current literature. Though Southworth (2007) argues that "without doubt it is now time to prepare the next generation of school leaders" (p.177).

The examination of the literature undertaken for this literature review along with associated findings and conclusions will underpin my own investigation into the pre-appointment preparation for aspiring primary school principals. While also examining what role current principal are taking in coaching and developing the next generation of leaders. The next chapter will focus on the methodology which guided research approach and the method employed to obtain data sought to achieve the research aims.

# CHAPTER THREE

# RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

**Introduction**

This chapter examines the methodological framework and data collection method which have been applied to this research. The framework and data collection method that were employed were informed by the nature of the research problem, namely the growing the next generation of primary school leaders. The context for this study was the perceptions that principals held in regard to developing leaders. Therefore, the most appropriate approach for this research study was the adoption of a qualitative methodology. The rationale for the selection of this methodological approach for this research is explained along with the ethical considerations relating to this research.

**Methodological approach and rationale**

The aim of methodology is to help researchers understand the process of scientific inquiry rather than just the product (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2007). The type of data that were sought in the endeavour of achieving my research aims guided the choice of an appropriate methodological approach and the research method employed to obtain the required information. The adoption of an inquiry approach would provide the opportunity to talk with principals and discover the assumptions, beliefs and values that underpinned their beliefs (Owens, 2004). The nature of qualitative research, in which investigations take into account the social context in which they occur (Husén, 1997; Owens, 2004), I considered to be an appropriate approach for this research. A qualitative methodological approach has features that would allow for an in depth approach to the stated research questions. Some of these features are discussed to highlight the benefits of using a qualitative approach for this research.

**Qualitative research**

One of the approaches qualitative research takes is a post-modernist approach. Verma and Mallick (1999) assert that post-modernists view the search for truth in the research process as naïve, that there is a multiplicity of legitimate truths that "are dependent on the positioning of each actor in context" (p.37). Husén (1997) claims that the post-modernist approach allows researchers to be humanistic, consensual, subjective and collegial. Razik and Swanson (2001) refer to critical and interpretivist theory as branches of post-modernist approaches to educational research.

Post-modernist researchers follow a qualitative process of inquiry and set out to understand the interrelationships that exist between the research subjects and their context. This is very pertinent aspect of this research in that there an inevitable interrelationship between the participants, the principals, and their context, their present or past schools. Kervin, Vialle, Herrington and Okley (2006) maintain that "the qualitative researcher is not interested in objective measures, preferring to explore the subjective experiences, ideas and feeling of the participants" (p.37). Qualitative research aims to help us understand the world in which we live and why things are the way they are. It is concerned with the social aspect of our world and seeks to answer questions about why people behave the way they do, how opinions and attitudes are formed and how people are affected by the events that go on around them (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2002; Lincoln and Guba, 2005). Cohen et al. (2007) believe that "individuals' behaviour can only be understood by the researcher sharing their frame of reference: understanding of individuals' interpretations of the world around them has to come from the inside, not the outside" (p.19). Qualitative data are, therefore, collected through direct encounters with individuals, through one to one interviews or group interviews or by observation. Qualitative methodologies include a range of research methodologies which make it possible for the researcher to engage with the research subjects in the context within which they operate. Qualitative research allows for an awareness of the subtle nuances of an educational context and allows for the investigation of the unexpected (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Kervin et al., 2006).

Data, from qualitative research, are presented not as a statistical analysis represented by a table of figures but as a report that is "lively, richly documented accounts of human beings at work that yielded insight and understanding of what was happening to people and how they were responding to their experiences" (Owen, 2004. p.158). Qualitative methodologies assume that due to the complexities of the variables that it is concerned with it is difficult for data to be measured numerically as advocated by quantitative

Qualitative researchers are sometimes criticised for their views of what is significant and important and the close relationships they develop with their research subjects (Bryman, 2004) The qualitative researcher recognises that it is not possible to be totally objective (Coleman and Lumby, 1999; Razik and Swanson, 2001) and acknowledges that experiences, bias, expertise and knowledge will inevitably be influential (Greene, 2000). As a researcher one needs to be aware of this predicament and ensure that theory emerges from the research and not precede it. The difficulty of replicating a qualitative study is also a criticism of qualitative research. The unstructured nature of qualitative data means the "interpretation will be profoundly influenced by the subjective leanings of a researcher" (Bryman, 2004, p.284). The scope of the findings in qualitative investigations are often referred to as being restricted (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007). It could be argued, therefore, that findings from research that is carried out in one organisation involving a small number of participants might not be able to "be generalised to other settings" (Bryman, 2004, p.285). In the case of this research it has not been the intention to generalise the findings, as presented in Chapter Four and discussed in Chapter Five, to all primary school principal. The findings presented and discussed reflect the perceptions of the principals who participated in this research and could serve as discussion points and a possible impetus for further research into identifying and developing the next generation of primary school leaders.

A further criticism of a qualitative approach is the lack of transparency. This would suggest that qualitative reports are sometimes unclear about how sampling procedures were undertaken and how data analysis took place (Bryman, 2004).

However, according to Bryman (2004) this lack of transparency is increasingly being addressed by qualitative researchers. As far as possible, issues of transparency have been covered in this research by an honest and open explanation of the processes of sampling and data analysis.

The choice of a qualitative methodological approach influenced how the research was carried out. Cohen et al. (2007) assert that "how one aligns oneself [to a research methodology] profoundly affects how one will go about uncovering knowledge of social behaviour" (p.7). A qualitative approach would enable me to gain an understanding of the principal's perceptions concerning leadership development. To attain an understanding of the personal values, beliefs and opinions of the participants, the contextual data that I sought required a humanistic approach such as that offered by qualitative methodologies.

**Quantitative research**

This humanistic approach is opposed to quantitative research which as a broad paradigm takes a positivist approach. Several writers (Husén, 1997; Lincoln and Guba, 2005; Owen, 2004; Razik and Swanson, 2001) suggest that researchers with a positivist world view would be inclined to believe that the true purpose of research is to discover truth through empirical observations that can be controlled by an objective researcher. This kind of research is quantitative in nature and implies that variables can be singled out from reality, while other parts of the setting can be controlled. Positivism claims that "science provides us with the clearest possible ideal of knowledge" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.11). However, positivism is less successful when applied to the study of human behaviour. This is particularly apparent in the school context where problems with "human interaction present the positivistic researcher with a mammoth challenge" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.11). Quantitative research provides outcomes in numbers and measures that are either explaining and predicting or confirming and validating or testing a theory (Bryman, 2004; Creswell, 2002). A further criticism of quantitative research in education is that it invariably does not take into account the numerous factors over which educators have no control which could point to failed practice. Robinson (1998) argues that 'one cannot, by definition, develop

knowledge of practice by ignoring or 'controlling out' that context" (p.20). Positivist research has a tendency toward reductionism, scientific experimentation in laboratory settings to simplify, restrict and control variables (Cohen et al., 2007). Whereas, educational researchers realise that educational practices cannot be separated from cultural, social and political contexts within which they are situated (Husén, 1997). In the context of this research a quantitative approach was unlikely to provide an adequate understanding of the perceptions of the principals.

**Interpretive stance**

As the intent of this research was to interpret the understandings of the twelve primary school principals, it was suited to an interpretive stance. Denzin and Lincoln (2000) suggest "all research is interpretive; it is guided by a set of beliefs and feelings about the world and how it should be understood and studied" (p. 19). By employing an interpretive stance meant that there was scope for interpretation at more than one level. Bryman (2004) notes "the researcher is providing an interpretation of others' interpretations" (p.15). The interpretive perception does not presume that the researcher's language or perspective is neutral rather it "assumes multiple, socially constructed realities are the norm" (Tolich and Davidson, 1999, p.184). In this study it allowed for focus on each participant's perceptions of the development of potential principals. The interpretive researcher begins with the participants and then by analysing data has a better understanding of how they interpret the world about them. Cohen et al. (2007) emphasis that "theory is emergent and must arise from particular situations …theory should not precede research but follow it" (p.22). In this study the theory of what the participants believed emerged from the research findings. Research findings are discussed in Chapter five.

The considerations taken into account when selecting this qualitative approach were the sample size, twelve primary school principals, and the actual small scale of the project. Qualitative research enables us to find out a great deal about what a small number of people think (Davidson and Tolich, 2003). I was confident that a qualitative paradigm would allow me to examine ways in which primary school principals coach and develop the next generation of school leaders and examine

first-time principals perceptions and experiences of coaching and leadership development.

## Data collection method

The nature of the problem under investigation and the varying perspectives from which it maybe viewed help determine the selection of an appropriate research method (Keeves, 1997). To achieve the aims of my research and allow for a qualitative inquiry to be applied I selected interviews as the research instrument for this investigation. I was interested in the interviewees' points-of-view and their insights. Thus, the choice of a semi-structured interview would allow for a range of divergent and detailed responses to emerge that would portray the perceptions of participants.

## Semi-structured interviews

The choice of a semi-structured interview as the sole method for this design, provided a framework with some flexibility so that the participants were able to define their own experiences (Cohen et al., 2007). Semi–structured interviews require the researcher to have questions that they want to cover through the interview. The researcher should be familiar with the questions that they are asking so they can be asked as if they are part of a conversation so that the interview flows (Babbie, 2007).  In this type of interview the participant is not as restricted in how they respond as they might be in a structured interview. The researcher may ask questions that they had not planned to ask. They would ask these questions to clarify what the participant has said or to probe the participant to elaborate on their response as this maybe an issue or new idea that the researcher has not encountered Bryman (2004). Additional questions were asked during the interviews to either clarify what the participant had said or to have them explain in more detail a point they had made.

As the intention of this research was to gain a rich understanding of the participants' views surrounding the coaching and developing the next generation of school leaders the semi structure of the interviews allowed me to prompt and probe without putting the interview process at risk. But as Bryman (2004) points

out questions should to be asked using a similar wording and all the planned questions need to be asked. Semi–structured interviews tend to be more flexible, allowing the researcher to respond to the direction that the participants take the interview, therefore, this was an ideal format for this research. The flexibility of this type of interview also provides the qualitative data a personal dimension and enables the participant's 'world view' to be sought and the emerging themes are able to be identified (Bryman, 2004). A semi–structured interview allows the researcher to seek what is common and what is particular to a participant and also provides the format for discovering what is uncommon (Stake, 2000).

