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CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
A CASE STUDY OF A NEW ZEALAND PRIMARY SCHOOL

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree
of

Doctor of Education

at Massey University, Albany.

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ABSTRACT

Capacity building is now mentioned synonymously with school improvement in much of the literature. However, research on the topic is limited (Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer and Barrett, 2004) and generally undertaken at the micro level of school functioning. There is an absence of debate on political, economic and social trends with implications for capacity building (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003; Gray, 2000). Hopkins, Beresford and West (1998) claim the concept lacks clear articulation and definition.

This inquiry explores capacity building for school improvement in one low decile, multi-cultural, New Zealand primary school. This research is framed by four aims: to undertake an investigation on processes that enhance improvement, namely, capacity building for school improvement; to define capacity building; to conduct an in-depth study of influences (external and internal) on capacity building for school improvement; and to record the journey of one school in building capacity for improvement. The inquiry is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm, employs a case study approach and grounded theory methods for data analysis and interpretation. Research questions that guide this investigation are:

- How is capacity for school improvement defined – what are its features?
- How do internal school factors – vision, stakeholder activity, culture and professional development – evolve capacity?
- In what ways do external wider societal factors influence the development of capacity?
- What links exist between capacity building and improvement as evidenced in this school setting?

Data suggests that capacity building for school improvement is time and context dependent. Its conceptualisation is unique to setting. Capacity building for school improvement is a response to meeting individual, collective and systemic needs in ways that sustain equilibrium while moving in the direction of improvement. Attributes inherent in its construction are vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. The main practices are: knowledge production and utilisation; switching-on mentality; and division of labour: roles and responsibilities. From attributes and practices emerge four themes: situated activity; connectedness; leadership, governance and management; and outcomes. Attributes, practices and themes explain capacity building for school improvement in one setting. The capacity of an organisation, to manage tensions and address need, ensures individual, collective and systemic equilibrium while moving in the direction of improvement.

CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT

I certify that the research project entitled:

Capacity Building for School Improvement
A Case Study of a New Zealand Primary School

and submitted as part of the Doctor of Education is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this research project (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: P. Stringer

Patricia Stringer

Date: 21/02/08

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

TITLE	I
ABSTRACT	II
CANDIDATE'S STATEMENT	III
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	IV
TABLE OF CONTENTS	V
LIST OF FIGURES	XI
LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS	XII
LIST OF APPENDICES	XIII
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	1
1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background to Study	2
1.2 This Study	9
1.2.1 Guiding Principles for this Study	9
1.2.2 Research Focus	10
1.2.3 Research Design	11
1.2.4 Background of the Researcher	11
1.3 Thesis Outline	11
CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	13
2. Introduction	13
2.1 Part One: Macro Level Political, Cultural and Socio-economic Influences	13
2.1.1 Neo-Liberal Reforms of the 1990s in New Zealand	15
2.1.1.1 Hidden Paradoxes in the <i>Tomorrow's Schools</i> Rhetoric	18
2.1.1.2 Policy Reform Initiatives	19
2.1.1.3 Funding, Accountability and Governance	23
2.1.1.4 Summary	27
2.1.2 School Improvement	27
2.1.3 Capacity Building	33
2.2 Part Two: Leadership, Culture, Vision and Professional Development	35
2.2.1 Leadership	35

2.2.1.1	Leadership and Management	37
2.2.1.2	Transformational leadership and Post-transformational Paradigms	39
2.2.1.3	Distributed Leadership	42
2.2.1.4	Developing Leadership for Learning Communities	45
2.2.1.5	Summary	48
2.2.2	School Culture	48
2.2.2.1	School Culture Defined	49
2.2.2.2	Culture and Structural Links in School Improvement	52
2.2.2.3	Typologies	52
2.2.2.4	Reculturation	55
2.2.2.5	Summary	56
2.2.3	Vision	57
2.2.3.1	The Blunting of Vision	58
2.2.3.2	Vision Construction-A Collective Process	58
2.2.3.3	Summary	59
2.2.4	Professional Development	59
2.2.4.1	The Changing Face of Professional Development	61
2.2.4.2	Collaborative Professional Development: The Importance of Collective Dialogue	64
2.2.4.3	Summary	65
2.3	Conclusion	65