During an interview the interviewer needs to remember their role is "to interview informants [participants], not to cross – examine them" (Tolich and Davidson, 1999, p.117). This also means that the interviewer should engage in active listening. At times the interviewer may find themselves not listening to what the interviewee has said rather they find they are thinking about the next question they are going to ask. Interviewers may find that there are silences during the interviews. They should "not be afraid of silences or long pauses; they often lead to much better data" (Tolich and Davidson, 1999, p.118). On the other hand there ought to be a balance if the interviewer talks too much the interviewee may feel that they are not on the right track and if the interviewer does not contribute the interviewee may not feel comfortable and close up (Bryman, 2004). As this research employed interviews as its only method of gathering data it was important that data obtained was sufficient and would allow me to achieve my research aims. As the interviewer I needed to "facilitate respondents' descriptions and reflections on their experiences" (Opie, 1999, p.245). This meant that I needed to be aware of non-verbal expressions and the participant's body language. Making notes during an interview is a way of recording these occurrences that may impact on the interview and would not be picked up in the recording of the interview.

**Interview sampling**

Time in which to complete this research and geographical accessibility to potential participants were constraints that influenced my selection of the sample size and composition of the principals for interviewing. The sampling strategy that I adopted, to ensure I would have appropriate participants, was purposive sampling. Researchers using this sampling strategy select the participants to be included in the sample on the basis of specific characteristics that are being sought (Cohen et al., 2007). Specific characteristics of the participants were that they were either a first-time principal, who had been appointed in the last eighteen months, or they had been a principal at least five years. When interviewing one of the established principals I discovered that they were in fact in their fourth year of principalship. As the interviews were conducted in the third term of the school year it did not appear to be a major concern that they had not been in principalship for five years. I contacted twelve principals all who agreed to participate in the research. Six principals were established principals and six were first-time principals. Conducting the research with the two groups of principals would not only provide for greater depth of data analysis but also allow for different perspectives to emerge (Creswell, 2007).

The twelve principals who participated in my research were known to me as professional colleagues. The principals are all from Auckland schools. Gender was not a characteristic I considered when drafting a list of potential participants, however, the make up of the twelve principals was six males and six females. There was an even split of male and female over the two groups. The intent of this research was not to examine the participant's perspectives from a position of gender. Therefore the data analysis in Chapter Four and the discussion concerning the findings in Chapter Five do not refer to the gender balance of the participants.

All potential principals were initially contacted by telephone to ascertain whether they would be prepared to participate in my research. Following the verbal confirmation of their willingness to participate I visited each of the principals to provide them the information sheet outlining the aims of the research and to explain to them what would be required of them. I explained to the participants

the need for recording the interview and explained that the interview would take approximately one hour.  At this meeting the participant completed the formal consent form and they were reassured that their responses would remain anonymous and that their identity would not be revealed in the final report. I contacted the principals, by telephone, a second time to organise with them a mutually convenient time to interview them. The interviews were spread over a period of fifteen days. Table 3.1 provides details of the dates for the interviews and when the transcripts were sent to the participants:

**Table 3.1 Interview and transcription completion dates**

| Participant | Date of interview | Transcript sent |
|---|---|---|
| Established principals | | |
| A | 11.09.08 | 12.09.08 |
| B | 12.09.08 | 12.08.09 |
| C | 17.09.08 | 24.09.08 |
| D | 17.09.08 | 18.09.08 |
| E | 16.09.08 | 16.09.08 |
| F | 23.09.08 | 24.09.08 |
| | | |
| First-time principals | | |
| G | 25.09.08 | 25.09.08 |
| H | 10.09.08 | 10.09.08 |
| I | 13.09.08 | 14.09.08 |
| J | 18.09.08 | 24.09.08 |
| K | 16.09.08 | 17.09.08 |
| L | 12.09.08 | 13.09.08 |

**Interview technique**

Two interview schedules (Appendix A and Appendix B) were used to obtain the required data from the participants. Appendix A was the interview schedule used for the established principals and Appendix B the interview schedule used for the first-time principals. Two interview schedules were necessary as the information I sought from the two groups of principals was not exactly same. The first-time principals were being asked questions that mainly related to their experiences prior to being appointed to the role of principal. The established principals were asked questions mainly to determine their views relating school leadership identification and development.

The main purposes of the interview, in terms of this research, were to provide an effective means of gathering the required information and to identify variables in the ways that the principals coach and develop the potential school leaders. The intent was also to provide a structure that was robust and common to all the participants but sufficiently flexible to provide data required.

As mentioned the interviews were recorded with the permission of the participants. I used a digital recorder which eliminated any concerns about a tape running out or not working. The recorder itself was small and therefore was quite unobtrusive. The recorder/ing did not appear to be an issue for all but one of the participants. Being a digital recorder also meant that I could transfer the interviews to my laptop and save them to a CD for save storage. Transferring the recorded files to the laptop made the task of transcribing a little easier as I could stop and start the recording with a certain amount of ease.

Disadvantages of this method were the initial poor recall by some of the participants and the inability of some participants to answer the questions that were asked. Two of the first-time principals had not previously reflected on how previous principals had provided development or coaching opportunities for them. As the interviews proceeded they were thinking more deeply and I prompted their thinking further so as to get them to elaborate on what they were saying. I was wary not to allow the prompting to "degenerate into … asking leading questions that [elicit] particular kinds of answers" (Tolich and Davidson, 1999, p.115). One of the more established principals kept going off on tangents consequently I felt the need to restate questions to refocus the interview. One of the more established principals was very conscious of being recorded and therefore was quite guarded in their responses. This resulted in a shorter interview as I sensed probing would not elevate the situation for the participant. The interviews were carried out at the respective principal's schools. Each interview was conducted during the day in the principal's office. One of the participants requested that the interview take place on a Saturday morning to allow for no interruptions. All but one of the interviews were conducted without interruption. The interruptions that

occurred during this one interview were unavoidable. The principal was required to deal with a student issue that had occurred before the interview had commenced. The interruptions did not affect the interview to any great extent. It just meant that the interview lasted longer than anticipated.

The participants were all provided with a copy of the transcript from their interview, within a week of the interview, for validation and further clarification they felt was necessary. One participant requested one grammatical adjustment and added a minor comment to further clarify what they had said but this did not alter the essence of the interview.

**Data analysis process**

The interviews were semi-structured and guided by a set of broad questions (Appendix A and Appendix B). The questions for the interviews were formulated from ideas generated within the literature. Following the interviews with the principals, the interviews were transcribed. Once the interviews had been transcribed the interviews were read through several times to gain some initial impressions and comparisons within and across each of the interviews and to become thoroughly familiar with the data (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007).

The first-time I simply read through each of the transcripts. While reading through the transcript a second time I was aware of some commonalities in wording and phrasing used by the participants. During this reading I underlined phrases that had significance in that the wording was of a similar vein to others or was in way unique to a particular participant. At the same time as underlining I made notes in a column alongside. Some of these notes were a reminder why I had underlined a phrase whereas others were single words which were emerging as themes. Reading through the transcripts again I started highlighting words which were common to most of the transcripts. To facilitate the ease of analysis I coded words by assigning a colour to each of the words. Cohen et al. (2007) describe coding as " a word or abbreviation sufficiently close to that which it is describing for the researcher to see at a glance what it means" (p.478).    I started with five codes

opportunities, relationships, nurture, encourage and support. I then thought that there were two other words which I needed to consider, confidence and belief. When I read through the transcripts again to see in what context the participants had used these two words I was aware that they being referred to in a similar way and they were able to be grouped as one word.

Reflecting on the codes I realised that having interviewed two different groups using two interview schedules that I needed to consider each group individually. I went through the established principal's transcripts and wrote down, on a separate piece of paper, any reoccurring themes that pertained to this group. I wrote twenty two words initially. As I was writing the words I was broadly grouping them. When I examined the way I had grouped and even the words I had recorded it became clear that I was still basically using the initial codes. What I was actually doing was breaking codes "down into finer codes" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.478). The first-time principal's transcripts did not generate any further themes. I put this down to the fact that I had initially gone through the first-time principal's transcripts highlighting the reoccurring words.

The next step in the analysis of data was to create two tables in a word document on the computer. One table had the first-time principal's questions as headers and the other table had the established principal's questions as headers. Key phrases from the interview transcripts were cut and pasted under each of the headings. By carrying out this process meant that I was again looking closely at the participants responses to the questions. It reinforced the richness of some of the data and also the amount of data obtained that did not relate directly to the questions asked of each respective group. Some of this data however was background into why the participant held the views that they voiced. This process enabled the identifying of themes that were significant to the participants in relationship to the context and topic (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007).

**Reliability**

A qualitative approach opens itself up for criticism because of its subjective nature, researchers' bias and the fact that findings cannot be generalised across

other contexts (Cohen et al., 2007). However, Bryman (2004) would argue that the external reliability is possible with this approach if the overall methodological approach including the research design and data collection methods are rigorous and able to be replicated by another researcher. The chances of the same findings being established in the replicated study would be doubtful as qualitative research tends to be an account of a situation at the time of the particular research. Another study would possibly not be able to replicate this very same situation. As the interpretations are subjective it is necessary for the researcher to consider how consistent their interpretations will be. However, reliability is not the intended goal of qualitative research (Tolich and Davidson, 1999).

In this project I was the only researcher conducting the interviews and analysing the data. This meant there was consistency in the questions asked and the order in which they were asked. The questions asked in the interviews had been carefully refined to avoid ambiguity of their meaning or inaccurate interpretation. All the questions were asked using similar wording for each interview. But as Cohen et al. (2007) assert "controlling the wording is no guarantee of controlling the interview" (p.150). Additional questions were asked that had not been planned. These questions were asked to either clarify what the participant had said or to get the participant to elaborate further concerning a particular point they had made. I asked each of the established principals to define coaching. I asked the first established principal to define coaching so then ensured that I asked each of the remaining established principals. Babbie (2007) contends "ideally, all interviews should use the same probes" (p.281). I did not ask the initial first-time principal so felt I should not ask the others. I asked the established principals to define coaching as I considered it was important to gauge their interpretation of coaching when they were discussing whether they had coached an aspirant.

It is important for the researcher to demonstrate that they have not invented or misinterpreted the data and that there has been care taken in recording the data (Cohen et al., 2007). The interviews were recorded and transcriptions were sent to each participant for checking and amendment to ensure accuracy and thus reliability of data.

Once data were collected it was analysed using coding. The data was able to be defined and categorised by using coding. Charmaz (2000) explains that in addition to constructing ideas inductively "we are deterred by line-by-line coding from imposing extant theories or our own beliefs on the data" (p.515). Coding in this way allowed me to remain attuned to the participants' views of their realities, rather than me thinking that we share the same views and worlds (Charmaz, 2000).

**Validity**

Validity tests whether the researcher is investigating what they say they are investigating and is concerned with the integrity of the conclusions (Bryman, 2004). It therefore deals with the appropriateness of the method to the research question. Validity is regarded as the soundness, effectiveness and usefulness of the measurement tool for the research being undertaken.

Validity is often ensured through pretesting the questions (Davidson and Tolich, 2003). The pretesting of my research questions, aimed to make sure that data gathered would provide valid information for analysis. The principle cause of invalidity in interviews is bias on the part of the interviewer and interviewee. Carefully formulated questions are a way of reducing the potential for bias although there needs to be provision for sufficient flexibility to allow the participants "to demonstrate their unique way of looking at the world – their definition of the situation" (Cohen et al., 2007, p.151). Attempts were made to limit bias in the interviews and transcripts were sent to participants for their verification.

Validity also addresses the validity of the researcher's interpretations. As mentioned previously all interpretations are subjective therefore it was important that as a researcher I demonstrated that my interpretations were a result of careful analysis of the data. To increase the validity of my research I provided the participants with my interpretations of their interview. The reason for this was so the participants could corroborate or disapprove of my interpretations. The

researcher's analysis has to have rigour, and that rigour is based on the researchers capabilities of tracing the sources and reasons for their interpretations. But in saying this as Janesick (2000) maintains "qualitative researchers do not claim that there only one way of interpreting an event. There is no one "correct" interpretation" (p.393).

Every care was taken to ensure the validity of this research project for as Cohen et al. (2007) emphasis "if a piece of research is invalid then it is worthless" (p.133).

**Ethical considerations**

There are five core principles that underpin ethical conduct in educational research. These five principles are: do no harm to the participants, voluntary participation, informed consent, avoid deceit, and confidentiality or anonymity (Tolich and Davidson, 1999). By taking into consideration these five principles as a basis for my research I was granted approval by Unitec Research Ethics Committee to carry out this investigation.

The researcher has an important responsibility in protecting the participants from harm or minimising harm. Harm can be physical harm; it can involve harm to future development, a loss of self-esteem, a threat of coercion and stress (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007). One of the fundamental principles of research ethics is that researchers need to "anticipate and guard against, consequences for research participants which can be predicted to be harmful" (Bryman, 2004, p.510).

There was no coercion of any of the participants either to be involved in the research or to disclose information. Participation in the research was purely voluntary and participants were reassured that by no means were they required to take part in my research. Participants were informed that they had the right to withdraw from the research project at any time. Formal consent forms were obtained from the participants to ensure they were participating without being coerced. There was no conflict of interest with the principals in the study as I had no links with the selected principals beyond a professional association. All

participants were provided with an information sheet outlining the aims for the research and what the nature of their involvement entailed. The information sheet indicated approximately how long the interview would take and that the interviews would be recorded. The participants were given the opportunity to ask questions they may have had regarding the research and their participation in it. All participants were assured that their responses would remain anonymous and that their identity would not be revealed in the final report (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007; Tolich and Davidson, 1999). This was achieved by assigning aliases to the participants and their schools. Interview records preserve the participant's confidentiality as they are identified simply by the aliases as well. The questions for the interviews were carefully constructed to ensure that they related directly to the achievement of my research aims. Care was taken to avoid requesting irrelevant information from the participants that could potentially waste the participant's time or cause them undue duress. The data gathered at the interviews was recorded initially and then transcribed. A copy of the transcript was sent to the respective participants, in a timely manner, for validation and further clarification that the participant might have considered was necessary. This also ensured an element of 'trustworthiness' to the research as referred to by Bryman (2004).

**Conclusion**

This chapter has sought to explain how this research was carried out. This research project favoured a qualitative methodological approach to gather data to investigate the research aims outlined in Chapter one. Semi-structured interviews were employed as the research method to provide data required. The chapter concluded with a discussion relating to the considerations taken in regard to the reliability, validity and ethical concerns relating to this research project. The next chapter will present and analyse data collected for this research.

# CHAPTER FOUR

# FINDINGS

**Introduction**

This chapter provides an analysis of data gathered during semi-structured interviews with principals from twelve primary schools. The chapter opens with an overview of these principals. This is followed by a description of the data analysis process. The findings are presented and the chapter concludes with a summary of the main research findings.

**Participants**

There were twelve participants in this research. Six participants were established primary school principals who have been in a role of principal for at least four years. The remaining six participants were first-time principals whom had been in their current their role for no more than eighteen months. Each of the participants was assigned an alphabetical letter to protect their anonymity, see Table 3.1. The following overview of the principals is to provide the readers with some background information.

One of the established principals is principal of an intermediate school (Years 7 and 8). Two of the established principals are principals of full primary school (Year 1 to Year 8). The remaining three established principals are principals of contributing schools (Year 1 to Year 6). The established principals' school rolls range from just over 150 pupils at a contributing school to just under 690 pupils at one of the full primary schools. Two of the first-time principals are at full primary schools. The other four principals are at contributing primary school. The schools rolls at the first-time principals schools range from just over 200 pupils to just under 540 pupils. Each of the schools has at least two teachers in senior management positions. These teacher's titles are deputy principal, associate principal or assistant principal. The schools do not all have a deputy or associate principal in a fully released position. All of the first-time principals have been or are at present involved in the First Time Principals' Programme. Four of the

established principals have had experience of the First Time Principals' Programme within the last six years.

The reminder of this chapter deals with data obtained from the interviews. Data is presented in two sections. First the results of the first-time principals' interviews and then the established principals' results are presented.

**Results and analysis**

**First-time principals**

Question one asked the participants whether they had experienced coaching from a past principal to prepare them for their current role. Four of the six participants had experienced coaching. All four of these participants referred to their immediate past principal as their coach. One of these four participants commented:

> *My principal at the time in her own way gave me coaching* (L).

A second part to this question was asked if the participants had experienced coaching. The participants were asked in what way they had experienced coaching. One of the participants had a coaching partner. This participant still has a coach from a local school and reports that:

> *We meet regularly and she coaches me so I'm always having to*
> *think about that and practice still what I am doing* (H).

Two of the participants experienced coaching in an informal manner. Both of these participants highlighted the support they had received. One of these participants also mentioned opportunities:

> *Her* [past principal] *approach it's about not holding people back*
> *but encouraging people to move on and forward. So there was*
> *always that understanding that opportunities were presented to*
> *you* (J).

The remaining participant who had experienced coaching had experience in a more formal manner. This is reflected in the following comment:

> *By way of coaching he* [past principal] *often had conversations with me around management and leadership and running a school. He used me as a sounding board a lot. Through doing that I got to learn from his experiences. They weren't first hand they were second hand… so through those through listening to him wrestling with things in his head I had opportunities for coaching as it were* (I).

The second question asked the participants what they considered would be or are the benefits of coaching. One of the participants who felt they had not experienced any coaching prior to their current role considered that they had observed their past principals dealing with different situations and decided that was not the way they would have dealt with the issue. This is reinforced by the following remark they made:

> *I felt I learnt to become a principal in a deficit model* (G).

Two of the participants commented on relationships in regard to coaching. One felt you needed a relationship with the coach first so that you knew you could trust them. The other participants' response was aligned with their present situation when they pointed out:

> *It makes for a more collegial relationship for a start. If you give them a meaty task then you have to support them.* (K).

Participant I considered that a benefit of coaching is that you are given experiences without the responsibility. They also maintained that:

> *You have some insight you get some insight into the job before you do it. You are a little more prepared. You will never be fully prepared for the job of a principal* (I).

Participant H believed that coaching has provided them with professional growth. They also thought coaching is beneficial because:

*You have to do the reflection and that thinking for yourself* (H).

Participant H has a coach and remarked how their coach has asked them for advice. In the light of this the participant stated:

*It's that real essence that coaching is a mutual learning opportunity* (H).

The participant's third question asked them what strategies past principals had employed to develop them as a leader. Five of the participants mentioned the support they were given and knowing that their past principal believed in them as a leader. The following remarks typify the comments that were made:

*She* [past principal] *was very supportive of my abilities and that was important to me and that I had the sense of someone who believed I could do it* (J).

*She* [past principal] *was very encouraging, very much motivating and I think that was her whole strategy in allowing me to develop as a leader within the school* (L).

*Knowing he* [past principal] *believed in me and that I had the ability to be a leader because I didn't think that I did for a long time* (H).

Participants I and J specifically spoke of the opportunities that they had been given. Participant J recalled opportunities from their immediate past principal as well as principals prior to them. Participant J made the following remarks:

*I think the thing that stands out is number one that they always provided me with opportunities* (J).

*Inclusion in decision making and everything that goes along with that* (J).

Participant I also considered recognising and supporting potential to be strategies their principal employed when they noted:

> *I think the key thing the principal would have done is about recognising potential for leadership and being encouraging of it and then having the open mindedness to say well if this is what you are passionate about and this what you want to do to take leadership for it and I'll support you. I'll give you the time that you need to do it* (I).

Participant H indicated how their past principal was inclusive in decision making. They also acknowledged the networking opportunities that they were provided. They feel that through these relationships that were built they were offered opportunities that they otherwise would not have been offered. This participant also discussed how they had completed professional learning with their past principal and claimed:

> *We had a common ground on which to discuss things because we both had the same learning. His security in me knowing that he could trust me* to *do things and him giving me the reins to go and do it.* (H).

Question four asked the participants to identify the most beneficial strategy that helped them develop their leadership skills. Four of the participants mentioned being provided with opportunities as the most beneficial strategy. For some of the participants opportunities were alongside support. The observation by Participant J is an illustration of this:

> *They have supported me in opportunities and said go for it. I'll support you or you will know I am behind you* (J).

Participant L felt that it was not only being given opportunities but also referred to being able to challenge when they made the following insight:

> *I think that whole liberty of her allowing me to try stuff. To challenge not only myself but I think I was actually challenging her* [past principal] *practises and to think she allowed me to do that* (L).

Participant G had support in a different respect. If they wanted professional development their past principal would support them. They did however make these comments:

*It was always yes but it was usually instigated by me* (G).

*The networking and the conversations beat any professional development hands down. The most important advice I've had while at the job is the local network of principals and trusted colleagues* (G).