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY **67**

3.	Introduction	67
3.1	The Perspectives of the Study	67
3.1.1	Interpretivist Paradigm	67
3.1.2	Case Study	69
3.1.2.1	Strengths of the Case Studies	70
3.1.2.2	Limitations of the Case Studies	70
3.1.3	Grounded Theory: An Introduction to Method	71
3.1.3.1	Essential Properties of a Grounded Theory	72
3.1.3.2	Critique and Defence of Grounded Theory Methods	73
3.1.3.3	Grounded Theory Methods for Data analysis: A Personal Choice	75
3.1.4	Unique Characteristics of the Research Design	78
3.2	Role of the Researcher	80
3.2.1	Personal and Professional Background	80
3.3	The Research Process	81
3.3.1	Sampling Strategy-Selection of School	82
3.3.2	A Brief Description of the School	83
3.3.3	Gaining Entry and Managing Exit	84
3.3.4	Ethical Issues	86
3.4	Data Collection Procedures	88
3.4.1	Interviews	89

3.4.1.1	Individual In-depth Interviews	90
3.4.1.2	Informal Interview	91
3.4.1.3	Group Interviews	92
3.4.2	Observation	93
3.4.2.1	Participant Observation	93
3.4.2.2	Non-participant Observation	94
3.4.3	Document Analysis	95
3.4.4	Data Recording Procedures	96
3.5	Data Analysis	96
3.5.1	Microanalysis	98
3.5.2	Open, Axial and Selective Coding	99
3.5.2.1	Open Coding	99
3.5.2.2	Axial Coding	101
3.5.2.3	Selective Coding	101
3.5.3	The Paradigm Model	102
3.5.4	Validity and Reliability of the Data	103
3.6	Conclusion	104

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS 1-CAPACITY BUILDING ATTRIBUTES **106**

4.	Introduction	106
4.1	Introduction-Vision	108
4.1.2	External Influences	109
4.1.2.1	Ministry of Education	109
4.1.2.2	Outside Agency Influences	111
4.1.2.3	Local Community Influences	112
4.1.3	Internal Influences on Vision	114
4.1.4	Vision Central Tenets	115
4.1.4.1	Student Centred Learning	115
4.1.4.2	Improvement Mindset	117
4.1.4.3	Empowerment	119
4.1.4.4	Community	121
4.1.4.5	The Vision Package	123
4.1.5	Vision Construction-Conceptualisation Transmission and Evolution	123
4.1.5.1	Vision Conceptualisation	123
4.1.5.2	Vision Transmission	125
4.1.5.3	Vision Evolution	127
4.1.6	The Vision/Reality gap	128
4.1.7	Vision: Capacity Building Links	129
4.1.8	Summary	131
4.2	Introduction-Stakeholders as Change Agents	133
4.2.1	Challenges of Site Affecting Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities	133
4.2.2	Personal Attributes	136
4.2.3	Vision-led Activity-Visionary Leadership	138
4.2.4	Systemic Development-Systems, Processes and Structures	139
4.2.5	Educational Activity-Educational Leadership	142
4.2.6	Network Building	144