This Participant G was very complimentary of the mentor they were assigned from the First Time Principals' Programme.

The final question for these participants asked them how they would identify leadership potential within their staff. All these participants have been in their current role for more than six months and they all indicated that they have identified potential within their staff.

Participant H believed that while leading change you start identifying potential in staff members. This participant maintains that one of their staff members sees himself as a leader. Two of the participants specifically mention 'go getters'. Both these participants refer to 'go getters' as staff members who self identified their potential through their actions. Participant L says that they:

*Look for proactive teachers that have the enthusiasm and the commitment to try stuff I look for teachers that are willing to explore different avenues* (L).

[are aware] *sometimes some people need a push and with that pushing, that support, that guidance you've got people who are now taking on leadership roles within your school* (L).

Other participants also referred to staff members who were unaware of their leadership potential. Participant I spoke of this in terms of lack of confidence and also noted relying on others when they made the following comment:

*In those incidence where people are not so forth coming because they don't have the confidence when I hear about potential there I engage with that and make things happen* (I).

This Participant I also believed that there is nothing technical about identifying leadership potential and that there is 'no step by step' method for identification.

Participant J spoke of the need to encourage members of staff:

*There are members of staff who you see potential in but might not necessarily see that for themselves so where that is a case of nurturing and encouraging and providing opportunities to give them a chance to explore and just encouraging to the hilt* (J).

All the participants in one way or another discussed observing staff members. The remark from Participant K summed this up by saying:

*I identify them by watching them at work and how they relate to people just like in a class you look for talent to nurture* (K).

The participants throughout the interviews mentioned having been given opportunities by previous principals and need for themselves to provide leadership opportunities for their staff members. Another factor they all identified was the support that either they had received or that they were making available to their potential leaders. Only one participant in this group specifically indicated having a staff member who is an aspiring principal. Some of the participants did however consider that they needed to be aware of the opportunities available for leadership development outside the school setting. Participant G felt strongly that as a principal they need to be watching for opportunities for their staff where they are involved in the learning. They considered that this is more beneficial than sending staff members 'on a course or telling them how to do something'. One participant remarked how the questions were making them reflect on their previous principal as a leader and they realised that strategies they were using were similar if not the same as their previous principal.

**Established principals**

The first question asked the participants how they identified leadership potential in their senior staff. Two of the participants mentioned 'gut feeling'. With one asking if I meant something other than 'gut feeling'. Three participants made reference to the fact that some staff members either do not see themselves as leaders or that they are unaware of their leadership abilities. One of the participants recounted how they rely on their deputy principals to alert them to potential in other staff members. The comments from Participant D encapsulated the thoughts of the participants:

> *I'm always observing teachers in the school. I look for I guess certain traits and qualities. I look for someone who frequently shows initiative. Someone who will come to me and explaining how she or he is going to or has resolved an issue rather than them coming to me wanting me to resolve the issue coming to me with the problem. I look for someone who shares his or her skills with colleagues and its observable without being asked to. I look for someone who um engages in learning conversations and talks about teaching and learning, you know someone who has a deeper level of interest and ability to engage in a conversation about teaching and learning. And probably also I look for someone who is interested in his or her own professional development and comes to me talking about their priorities for professional development. That says to me that they are an ongoing learner which is what you would expect leadership to promote amongst others in your team* (D).

One of the participants said that during appraisal discussions staff members sometimes talk about their aspirations and goals which will alert this participant to untapped potential within their staff. Participant B considered that it is a person's attitude and enthusiasm that identifies them as having leadership potential. They believed that the person might not have the ability or the knowledge but if they have the right attitude they can learn. Participant C on the other hand thought that with leadership there needs to be a knowledge base. Two of the participants particularly emphasised having inherited members of their senior management team.

Questions two asked the participants in what way they saw this leadership potential leading to a principal role. Only two of the participants made reference to leadership potential leading to a principal role. Participant B spoke about not only their senior teachers [deputy principal and associate principal] but also a teacher who is not on the management team:

> *I talk to my senior teachers and one of my scale A's. One of my young men could well be a principal in a small school. I talk to some of my staff about their ability to be a principal. I guess I identify it I nurture it I signal it to them* (B).

Participant E was conscious of the need to develop their leadership team so answered the question with this in mind when they made the following remark:

> *What I am trying to do is open the eyes of the leadership team that there is more than just their class and their team when we are talking about the school. Hopefully developing and opening eyes to the bigger picture then that's going to um give people an opportunity to see the bigger picture (*E).

Participant D considered they have a responsibility to provide for leadership and therefore responded to the question by saying:

> *I've always believed that I have a responsibility to foster leadership potential and opportunities for experimenting with and demonstrating your leadership potential in the school, whoever you are. So for me I guess it's about structuring opportunities for people to exercise leadership* (D).

The third question asked the participants what strategies they use to develop their staff as aspiring principals. The participants tended to answer this question broadly by referring to leaders within their schools not specifically aspiring principals. Two of the participants who did refer to their deputy principal or associate principals made the following comments:

> *It's encouraging them to plan their career. To look at what they need to do, to support that planning in terms of whether it be academic qualifications or whether it be actually going out and*

*seeking a mentor outside of this school or joining a PLG* [professional learning group] (B).

*You drop those ideas into their heads. Had you? Where are you going in your? Especially when they are working on their goals. I start taking them to APPA* [Auckland Primary Principals' Association]. *Feeding the ideas* (C).

Participant F and Participant A thought more generally than their senior leaders when they talked about:

*Sometimes it's a little of asking and persuading them to give something a go. To actually identify their leadership that they might not have noticed. Letting them know that they can take a risk they can have a go. I don't mind if it doesn't work but have a go. Often they are surprised at their development at their blossoming interest and their ability to do what I know they can do* (F).

*If we can disperse the leadership roles around so people who have the skills have opportunities to lead others* (A).

Participant D referred to aspiring principalship and leadership in the broader sense which is evident in these comments:

*I have talked to other staff even much less experienced staff saying that for some of you it might be a goal to work towards already even though you might only be senior teacher or you might not even have a specific leadership responsibility but the potential is observable in your behaviour* (D).

*I do encourage people who have been in leadership positions within the school and who would like to um aspire to being principal I've provided more opportunities for leadership. I have consistently encouraged people who want to move up in the leadership responsibility levels, including aspiring principals, to take professional development outside the school and opportunities for demonstrating their professional qualities to other audiences other than just the teaching team in the school. Things like taking workshops or seminars sharing their expertise, going with me to a workshop or a seminar that I go to as principal and take an aspiring person with me* (D).

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This Participant D considered that there needs to be flexibility in the strategies used to develop leadership because 'it relates to the individual' and their needs should be taken into consideration.

One participant discussed how they use facilitative questioning and learning conversations as strategies to develop their staff. They also recounted how they considered it is important to provide opportunities and for them as a leader to be enthusiastic. Participant A stated how they believed:

> *Part of it is talking up our jobs. I love the principal's role Sometimes teachers hear oh I wouldn't want to be... but I've never personally never thought that myself because I've only experienced that it's a great role to be in. So I tell people how good it is* (A).

The participant's fourth question asked them whether they had coached an aspiring principal. All the principals consider that they have coached an aspiring principal to some extent. The participants are not all coaching an aspiring principal at present. To clarify what these participants definition of coaching was I asked them to define coaching. The following definitions portray the views of these participants:

> *Coaching is the specifics of developing their knowledge and their skill base* (B).

> *A coach to me is someone who would give me the hard feedback that I would need to develop myself.* (F).

> *Working together in partnership to undertake various tasks and roles* (A).

The second part to this question asked the participants what aspects of the principal's role they had coached an aspiring principal in. One of the participants felt that the gaps their deputy principal and associate principal have are not one they can coach them with. This participant has ensured that these two staff members have had professional development in the hope that they recognise what they are good at and what they may still need to learn before applying for a

principal role. Another participant felt that even if their current deputy principal and associate principal were not aspiring principals, at present, they were coaching them for when they are not there. One of the ways this participant coaches is by providing opportunities for the two staff members to 'carry the title of acting principal'. This participant has no hesitation in attending a conference or such like that lasts more than one day because they are secure in the abilities of these two staff members. This Participant B went on to say:

> *We have the ability to take each others roles and I am coaching and guiding them in aspects of my job. It is treating them as equals too. Having the confidence that I know they could be principals* (B).

Participant A considered that their two deputy principals plus themselves 'function as three as one'. Even though the two deputy principals know an extensive amount of the principal role, through being involved in various aspects of the role, Participant A does believe that:

> *There are aspects that you actually have to be functioning in the role to be able to do them* (A).

Participant D recalled a past aspiring principal they had coached in aspects of the principal's role. They had many professional learning conversations about leadership with the aspirant. This participant outlined other ways that they introduced this aspiring principal to the role of principal:

> *I created opportunities for when that person exercised responsibilities particularly when it was dealing with difficult issues with students or with teachers or with parents that person had an opportunity to come back and reflect with me on the decisions that she made and what afterwards worked well and what things could she improve upon. And by involving that person in difficult decisions I had to make so she could see how I made decisions how I exercise decisions. So allowing that person to be part of that process to learn from that. Becoming truly familiar with all the varied tasks and responsibilities that a principal has* (D).

Participant D also spoke about encouraging the aspiring principal to attend board of trustee meetings so they could see how a board operates and also to see how an experienced principal manages the relationship between the board and themselves. This participant, in a similar vein to some of the other participants, indicated that there are some things that you have no real knowledge or experience of until you are a principal.

One of the participants had no coaching or guidance prior to taking on a principal role consequently they ensure they create opportunities for their deputy principals in a range of ways. They are very involved in major decision making within the school. Another participant discussed how their previous principal had not given them any guidance or insight into the principal's role and was very conscious of the need to provide insight for their current deputy principals. A third participant remarked on how 'ill prepared' they were going into the role of principal. They are aware of the need to prepare aspiring principals because of this. However this participant admited they find it hard to 'lose good staff'. One participant was very appreciative of the guidance and networking opportunities they had received as an aspiring principal and as a result of this are doing the same for their deputy principals.

The participants were then asked what they considered are the benefits of coaching. Participant E answered this question by referring to a coach that they have:

> *She* [the coach] *is having a learning conversation with me to try and help me find my own solution to the issue* (E).

This participant felt that a benefit of coaching was having guidance but that you were finding your own solution to a problem. Participant B also made a similar comment:

> *As a coach I can guide you I can lead you but I am not going to do it for you* (B).

Participant B, Participant E and Participant F considered a benefit of coaching is the specific feedback that the coach gives. Participant F referred to feedback that would assist the coachee to develop as a leader.

Participant A and Participant D emphasised relationships as a benefit of coaching. Participant A maintained:

> *You have closer relationships with people because you are working together with people* (A)

Participant D believed a benefit is that the person receiving the coaching, in a leadership role, will gain confidence in leading. This participant considered there is a 'positive spin off' benefit for others not being coached. Other staff members observed the opportunities the coachee was experiencing and the growth that was occurring through these opportunities. Therefore it 'sets in place a culture' where staff members realised they could have responsibility if they wished to seek it.

Participant C focused on coaching benefits being specifically for aspiring principals when they said:

> *They get a clear pathway of … they get a vision too of what the job entails of what the next step might be. And some aspects of their own character development that they might need to develop in order to take that role* (C).

The final question asked the participants if there were other methods they employed to grow leadership capabilities in potential leaders. Participant F discussed having outside expertise, other principals, providing some form of professional development in leadership. This participant and Participant D acknowledged the need for their deputy principals to interact with others when they made the following comments:

> *There is a bit of cross fertilisation in that they are off to professional learning groups with other like minded AP/DP's* [associate/ assistant principals/deputy principals] *senior leaders* (F).

> *Participating in a professional learning group and encouraging our senior managers at leadership level to participate in professional learning groups I think has been a very worthwhile process. That has been a very important route for promoting leadership and particularly for an aspiring principal* (D).

Four of the participants referred to professional readings. Some of the participants provided the readings to the whole staff and then created time for discussion whereas others encouraged their leadership teams to read. Participant E recounted how they themselves read widely and attend conferences so they can acquire knowledge of systems and programmes that they might be able to incorporate into their school. Participant A was undertaking professional development, at university level, and was sharing reading with their two deputy principals. The following insight explains the participants thinking behind this:

> *We have been accumulating some of the knowledge base and so we have similar not the same understandings of the current research and theory of educational practice. So we are all up to speed* (A).

Participant D thought that they have a responsibility to be a role model for leadership. They make sure that they model a high standard of professional behaviour at school. This is to ensure that the staff see what is expected of someone at that level. This participant discussed how important it is that they participate in professional development and continue to grow as a professional.

Participant C described a conversation they had had with a staff member where the staff member was saying how Participant C gave people leadership opportunities before they thought that they were ready. This staff member appreciated being given the chance to lead with the support of the participant. This Participant C emphasised how important they feel it is to learn both the leadership and management aspects of the job.

Not all the participants in this group considered that they have an aspiring principal on their staff at present. Two of the participants have identified staff members whom they consider demonstrate principalship potential. They have provided these staff members with opportunities and support in leadership roles

within their schools. One participant is aware of two staff members, in senior leadership roles, who aspire to be principals but voiced concerns about their readiness for that next step.

This entire group of established principals maintained in one way or another how they themselves are still growing and learning as leaders in their schools. They discussed ways they are accessing professional development for themselves. These ranged from undertaking study at a tertiary level to participating in professional learning groups. This group acknowledged that they needed to continue to grow as leaders for their own development. Two of the participants specifically emphasised how they felt they had a responsibility, to their staff, to model being a learner. Three of the participants made reference to how they felt they were prepared for their first principal role only to discover how much they did not know once they were in the role. Reflecting back to their first principal position, one of the participants (Participant E) felt that nothing could prepare anyone for that very first principal job.

**Conclusion**

This chapter provided analysis based on data obtained from interviews with twelve primary school principals. It is evident from the comments the principals have made that they identify potential leadership within their staff and ensure that this leadership potential is nurtured. Opportunities to develop leadership skills were highlighted in the analysis. The importance of support and encouragement for potential or aspiring principals was stressed. Identification of leadership potential is recognised in a variety of ways. Most principals observe how staff members interact with other staff and what contribution they are making around the school. The need to be alert to not only the self identified leaders but also those who are not aware of their leadership potential was emphasised. The analysis of the interviews provided the basis for the discussion of findings in Chapter Five. The issues that will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Five are leadership development, identification of leadership potential and coaching.

# CHAPTER FIVE

# DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

**Introduction**

This chapter discusses the significant findings from data gathered and analysed throughout this investigation. The chapter commences by reviewing the research participants. The research questions that guided the research are answered. Conclusions are drawn from the findings with reference to the literature review in Chapter Two.

**Participant review**

Twelve primary school principals were interviewed to gather data that was presented in Chapter Four and is the basis for the discussion in this chapter. Six of the principals who were interviewed are referred to as established principals. Established for the purposes of this research means the principal has been in a role of principal for more than four years. The remaining six principals are referred to as first-time principals which means, in this research, that they have been appointed to their first position as principal within the last eighteen months. I have produced Table 5.1 to remind the reader which of the participants are established principals and which ones are first-time principals.

**Table 5.1 Participants in the research**

| **Established principals** 4 years plus | **First-time principals** 18 months or less |
|---|---|
| Participant A | Participant G |
| Participant B | Participant H |
| Participant C | Participant I |
| Participant D | Participant J |
| Participant E | Participant K |
| Participant F | Participant L |

The following four questions formed the basis of examining ways in which primary school principals' coach and develop the next generation of school leaders:

1. How do primary school principals identify leadership potential in their school?

2. What models, strategies and processes do primary school principals use to develop senior staff?

3. What are the experiences of first-time primary school principals of coaching practices?

4. What are the implications for the ongoing professional development and training of school leaders?

**Leadership development**

One of the aims of my research was to establish what principals are doing to develop potential leaders in their schools. Information obtained from the established principals directly related to this aim. However, the first-time principals also provided data when they described strategies past principals had employed to develop them as leaders.

The established principals discussed a variety of strategies they use to develop leadership potential. One strategy Participants B, C and D mentioned was talking to staff members about their future. Participant B spoke of career planning 'it's encouraging them to plan their career. To look at what they need to do to support that planning'. Participant D referred to speaking to staff members who as yet may not be in leadership or senior management positions 'I have talked to other staff even much less experienced staff saying that for some of you it [leadership] might be a goal to work towards already'. Participant C referred to one of their deputy principals when they said 'you drop those ideas into their heads. Had you...? Where are you going in your? Especially when they are working on their goals'. These principals have realised "the value of career succession planning will create opportunity for staff with potential to understudy roles to which they

aspire" (Cardno, 2005, p.303) and are ensuring that their potential leaders are aware of the opportunities available through having discussions with them and guiding and supporting them.

A strategy that four of the established principals and four of the first-time principals referred to in developing leadership was providing or being provided with opportunities. Participant F spoke of 'letting them know that they can take a risk, they can have a go. I don't mind if it doesn't work but have a go'. This participant is encouraging their staff to take risks and letting them know that they might not get it right but the important thing is to have a go. Hartle and Thomas (2003) maintain that to grow leadership talent principals need to provide their staff with opportunities to take risks with leadership responsibilities and be prepared to back them up. Southworth (2004) illustrates the importance of opportunities being provided for aspirants when he refers to "research and experience show that most school leaders believe they learned how to lead by being given opportunities to lead and through on-the-job learning" (p.345).

Participants A, E and J referred to the size of their schools creating opportunities for leadership development. Participants E and J suggested as their schools are smaller there is more opportunity for leadership. Participant E said 'it gives people here because it's a smaller school more opportunity to lead'. Whereas Participant A felt that because their school is larger that 'opportunities come up with a staff our size there can often be someone away on maternity leave … so that gives someone a year to experience being a team leader. Get a taste for it'. These three principals, Participants A, E and J have provided opportunities for leadership development through contextual circumstances. This demonstrated how schools can use their schools situation to their advantage and how potential leaders can benefit from the situation by being given opportunities to lead.

Participants H, I and J, first-time principals, identified opportunities as being a strategy that had been afforded them as aspiring principals. Participant J referred to previous principals when they said 'they have always provided me with opportunities. Without opportunities you don't know whether you are able do it or

not' and they remarked that their immediate past principal 'also just encouraged [me] to go to senior conferences and AP/DP [Associate/Assistant Principal / Deputy Principal] conferences and things like that. To make use of those opportunities'. Participant H considered 'opportunities and being developed' as the two most beneficial strategies they had experienced. Participant I commented that 'it's about having access and opportunities' but they also feel that 'we should make opportunities for people'. Woodall and Winstanley (1998) agree with Participant I when they refer to "[leaders] always being on the look out for learning opportunities at work" (p.187). Participant B talked about 'creating opportunities for them [deputy principals]' and 'seeing an opportunity and saying hey you could do this'. Participant D discussed how they use 'a number of strategies quite open and flexible because it relates to the individual but the underlying principle is finding ways to create opportunities for leadership development'.

Both Participant B and D are aware of the need to create opportunities for leadership development. Clutterbuck (1998) would assert that principals need to be alert to learning opportunities for their aspiring and potential principals. Principals need to be looking for opportunities for developing leadership learning, within their schools, for the aspiring and potential principals (Robertson, 2005). As can be seen from the examples presented principals involved in my research are providing opportunities for staff members to develop their leadership skills. Southworth (2007) agrees that opportunity need to be offered but also suggests that support is provided when he says that principals need to "ensure they [potential leaders] are given a range of development opportunities and support" (p.187).

Evidence from five of the first-time principals, Participants H, I, J, K and L, revealed the support they had received from previous principals. Participant I referred to support by saying 'this is what you want to do and take leadership for it and I'll [past principal] support you'. Participant L discussed how 'she [past principal] was always there to provide that support'. Participant J felt that support was important when they said 'I have always felt very supported and I think that

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was really important'. The notion that aspiring principals should be supported in their development is confirmed by Brundrett et al., (2006b) "senior leaders need to actively and purposefully support leadership development that encourages staff to take on new roles and to aspire to leadership positions" (p.266).

Networking as a strategy for leadership development was mentioned by two first-time principals, Participants G and H, and four of the established principals, Participants A, B, C and D. Networks can be an important source of information and support. Participant G considered that local networks they have been invaluable to them 'the most important advice I've had while at the job is the local networks of principals that I can ring'. Participant B reflected back to when they first became a principal and moving into a new area 'coming to a new area I didn't have established networks… so they [local principals] were able to help me in term of networking by introducing me to other principals in the area'. The local principals were able to assist Participant B develop their professional network. Davies and Davies (2006) consider that "the ability to develop personal and professional networks that provide alternative from those prevalent in their immediate educational environment is a key" (p. 133).