4.2.6.1	Network Building-Looking For New ideas	145
4.2.6.2	Home-School Networks that build Community	146
4.2.6.3	Networking: Entrepreneurial Activity	147
4.2.7	Summary	147
4.3	Introduction-School Culture	150
4.3.1	External and Internal Influences on Collective Values, Beliefs and Norms	150
4.3.1.1	External Influences on Values and Norms	150
4.3.1.2	Internal Influences	152
4.3.2	Cultural Hallmarks	156
4.3.2.1	Collaboration	156
4.3.2.2	A Learning Culture	157
4.3.2.3	A Culture of In Inclusion	158
4.3.2.4	Commitment	160
4.3.2.5	Feeling Safe	162
4.3.3	School Culture's Contribution to Building Capacity for School Improvement	165
4.3.4	Summary	166
4.4	Introduction-Professional Development	169
4.4.1	External Factors of Influence	169
4.4.1.1	Ministry of Education	170
4.4.1.2	Outside Agencies	172
4.4.1.3	Tertiary Influence	173
4.4.1.4	Business Sector Influence	174
4.4.1.5	Networking with other Schools	174
4.4.1.6	Overseas Connections	175
4.4.1.7	Professional Associations	176
4.4.1.8	Educational Websites	176
4.4.2	Internal Factors of Influence	177
4.4.2.1	Collaborative interchange	177
4.4.2.2	Reflective Practice	178
4.4.2.3	Openness to New Ideas	180
4.4.2.4	Management of Professional Development-Flexibility	180
4.4.2.5	Management of Professional Development-Relevancy	181
4.4.2.6	Management of Professional Development-Scaffolded Learning	182
4.4.3	Evolving, Continuous Professional Development-A Layered Approach	183
4.4.3.1	Layered Approach-Formal and Planned meetings	183
4.4.3.2	Layered Approach-Unplanned and Informal	185
4.4.3.3	Monitored Practice	185
4.4.3.4	Professional Development: Key Elements Related to Capacity Building	186
4.4.5	Summary	187
4.5	Conclusion	190

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS II-CAPACITY BUILDING PRACTICES **191**

5.	Introduction	191
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5.1	Knowledge Production and Utilisation	194
5.1.2	Knowledge Production and Utilisation: The Importance of Vision	194
5.1.3	Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Collaborative Interchange	196
5.1.4	Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Reflective Practice	199
5.1.5	Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Networking	202
5.1.6	Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Systemic Development	203
5.1.7	Knowledge Production and Utilisation-Summary	206
5.2	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities	207
5.2.1	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: The Importance of Vision	208
5.2.2	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Collaboration	210
5.2.3	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Reflective Process	211
5.2.4	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Networking	212
5.2.5	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Systemic Development	213
5.2.6	Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities-Summary	214
5.3	“Switching On” Mentality	214
5.3.1	“Switching On” Mentality: The Importance of Vision	215
5.3.2	“Switching On” Mentality: Collaboration	216
5.3.3	“Switching On” Mentality: Reflective Practice	217
5.3.4	“Switching On” Mentality: Networking	218
5.3.5	“Switching On” Mentality: Systemic Development	219
5.3.6	“Switching On” Mentality-Summary	220
5.4	Conclusion	220

CHAPTER SIX: THEORISING ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT **222**

6	Introduction	222
6.1	Situated Activity	222
6.1.1	A Socially Constructed Vision-A Deliberate Choice	223
6.1.2	Managing Tensions-Minimising Limitations / Maximising Opportunities	225
6.1.2.1	Funding	228
6.1.2.2	Parents’ / Caregivers’ Involvement	229
6.1.2.3	Accountability and Compliance	230
6.1.2.4	Low Decile Socio-economic Factors	231
6.1.2.5	Multi-ethnic Issues	231
6.1.3	Shifting Dimensions of Capacity Building for School Improvement	232
6.1.4	Summary	233
6.2	Connectedness	234
6.2.1	Connectedness at the External / Internal Interface	234
6.2.2	Connectedness: Knowledge Production and Utilisation	235
6.2.3	Connectedness: A ‘Switching on’ Mentality	237
6.2.4	Connectedness: Division of Labour: Shared Roles / responsibilities	239
6.2.5	Summary	240
6.3	Governance, Leadership and Management	240
6.3.1	Visionary Leadership	241
6.3.2	Educational leadership	241

6.3.3	Network Builders	242
6.3.4	System Developers	242
6.3.5	Summary	243
6.4	Capacity Outcomes	243
6.4.1	Summary	245
6.5	Conclusion: A Substantive Theory – Theoretical Model of Capacity Building for School Improvement	245
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION		249
7	Introduction	249
7.1	Research Questions Answered	249
7.2	Limitations of the Substantive Theory / Research	253
7.3	Strengths of the Substantive Theory / Research	255
7.4	Reflections on Methodology	256
7.5	Implications	256
7.5.1	Implications for the Ministry of Education	256
7.5.2	Implications for School Staff	257
7.5.3	Implications for Parents / Caregivers	259
7.6	Further Research	259
7.7	Conclusion	260
7.8	Final Words	260
APPENDICES		262
REFERENCES		290