Participants A, C and D discussed taking aspirants with them to seminars, principal meeting and workshops which all could potentially provide opportunities for networking. Participant D talked about their aspiring principal accompanying them to possible networking occasions when they recounted 'going with me to a workshop or a seminar that I go to as principal and take an aspiring person with me'. Participant C also referred to their aspirant attending principal gatherings 'I start taking them to APPA [Auckland Primary Principals' Association] if I go and to WAPA [West Auckland Principals Association] and all those other meetings'. Participant H spoke of their past principal 'involving me in a number of professional circles'. Participant H also mentioned that ' we [past principal] went to WAPA every now again and vision schools and the work they were doing with that group of principals which is how I got to know so many of those others principals'. By introducing potential and aspiring principals to networks principals will be assisting them to grow their leadership knowledge and

presence beyond their own schools.  Hartle and Thomas (2003) maintain that "networks are a potentially powerful source of leadership" (p.66).

Leadership is a process that is developed overtime. First-time principal, Participant H, described being developed by their previous principal '[past principal] grew me as a leader and staggered me through from just being a classroom teacher to an informal syndicate leader to a formal syndicate leader role to an AP [Associate Principal] position'. Hartle and Thomas (2003) refer to development of leadership potential as being developed overtime and necessitates individuals being exposed to an array of roles with an increasing amount of responsibility and accountability. One of the established principals, Participant B, described how after six years they are still learning about principalship 'I have learnt so much and still learning and will never stop learning about being a principal'. Robertson (2005) considers that leaders should carry on learning right the way through their careers.

Participants A, D and I all referred specifically to distributing leadership. Participant A discussed growing individuals into roles 'I think part of growing into other roles is if we have opportunities to participate and lead then if we can disperse leadership roles around so people who have the skills have opportunities to lead'. Examining distributing leadership from a leadership succession point of view Hargreaves (2005) notes that distributing leadership "makes the success of successors less dependent on the talents or frailties of particular individuals" (p.34). Participant I made reference to their immediate past principals being a distributive leader and they shared how they felt about distributive leadership in their role as a first-time principal. Participant I talked about the past principal when they said 'he's a distributive, a distributive management kind of person he believes quite strongly in distributed leadership' and commented on distributive leadership from their point of view 'I believe in the power of distributive leadership'.

Data revealed that distributive leadership was discussed by Participant D more than once. Initially Participant D described how they felt that 'I practiced a form of distributed leadership so that people have opportunities to take on responsibilities or tasks' and another instance when they mention distributed leadership was when they said 'I do believe in distributed leadership at all levels'. The evidence presented from the three participants who specifically referred to distributing leadership demonstrated their belief in employing distributive leadership within their schools. Southworth (2005) would argue that distributed leadership is essential for the growth of leadership. Southworth (2005) furthermore emphasises the need for leadership identification by saying "ensuring there are lots of leaders enables us to create pools of talented leaders. From these pools of talent we can draw and grow tomorrow's leaders" (p.162).

Data has revealed that principals are employing an array of strategies to develop leadership within their schools. According to National College for School Leadership studies in schools that nurture and develop leadership potential reveal that they generally use a range of tactics. It would appear from the evidence discussed that principals are taking into consideration what the leadership priorities are in their schools. Bush and Glover (2004) support the idea of schools taking into account their circumstances as what works well in one context may not necessarily transfer to another. If potential and aspiring principals are to have success in the role of principal they need to receive preparation for the role within a familiar context. Rhodes et al. (2008) would agree that there is a need "to identify and develop a pool of talent able to meet present and future leadership requirements in schools" (p.313).

**Identification of leadership potential**

To ascertain ways that leadership potential is identified in primary schools this research sought information from the participants concerning the ways they identify potential leaders. Four of the participants, Participants A, C, D and F all established principals, have appointed a deputy, assistant or associate principal at their present school. Two of the established principals, Participant A and E spoke explicitly of inheriting members of their senior management team. Participant A

made the comment that 'some of that leadership potential had already been identified. Some people have been in those leadership roles since I've been in the school'. Participant E mentioned 'that's hard when you inherit a leadership team' while commenting on growing leadership capacity. The evidence from this research focuses on the identification of leadership in a more general sense than purely identifying potential or aspiring principals.

The most common way that participants acknowledged they identify leadership potential was by means of observation. The principals discussed either observing the actions of staff members and determining their leadership potential or witnessing potential leader's interactions with other members of staff. Participants C and D talked about observing their staff. Participant C explained that 'I am an out and about principal. I find people with leadership potential. So I am a watcher of people'. Participant D also commented on the fact that 'I'm always observing teachers in the school'. Participant D then explained what they are looking for in a potential leader 'I look for I guess certain traits and qualities. I look for someone who shows initiative'. Participant K described observing their staffs actions and interactions when they said 'I identify them by watching them at work and how they relate to people just like in a class you look for talent to nurture'. The evidence from this research revealed that the participants are observing the actions of their staff to ascertain their leadership potential. It appears that these participants consider observing their staff is an appropriate way to identify leadership potential within their schools. Data suggests that the participants are actively observing and responding to their observations in regard to identifying potential leaders within their schools.

Another way that participants said potential leadership was identified was by staff members who self identified their desire to lead or self nominated themselves for a position of leadership. Participants A and E spoke about one of the ways that their staff identify themselves for leadership roles is when they have advertised positions within their schools. Participant E said 'it's pretty much self nomination. So we advertise those positions and people say I'd like to do that'. Participant A described letting the staff know about leadership positions 'we put it out there

who would like to be involved in leading this initiative'. The principals have allowed for potential leaders to identify themselves in this way. Fink (2005) claims that "traditionally, potential leaders have signalled their interest in leadership roles by applying for posted or advertised positions" (p. 146). Other ways that participants referred to staff members identifying themselves were by volunteering for tasks. Participants B, H and K recalled staff members volunteering. Participant H remarked how they have identified themselves by 'putting their hand up to say I'm willing to do this' and Participant B said 'through putting their hand up for anything and everything' and Participant K also commented 'there are people who put their hands up'. The participants being aware and receptive to individuals self nominating will provide the school with leadership potential that can be considered and developed. Bush (2008) claims that there are two main strategies that are used to identify school leaders one of which is 'self-nomination' where those interested in leading submit themselves for the position or task that is available.

Participants commented on staff members approaching them with ideas for their own professional development or suggesting things they would like to do. Participant I discussed how they were approached by a staff member who 'expressed an interest and a passion in a particular area and will lead the school in incorporating and developing the programme'. Participant I as an aspiring principal had been given opportunities by their previous principal to lead 'if this is what you passionate about and this is what you want to do take leadership for it and I'll support you' they are now offering their aspiring leaders the same kinds of opportunities. Participant D described how they identify possible potential when 'someone who is interested in his or her own professional development and comes and talks to me about their priorities for professional development'. This participant is demonstrating a willingness to develop leadership potential by recognising when an individual self identifies and is motivated to be developed.

Two participants, Participants A and I, acknowledged that were alerted to leadership potential by either members of their senior management team or other staff members. Participant A described relying on their senior management team

'some of it is the management team identifying or thinking about potential and identifying people'. Participant I being a first-time principal is aware of needing to have input from others 'I rely on the senior staff and colleagues to come and tell me you know this person is really good'. Hartle and Thomas (2003) support the practice of utilising other staff member's knowledge to identify potential as they believe 'team leaders' can drive leadership identification. Brundrett (2008) would suggest "that head teachers and other senior school leaders may play a central role in the creation of a culture which fosters leadership development" (p. 17).

Data revealed that three participants, Participants B, F and H were unaware of their own leadership potential until a previous principal had encouraged them to take on leadership responsibilities. Participant H recalled how their previous principal had not only identified their leadership potential but also demonstrated a belief in their abilities ' knowing that he believed in me and that I had the ability to be a leader because I didn't think that I did for a long time'. Participant F was also unaware of their ability until they were aware of someone believing in them 'I was unsure that I had that ability and at first didn't step up but after realising that person believed in me so had a go'. Participant B was encouraged to apply for a leadership position by a previous colleague ' someone saw a trait in me that I didn't know I had and quietly said are you applying for this senior teacher job and I said I couldn't be a senior teacher [the colleague] said to me you have the right attitude'. The past principals have identified the potential in these three participants and demonstrated their belief in them by encouraging them to develop their leadership skills. Dimmock (2003) asserts that "one element of successful leadership may itself be a commitment to enhancing the leadership skills of others" (cited in Brundrett, 2008, p.17). There was a possibility that if these participants had not been identified and encouraged in leadership roles that their leadership potential may have gone untapped. As they were unaware of their own potential they were fortunate to have been identified by others who recognised their potential and were aware of their responsibility to develop and support these participants in leadership roles. Evidence from this research showed that

individuals who are unaware of their potential are being identified and encouraged to take on leadership responsibilities.

Four of the principals, Participants A, F, H and J, have indicated that they have identified potential in staff members who were unaware of their own abilities. Participant A discussed how 'sometimes I find people don't realise how capable they can be or are because they don't see themselves but other people see it in them'. Participant J spoke of seeing potential in staff members 'there are members of staff who you see potential in but might not necessarily see that for themselves'. Participant F described identifying potential and having the individual fulfil their potential 'to recognise their potential and try and get them to step into their potential'. Participant H identified a third year teacher's potential at a staff meeting when the prospective leader started to lead a group in a discussion 'he just started doing things without even knowing he was doing it'. This participant considered that he is 'a natural leader coming through'. Participant C would suggest that you need to know your staff when they said 'it's all about getting to know your people'. Participant C recounted a conversation they had had with a staff member where the staff member had said that Participant C 'gives people leadership opportunities even before they think they are ready and chances for us to try'. Leaders in schools need to be alert to the early signs of leadership potential from within their staff so these individuals' leadership skills can be developed. Southworth (2007) maintains that "we need to be able to spot suitable candidates at an early stage in their careers and then ensure they are given a range of development opportunities and support" (p.186-187).

Established principal, Participant B, believed that potential leaders may not have the skill, ability or knowledge but by demonstrating the right attitude they are identifying themselves as potential leaders. Participant B identified the word attitude as what comes to mind with identifying leadership potential and then went onto say 'if their attitude is that they show those early signs of wanting responsibility through initiatives'. They continued by saying 'they don't always have the ability or they don't always have the knowledge or they don't always have the skills but to me their attitude and enthusiasm if you've got that then that

is the first step towards leadership'. Robertson (2004) supports this observation "effective leadership is a learned process over time" (p.2).

Participant L looks for teachers who are proactive and prepared to try doing things differently 'I look for proactive teachers. I look for teachers that have the enthusiasm and the commitment to try stuff I look for teachers that are willing to experiment to a certain degree and to explore different avenues'. Fink (2005) considers that the challenge for principals in identifying leadership potential is determining who would make the 'leap from successful doer' to leader. Two established principals, Participant A and E, on the other hand spoke of a gut feeling. Participant A described it as 'those gut feelings we have'. It is apparent that identifying leadership potential can be as basic as having a gut feeling. Participant I considered that 'there is nothing technical there is no step by step' for identifying leadership potential. Fink (2005) also notes that "identification of potential leaders in education is certainly not an exact science" (p.146).

Data from my research showed that all the principals had identified potential leaders within their schools. Brundrett et al. (2006b) believe that the recognition of potential leadership ability is necessary for leadership succession. The principals have described similar methods of identifying potential but data reveals that no two principals identify leadership potential in exactly the same way. The way potential is identified appears to be guided by the principals previous experiences, what they consider are the needs of the school in relation to areas of leadership and staff members self identifying or self nominating. The evidence from my research has established that principals are employing a range of methods to identify leadership potential and that they are taking into account what they consider is best for their school. Southworth (2005) claims "we should avoid adopting a 'one size fits all' approach to leadership identification" (p.166).

**Coaching**

Information was gathered from the first-time principals to determine their experiences of coaching. Data was gathered from the established principals to discover how familiar they are with coaching practices.

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Data revealed that four of the first-time principals, Participants H, I, J and L, reported that they had experienced coaching from a previous principal. Participant J described being part of a small management team and participating in professional development opportunities with the whole team 'as a part of a very small management team we did quite a lot of PD [professional development] together as a management team. That helped toward my having a sense of confidence that I knew where I was going and having knowledge that you are on the right track'. Coaching allows for the efforts of the coachee to be acknowledged. Robertson (2004) confirms that "coaching also provides opportunities for affirmation and validation of practice, which is important in leadership development" (p.7). Participant J also described how their previous principal had coached them by allowing them to practice within their own capabilities 'it was case of doing it within your own capabilities if you chose to which is very powerful because you choose to'. Reiss (2007) however, would argue that a coach should "inspire people to get out of their comfort zones to reach their full promise" (p.12).

Participant L experienced coaching in an indirect way from their previous principal. Participant L reflected that 'a lot of the coaching that I received was from her [previous principal] in an indirect way'. A coach may not necessarily work with a coachee but will give the coachee space and time to achieve a task by themselves but will be there to offer support if the coachee needs it. Participant L felt that their previous principal did not necessarily work along side them but was there if they were needed 'no one was really working alongside me but she [previous principal] was always there to provide that support'. Reiss (2007) suggests that "the skilled coach provides a learning process founded on self-discovery as a means to identify inner beliefs" (p.63).

Coaching is a planned professional activity which supports a professional learning relationship. Data revealed that Participant I considers the relationship that they had with their previous principal contributed to their leadership development. Participant I recalls how they discussed 'a career path' and then went onto expand on this by saying 'fortunately the relationship I had with him [past principal] had

always been professionally very sound in the sense that he knew that I was ambitious and he was supportive of that'. Participant I again referred to the importance of their relationship 'we had a close professional relationship I got to see the impact of some of the struggles that he had to deal with so that was very very useful in terms of coaching'. This participant explained their previous principal would discuss leadership and management issues with them 'by way of coaching he [past principal] would often had conversations with around management and leadership and running the school. Through doing that I got to learn from his experiences'. Robertson (2005) emphasises "coaching is beyond mere conversations and is a relationship between peers where they both expect to make gains in knowledge, it is done with, not to" (p.24).

One participant, Participant L stressed the importance of having a relationship with the coach in terms of they felt they would need to trust their coach. Participant L suggested that 'if there is no relationship you would not trust that person with what you want to share with them'. Southworth (2007) believes that a role of a coach is to allow the coachee to unburden themselves of doubts and concerns that they may have.

Participant H, a first-time principal, and Participant E, an established principal, referred to coaches they currently have. Participant H had a coach, other than their own principal, as an aspiring principal and was appointed as a first-time principal to a school that is close to their coach's school. Participant H described the situation by saying 'winning this position this year and because I worked with [coach] quite closely and because geographically we are quite close here I maintain her as a coach'. Participant H discussed how the relationship has continued 'we meet regularly and she is very skilled at coaching. So she coaches me so I'm always having to think about and practice still what I am doing'. This participant was aware that coaching can be a reciprocal relationship when they recounted how their coach had approached them for advice 'that realisation that she comes to me with problems'. They then said 'it's that real essence that coaching is a mutual learning opportunity'. Zeus and Skiffington (2002) support the comments by Participant H "a coach is not a teacher and does not necessarily

know how to do things better than the coachee" and when they claim that "coaching, is a special, sometimes reciprocal relationship between (at least) two people … where participants are open to new learning and engage together as professionals." (p.3). Participant E described the relationship between themselves and their coach 'she is having a learning conversation with me to try and help me find my own solution to the issue'. Clutterbuck (1998) agrees with Participant E's coach's approach to coaching when he asserts that "modern concepts of coaching emphasise dialogue, ownership of the issue by the learner, and allowing the learner to provide much of his or her own feedback" (p.8).

Dialogue is an essential aspect of coaching as has been referred to, however, what is being discussed and in what context the discussion is taking place is possibly equally important. One participant, Participant H, described how their previous principal would alert them to something during a discussion about a leadership or management situation 'he'd say actually you need to think about this because that oh ok I didn't know. So some great support so I think that opportunity to lead to make mistakes'. The principal, in this case, was providing feedback to a situation that Participant H could relate to. Robertson (2005) believes "coaching focuses on leadership practice in context" (p.38). Participant H also discussed having discussions with their current coach where the coach would 'say so what did you do or what do you think you need to do or what do you think the impact of that was so we can explore some things'. Coaching provides the coachee with "an authentic leadership learning experience and the tools for thinking critically about leadership" (Robertson, 2006, p.4). Participant H's coach is challenging Participant H's thinking in a supportive way. Clutterbuck (1998) supports this coaches actions "constructive challenge is one of the most powerful gifts a coach can give to a learner" (p.28).

Principals are in a position to provide coaching for potential and aspiring principals. As can be seen from the evidence presented from the first-time principals who had experienced coaching they all discussed coaching in favourable terms. Established principals, Participants A, B and E, mentioned how

they felt unprepared for the principal role when they were first appointed as a principal.

Participant C stated it simply as 'I was so ill prepared. It was awful'. Participant E thought they were prepared then realised they were not as prepared as they initially thought they were 'you think you are prepared and then you get in and you think how stupid could you have been to think you were prepared'. Participant A discussed being aware of coaching their deputy principals because they did not experience any coaching prior to their first principal position 'I never did that with anyone. I had to do it on my own and it was a shock to me when I started as a principal'. Reflecting on their own experiences these three participants are aware of the role they can play as a coach to develop their aspirants. Woodall and Winstanley (1998) writing from a business management view point support coaching as a means of developing employees "perhaps the most important source of development is the immediate line manager. They can counsel, provide insight, give frank feedback and open doors. Coaching skills are the essential means by which this can be done" (p.186).

Participant C, who is coaching an aspiring principal because they are conscious of their needs, admitted that they "hate losing staff. I find it really hard. Inside me I'm saying – please don't go- I find that really hard. But I have to what's fair but that doesn't mean I don't find it difficult'. Hargreaves (2005) suggests that a "failure to care for leadership succession is sometimes a result of manipulation or self-centeredness" (p. 163). Participant C has ensured their aspiring principal is being developed as they are attentive to 'putting aspiring principal information in their box… and training and leading him'.

Evidence from my research indicates that participants have received support from their coaches and their coaches have encouraged them to reflect critically on their own practices. Participant I recalled how their previous principal would ask them questions such as 'how does it fit in with the bigger picture here at our place? How are you creating opportunities for other people to develop or take leadership as a result of that? How does that impact on them?' This participant then

suggested that 'asking those kinds of questions help'. From this evidence it would appear that a coach's role in the relationship is to guide and support and ask appropriate questions of the coachee as they reflect on their own practice. Zeus and Skiffington (2002) consider that "coaching is more about asking the right questions than providing the answers" (p.3). This notion is expanded on by Reiss (2007) when they maintain that what a coach does is "asks empowering, probing and reflective questions" (p.63).

A major finding of my research was that principals consider there are a number of benefits to coaching in an educational context. The benefits of coaching that the principals identified are presented in Chapter Six. Evidence from the first-time principals who experienced coaching, Participants H, I, J and L, would indicate that aspirant principals would potentially benefit from being coached in their present roles in senior management positions.

**Conclusion**

The significant findings from my research are that principals use a variety of ways to identify leadership potential within their schools. The fact that no two principals identify leadership potential in exactly the same way does not appear to be an issue. This confirms the assertion by Southworth (2005) concerning the avoidance of leadership identification being carried out the same way in every school. As each context and needs of each school are individual there needs to be some flexibility in the way that leadership potential is identified.

An important factor in this research is that all the principals have identified leadership potential in members of their staff. The principals demonstrated an awareness of the need to develop identified leaders. This data supports Bush and Jackson (2002) observation that there is a growing recognition of the need to prepare aspiring leaders. A range of strategies are being employed by the principals to develop their identified leaders and consideration is being given to leadership priorities within each school. It is necessary for principals to consider the schools particular needs and circumstances as the development needs of an individual in one school may not be those of an aspirant in another school.

The strategy that the first-time principals mentioned most frequently, in regard to their own development as an aspirant, was that of being provided opportunities to lead. This finding concurs with Clutterbeck (1998), Robertson (2005), Southworth (2007) and Woodall and Winstanley (1998) who all agree that aspirants need to be provided with opportunities to lead. Four of the six first-time principals who had experienced coaching all spoke favourably about their experiences. All the established principals consider that they have coached an aspiring principal at some time to some extent. The established principals are not all coaching aspirants at present. This could be an issue if these principals have not considered putting in place a plan for career succession. Bush (2008) claims leadership preparation "should be a deliberate process designed to produce the best possible leadership for schools" (p. 125). The principals, as referred to previously, are identifying leadership potential but the evidence from this research would indicate that they are not all identifying and developing aspiring principals. Hargreaves (2005) allegation concerning leadership succession not being successful in education might, therefore, come to fruition.