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: Capacity Building for School Improvement: Attributes and Practices	107
FIGURE 2: School Vision: Underpinning tenets: student-centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community	132
FIGURE 3: Stakeholders as Change Agents: Underpinning tenets: student-centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community	149
FIGURE 4: School Culture: Underpinning tenets: student-centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community	168
FIGURE 5: Professional Development: Underpinning tenets: student-centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community	189
FIGURE 6: Practices: Knowledge production and utilisation, Division of Labour: roles and Responsibilities, 'Switching on' mentality	193
FIGURE 7: Reading Review (2004)	205
FIGURE 8: Capacity Building for School Improvement: Themes	248

LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS

PHOTOGRAPH 1: ‘You Can Do It’ Mural in Foyer	119
PHOTOGRAPH 2: ‘You Can Do It’ Classroom Display	125
PHOTOGRAPH 3: Trophies	126
PHOTOGRAPH 4: Shared Lunch – Celebration of Different Cultures	154
PHOTOGRAPH 5: Nga Ringa Awhina	159
PHOTOGRAPH 6: Notice Board in Staffroom	164

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix A: Summary of Research Activities Conducted in November, 2004	262
Appendix B: Data Collection Outline	264
Appendix C: Consent Form – Board of Trustees	267
Appendix D: Participant Information sheet	268
Appendix E: Consent Form – Participant Consent Form	271
Appendix F: Ethics Approval	272
Appendix G: Interview Guide	273
Appendix H: Transcript Release Form	275
Appendix I: Microanalysis of Interview Transcript: Principal Style	276
Appendix J: Sample of Memo Writing – Segment of Observation	277
Appendix K: Sample of Open Codes – Professional Development	278
Appendix L: Sample of Axial Codes – Values	280
Appendix M: Sample of Complete Data Set Codes – Vision	281
Appendix N: Sample of Paradigm Framework – School Culture Links to Capacity Building for School Improvement	283
Appendix O: Excerpts	284
Appendix P: Path Chart for Vision Achievement	287
Appendix Q: Power Point Slide Show – CD	288
Appendix R: Professional Development- External and Internal	289

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1 Introduction

Capacity building is now mentioned synonymously with school improvement in much of the literature. Research on the topic is, however, limited and generally undertaken at the micro level of school functioning. There is an absence of debate on political, economic and cultural trends with implications for capacity building. This leads to claims that the concept lacks clarity and articulation (Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer & Barrett, 2004; Hopkins, Beresford & West, 1998). Capacity building provides a valuable lens for taking a fresh look at what schools do to meet challenges of change and improvement in productive ways.

Capacity building for school improvement is complex. Schools function as networked (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) open systems (Lam & Punch, 2001; Dantley, 2005) which makes the construct deeply embedded in macro and micro contexts; a product of situated activity. Interfacing contexts suggest capacity building may result from connectedness. As such, an examination of the nature and type of meaningful relationships, among stakeholders, that advance capacity for improvement is required. Situatedness and connectedness require investigation within political, cultural and socio-economic frameworks to deepen understanding of the phenomena.

This research is framed by four aims: to undertake an investigation on processes that enhance improvement, namely, capacity building for school improvement; to define capacity building; to conduct an in-depth study of influences (external and internal) on capacity building for school improvement; and to record the journey one multicultural¹, low decile², state primary school undertook in the building of capacity for improvement. The inquiry is positioned within an

¹ Assuming that the dominant culture in most New Zealand schools is usually European/Pakeha, a multicultural school is defined by ERO (2000) as "A school in which students from at least two other ethnic groups comprise at least 20 percent of the school's population. The 20 percent threshold is low enough to capture all schools with a significant population of students of other cultures, yet not so low that the definition loses its value and meaning" (p. 3).

² Every state school is allocated a decile (10 percent grouping) by which to target funding based on the degree of socio-economic disadvantage the community from which the students are drawn. "Low decile schools (1-3) draw from communities with the highest degree of disadvantage while high decile schools (8-10) draw from communities with the lowest degree of socio-economic disadvantage. A school's decile ranking is calculated using six dimensions: equivalent household income; parental occupation; household crowding; parent's educational qualifications; income support payments received by parents; and the portion of students of Maori or Pacific ethnicity" (Ministry of Education, 1999a, p. 8).

interpretivist paradigm, employs a case study approach and grounded theory methods for data analysis and interpretation.