This chapter presented a discussion relating to the research questions outlined in Chapter One and the beginning of this chapter. Discussion was developed from data represented in Chapter Four. Strategies that principals employ to develop leaders within their schools have been discussed. The findings are related to the themes that emerged from the literature review presented in Chapter Two. The discussion in this chapter provided the information used to draw conclusions and make recommendations included in Chapter Six.

# CHAPTER SIX

# CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Introduction**

This final chapter summarises the findings relating to the research questions which were discussed in Chapter Five. The benefits of coaching that the principals identified are presented. The implications for ongoing professional development and training of school leaders are discussed. Recommendations for growing the next generation of school leaders are provided and the limitations of this research are included.

**Summary of specific findings**

This research revealed that principals identify potential leaders in a variety of ways. The most common way the principals acknowledged they identify potential leadership was by means of observation. The principals discussed either observing the actions of staff members and determining their leadership potential or witnessing potential leader's interactions with other members of staff. Self identification/self nomination was also considered a way that leadership potential was identified. The principals described how members of their staff volunteered to lead in different respects within their schools. Six of the twelve participants referred to staff members who they considered had leadership potential but the staff members themselves were unaware of their leadership abilities.

The principals who discussed identifying leadership potential in staff who were unaware of their abilities described how they fostered the leadership potential in these staff members. The strategy that was predominantly highlighted to cultivate these staff members potential was one of growing them slowly while allowing them to realise their potential. Other strategies that principals employ to develop senior staff   members include providing opportunities for leadership, developing networks and involving them in decision making. Alvy and Robbins (1998) advocate the networking for gaining inspiration from colleagues whereas Fink

(2005) maintains that the development of networks is important for supporting potential leaders. A further strategy that principals use to develop their staff is to provide them with support. Brundrett et al. (2006b) argue that principals need to support leadership development that encourages staff to take on new roles. Another strategy that principals have used is taking on the role of coach to develop and support an individual who demonstrates potential.

The first-time principal's data revealed that they had not all experienced coaching from a previous principal. Four participants had experienced coaching and recounted being supported and getting guidance from their coach concerning leadership issues. They discussed how their coaches had provided them with opportunities to lead. Robertson (2004) affirms that coaching provides support and opportunities for leadership within their daily practice. Three of the participants who had experienced coaching referred to being coached in leadership and management of a school through discussions with their coach and decision making opportunities. The coaching experiences were all reported favourably.

**Benefits of coaching**

In Chapter five the first-time principals' experiences of coaching were discussed. The presentation of data in Chapter Four demonstrated that four of the six first-time principals considered they had experienced coaching prior to being appointed to the principal role. Participants from both groups were asked what they considered to be the benefits of coaching. Data presented in Chapter Four reflects what the principals consider are some of the benefits of coaching. Data analysis revealed that the principals claim there are a number of benefits of coaching in an educational context. Table 6.1 presents the advantages of coaching as identified by the participants. Data represented in Table 6.1 demonstrates the extent to which the participants consider coaching to be beneficial in an educational context. Aspirant principals would potentially benefit from being coached in their present roles in senior management positions.

**Table 6.1 Identified benefits of coaching**

| Benefit for the coachee | Benefit for the coach | Benefits for others |
|---|---|---|
| Mutual learning | Mutual learning | Observe growth of coachee |
| Professional growth | Collegial relationships develop | Observe possibilities for themselves |
| Collegial relationships develop | | |
| Guidance provided | | |
| Supported in finding own decisions | | |
| Receives specific feedback | | |
| Gains confidence in leading | | |
| Prepared for future roles | | |
| Someone to springboard ideas off | | |
| Does own reflecting | | |
| Encounters experiences without responsibility | | |
| Awareness of what principals role entails | | |

The benefits of coaching that the participants have reported affirm the view of Robertson (2004) that coaching allows for the " individual needs of the leader to be met as they focus on their daily issues and the experiences they are having on a daily basis and take the time to reflect critically on their practices relating to these issues" (p.6). Robertson (2004) is, however, referring to the practice of coaching involving principals coaching principals. The evidence from my research indicates that the first-time principals who have experienced coaching consider their experiences of coaching to have been beneficial. These participants all gave accounts of coaching in favourable terms.

**Implications for ongoing professional development for school leaders**

The First Time Principals' Programme is a Ministry initiative that focuses on the developing principals post employment. Kiwi Leadership for Principals (KLP), another Ministry initiative, particularly focuses on principals as educational leaders. The role the principal has in guiding and supporting others to step up as leaders is referred to in the KLP document (Ministry of Education, 2008). The importance of guiding and supporting leadership potential to grow and sustain the school's leadership capacity is also mentioned in the KLP document. The National Aspiring Principals Pilot, also a Ministry initiative, which operated this year with a specific focus on the development of aspiring principals, may not continue in 2009.

This is the current policy context in New Zealand but my research is saying that there is a need to identify up and coming school leaders and to develop their leadership potential. Even though KLP does make mention of recognising and developing leadership potential it is referred to in more general terms than specifically identifying and developing potential or aspiring principals. Data from my research has revealed that principals are identifying leadership potential within their staff but on the whole the staff members being identified are not referred to as potential or aspiring principals. It would appear that current principals are in the best position to identify and develop their aspiring principals. Once leadership potential has been identified then ways need to be found to develop the potential.

Finding opportunities for leadership is important for the development of aspiring principals. Principals should actively watch for opportunities for their aspiring principals to lead the school (Southworth, 2007). Making available a variety of opportunities to lead, including management and leadership experiences, may be beneficial for aspirants. Increasing the range of responsibilities for an aspirant may assist in their development. The principal would need to be prepared to support the aspirant while being aware of their stage of development. Being aware of the aspirant's capabilities and whether they are ready for increased responsibilities is important so the aspirant confidence is built up and sustained

(Southworth, 2007). The learning needs of the aspirant need to be taken into consideration when planning for their development (Fink, 2005).

Developing potential and aspiring principals within their own context would ensure that their learning needs are taken into consideration. The aspirants would be likely to receive the support and the encouragement they require to grow their skills and knowledge of leadership. The key to preparing the next generation of school leaders is initially identifying leadership potential and then to ensure that the potential is nurtured and developed by providing opportunities for leadership that will develop  skills, knowledge and confidence.  The ideal environment for this to occur in would seem to be a context familiar to the aspirant, namely their current school.

**Recommendations**

Investigating ways in which primary school principals coach and develop the next generation of school leaders has prompted me to make the following recommendations in anticipation of them being prepared for principalship:

1.  Increased opportunities to lead should be provided for members of the senior management team who aspire to principalship. These opportunities should include both management and leadership responsibilities. Aspirants could gain knowledge that they might be able to employ when they are appointed to the role of principal.

2.  Principals should offer coaching to aspiring principals in areas of leadership and management. The aspirants would gain experience and an understanding of the principal's responsibilities in a familiar context. They would also benefit from focused feedback provided from their principal as a coach.

3.  The NAPP should continue to be offered to aspiring principals. As this programme was specifically designed to prepare those aspiring to be principals. This is the only national programme that has been offered, thus far, to develop those aspiring to principalship.

4. The impact of the KLP should be monitored to ascertain the effect it has on growing the next generation of principals.

**Limitations of this research**

Time constraints were a limitation of this research. If more time had been available to pre-test the interview questions with more than one established and first-time principal I would have perhaps identified the need to ask the participants to define coaching. I asked all the established principals to define coaching but as I had not asked the initial first-time principal their definition of coaching I could not ask subsequent participants in this group or data from them concerning coaching would have been invalid.

A time restriction for carrying out the interviews was also a limitation. I was aware of the participants being busy whilst also conscious of the fact that I wanted to send a copy of the transcribed interview to the participant in a timely manner. When I contacted the participants to arrange an interview time I ensured that the time was suitable for them. This meant spreading the interview times over fifteen days to accommodate the availability of the principals. All but two of the interviews were able to be transcribed and sent to the participant for verification within twenty four hours of the interview. The remaining two participants were made aware that their transcripts would take longer to be sent to them for verification. .

A further limitation of this research was the emphasis participant's put on identifying leadership throughout their schools – from the students to aspiring principals. My research was in examining the identification and development of aspiring principals. I found that even though I had chosen to use semi- structured interviews as my tool to collect data I did not want to be redirecting the participants or probing the participants to any great degree in the fear that it would appear I was leading their responses in a certain direction. Where participants were referring to school wide leadership and not referring to aspirant principals I refocused the discussion by restating the question in such a way as to not appear

to be leading the discussion and also to ensure that the interviewee was aware that I was listening and taking into consideration what they were saying.

**Suggestions for future research**

This research has highlighted to me the possibilities for further research into the preparation of aspiring principals. Research into the success of the NAPP could inform future development and training of aspiring principals. Research into the KLP could provide valuable insight into the effect this initiative is having on developing future school leaders.

This investigation concentrated on obtaining the perceptions of established and first-time principals concerning the development and coaching of the next generation of school leaders. Further research could investigate the perceptions of aspiring principals to ways of developing their leadership potential. Research using a different tool might provide additional data to support or contradict my research findings.

**Conclusion**

This final chapter has summarised the findings based on the research questions. The benefits that participants identified for coaching have been presented. Implications for ongoing professional development for school leaders and recommendations for the development of aspiring primary school principals have been offered. It is acknowledged that this research was constrained by limitations which have been identified in this chapter. Finally considerations for further research into ways in which the next generation of school leaders are identified and developed are suggested.

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# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS -ESTABLISHED PRINCIPALS

1. How do you identify leadership potential in your senior staff?

2. In what ways do you see this leadership potential leading to a principal role at some point?

3. What strategies do you use to develop these staff as aspiring principals?

4. Have you coached an aspiring principal? If so what aspects of the principal role did you coach them in?

5. What do you consider are the benefits of coaching (for a potential leader)?

6. Are there any other methods you employ to grow leadership capabilities in potential leaders?

# INTERVIEW QUESTIONS – FIRST-TIME PRINCIPALS

1. Have you experienced coaching from a past principal to prepare you for your current role? If so what experience of coaching have you had?

2. What do you consider would be/ are the benefits of being coached for the role of principal?

3. What strategies did past principals employ to develop you as a leader?

4. What do you consider was the most beneficial strategy that helped develop your leadership skills?

5. How will you identify leadership potential within your staff?