1.1 Background to the Study

In New Zealand, much emphasis has and continues to be directed towards school improvement in pursuit of raising student achievement and reducing disparity (Ministry of Education, 1999a, 2004; Alton-Lee, 2003). Over the last decade, the need to 'step up' action in this area can be traced to several policy statements. In 1999, the briefing paper prepared for the incoming Minister of Education by the Ministry of Education (MOE), stressed the importance of increasing achievement levels and reducing disparity to enhance New Zealand's social and economic well-being and adaptation to growing international and technological influences, ethnic diversity and calls for lifelong education (MOE, 1999a). Addressing underachievement and raising achievement was said to require a broad, integrated strategy across all education sectors, inclusive of families. The point made was that educational policies needed integration within broader social and economic policies to make a difference to learners. A focus on evidence-based policy development and use of achievement indicators to gauge the extent of policy success³ received attention.

To manage change, certain projects were invoked. Some examples included: strengthening education initiatives in Northland, the East Coast, Mangere / Otara, and with Tuhoe; Maori

³ In terms of addressing underachievement, the following strategies were employed:

- Strengthening the role families and communities play in the learning process;
- Lifting participation of Maori, Pacific and low income families in high quality early childhood education services;
- Developing schools' capabilities to implement effective approaches for teaching;
- Building management and governance capabilities of schools;
- Supporting and enabling providers to recognise and respond to diversity of needs;
- Developing partnerships among government, providers and communities to lift student achievement;
- Ensuring qualification systems are supportive of ongoing opportunities for learning; and
- Lifting skills of adults and improving pathways into tertiary education for those with low skills and qualifications.

For the schooling sector, achieving excellence focused on:

- Ensuring effective teacher / student interaction by promoting teaching and learning that reinforces best practice;
- Fostering a climate that empowers teachers to develop a self-sustaining drive for improvement in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment practices;
- Supporting and developing leadership capabilities of boards and principals; and
- Building on gains made by *Tomorrow's Schools* by fostering collaboration (Ministry of Education, 1999a).

language initiatives; assessment policies and practices; introducing a range of initiatives to raise Pacific student participation; and implementing a School Support programme to assist and support 'at-risk' schools. Effective change was noted as requiring extensive communication, consultation and professional development to help build sector capability. Reform implementation was staggered to counteract detrimental effects of too much change.

The Ministry of Education's first Statement of Intent, for the period 2003 – 2008, promotes education as a lifelong process to keep pace with a changing world (MOE, 2004). Key forces of influence are: the need to be more responsive to diverse cultures and a wide range of needs and aspirations, globalisation, the impact of technology and information, and development of a knowledge-based economy. To ensure this, high standards and clear expectations at all levels in the education system are stressed. Attention is focused on developing a schools' sector strategy with continuous focus on raising achievement and reducing disparity. The emphasis is on achievement and evidence based decision making. Implied in the Statement of Intent is Ministry involvement to influence system-wide learning outcomes with a focus on better learning for all New Zealanders. This is justified on the basis of building a substantial knowledge-base and systemic capabilities across all levels – systems, institutions and individual teachers.

To promote policy reform success, the Ministry of Education stipulates that it draws on consultations and discussions with educators, professionals, trustees, iwi partners and other stakeholders (MOE, 2004). For example, the Ministry of Education claims its first Statement of Intent (2003-2008) is based on internal discussions and syntheses of evidence based national and international research, theoretical literature and experience. International comparative performance, from reports⁴, provides a snapshot of the state of learning in New Zealand. Indications are that levels of achievement are on the rise. New Zealand is performing well compared with other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries across a number of education measures including overall participation in early childhood and tertiary education and in the literacy of 15-year olds (MOE, 2004). However, by international standards, there is wide variation between highest and lowest achieving students which presents a pressing problem (ibid.). When deconstructed, these results mean many students leaving school have little or inadequate qualifications to transit successfully into a knowledge

⁴ OECD data and International Adult Literacy Survey data (1996); Third International Mathematics and Science Study (1994 / 1995); OECD (2001) *Knowledge and skills for life: First results from PISA 2000. Programme for International Student assessment* (MOE, 2004).

based economy. From a policy perspective, such results create an urgency to reduce disparity (Alton-Lee, 2003; MOE, 2004). However, the Ministry concedes that, at the school level, pressures to provide pathways, options and support that meet diversity create stress on schools and the wider system. Alongside this are pressures on schools to respond to or confront more deeply seated social and community issues (MOE, 2004).

In the Statement of Intent – 2005 to 2010, the Ministry reasserts its mission of raising achievement and reducing disparity (MOE, 2006). Three outcomes targeted to raise achievement and reduce disparity are: effective teaching for all students; family and community engagement in education; and development of quality providers. To ensure these overarching goals are met, a wide range of legislative mandates, official documentation and research are promoted. Mandates contained in *The National Education Guidelines*⁵ (MOE, 1993a) and *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993b) depict commitment to improving schools. Recent changes to *The National Administration Guidelines* (NAGs) (MOE, 1993a) and the 2001 amendment to the 1989 Education Act place planning for and reporting on improved student achievement at the top of schools' agendas. The amendment legislates that schools' charters must indicate how schools plan for ongoing improvement (MOE, 2000).

Recent legislative changes to governance responsibilities have increased board responsibility in monitoring student achievement and reviewing effectiveness of teaching and learning in relation to expectations set by the school. However, as Timperley, Smith, Parr, Portway, Mirams, Clark, Allen and Page (2004) claim, in *Analysis and Use of Student Achievement Data* (AUSAD), the board does not have direct involvement with students and programmes at the classroom level; these responsibilities are inevitably exercised through an accountability relationship with professionals.

The Ministry is actively committed to building relationships between the Crown and iwi that gives effect to the collaborative relationships envisaged in the Treaty of Waitangi; that is, to generate new opportunities to improve Maori education (MOE, 2004). Alton-Lee (2003) explains, "To achieve systemic improvement – the kind that will impact on every child – we need a step up

⁵ The National Education Guidelines were established in 1990 and were revised in 1993 and again in 1996. They are given effect by sections 60A and 61 of the Education Act 1989: *Every charter and proposed charter shall be deemed to contain the aim of achieving, meeting, and following (as the case may be) the National Education Guidelines* (section 61 (2)). The National Education Guidelines have three components: National Education Goals (NEGs), National Curriculum Statements and the National Administration Guidelines (NAGs).

in our thinking about indigeneity and responsiveness to diversity, a step up in professional learning and a step up in systemic integration of research and development in education” (p. 16).

In terms of promoting Pacific Education, the strategy *Ko e Ako 'a e Kakai Pasifika*, introduced in 1996, focuses on empowering and recognising Kakai Pasifika strengths by furthering Pacific communities' involvement in education and links through Pacific languages and culture.

Work undertaken by the Ministry in improving education outcomes includes building relationships with other educational agencies⁶ to ensure system coherence and develop interagency cooperation and integration in implementing strategies, activities and services that promote better outcomes (MOE, 2004). In terms of the latter, the focus is on addressing the needs of at-risk children, young people and families; providing second-chance opportunities; building a knowledge base; and working with agencies to ensure pastoral and health needs of learners are supported (MOE, 2004).

Government goals, strategies and Ministry outcomes have seen a range of projects initiated to raise school effectiveness, enhance professional capabilities of educators and support student learning. The following are a few examples of current Ministry (Research Division) projects under the headings of Assessment, Curriculum, Maori Education, Schools, and Special Needs:

- Assessment: Assessment Resource Banks for Classroom Teachers; National Education Monitoring Project; Programme for International Student Achievement 2006 (PISA-06) – Third Cycle; Science Study 2006/2007 (TIMSS-06/07);
- Curriculum: Monitoring of Reading Recovery Data; Resource Teachers of Literacy: Annual Monitoring; Evaluation of the professional development strategy to improve literacy in secondary schools;
- Maori Education: Evaluation of the Teacher Professional Development: Learning te reo Maori (Pilot programme for mainstream primary and intermediate teachers);
- Schools: A study of Students' Transition from Primary to Secondary Schooling; and
- Special Needs: Enhanced Programme Funding (EPF) Evaluation.

⁶ The education review Office (ERO), Career Services (ECD), New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA), New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER), Learning Media, Group Special Education (GSE), Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) and the Teachers Council.

The Ministry of Education, with teacher unions, educational leaders and educational researchers / teacher educators, has been proactive in managing the development of a series of Best Evidence Synthesis (BES) reports that exemplify the practice of teachers⁷. The purpose is to develop a, “shared, constantly updated knowledge base to inform dialogue and improve the work of teacher educators, practitioners, researchers and policy development” (Alton-Lee, 2005, pp. 6-7). Alton-Lee claims that the approach is not about prescribing practice from the past but drawing out, “principles and characteristics underpinning effective practice in recognition of the importance of context and the complexity and creativity of any teaching endeavour” (ibid., p. 7). In addition to the BES reports, Ministry convened reviews inform evaluations of certain programmes. These add to an increasing knowledge base⁸.

Supplementing the Ministry of Education’s national knowledge base, the Education Review Office (ERO)⁹ provides reviews on schools and early childhood providers and national and cluster reports. Reviews are public documents available from ERO or downloaded from their web site. National and cluster reports¹⁰ are also easily accessible, designed to give parents, boards of trustees, teachers, government officials and other interested parties information for improvement and opportunities for debate on what counts as quality in education policy and practice.

⁷ Best evidence syntheses, available now, cover:

- *Quality Teaching for Diverse Students in Schooling: Best Evidence Synthesis* (Alton-Lee, 2003);
- *Quality Teaching: Early Foundations* (Farquhar, 2003);
- *Professional Development in Early Childhood Settings* (Mitchell & Cubey, 2003); and
- *The Complexity of Community and Family Influences on Children’s Achievement in New Zealand: Best Evidence Synthesis* (Biddulph, Biddulph & Biddulph, 2003).

Four syntheses in progress include: *Teacher Professional Learning, Teaching and Learning in pangarau/mathematics, Teaching and Learning in Tikianga-a-iwi/Social Studies/Social Sciences* and *Schools’ Educational Leadership*.

⁸ Examples include: Developing a more positive school culture to address bullying and improve school relationships. Case studies from two primary schools and one intermediate school. (Children’s Issues Centre, 2004); Review of Future-focused Research on Teaching and Learning (Codd, Brown, Clark, McPherson, O’Neill, O’Neill, Waitere-Ang & Zepke, 2005); The Impact of Family and Community Resources on Student Outcomes: An assessment of the International Literature with Implications for New Zealand (Nechyba, McEwan, Older-Aguilar, 2005); and Literature Review on the Effective Engagement of Pasifika Parents & Communities in Education (Gorinski & Fraser, 2006).

⁹ The role of ERO is “The purpose of ERO reviews is to contribute to improved student achievement. When ERO reviews schools it has a key interest in information that the school has about student achievement and also looks at the way in which school programmes and processes contribute to this achievement” (ERO, 2006a, p. 1).

¹⁰ The following reports were used for this study: *The Achievement of Maori Students* (ERO, 2006b), *The Achievement of Pacific Students and Assessment in Primary Schools* (ERO, 2006c), *Schools’ use of Operational Funding* (ERO, 2006d); *Multi Cultural Schools in New Zealand* (ERO, 2000); *School Governance and Student Achievement* (ERO, 1999); *The Capable Teacher* (ERO, 1998a), *Good School – Poor Schools* (ERO, 1998b), *Schooling in Mangere and Otara: Progress since 1996: Follow up Report* (ERO, 1998c); *Schooling in Mangere and Otara* (ERO, 1996).

A national push to raise achievement levels and reduce disparity by focused attention on school improvement is clearly the government's agenda. The focus is on enhancing New Zealand's social and economic well being and adaptability to technological advancements, addressing diversity and a push for lifelong learning. Despite a mass of legislation, policies and research, contemporary literature suggests school improvement is accompanied by tensions, such as:

- Funding: Financial and strategic capabilities of schools have an impact on capacity building. Funding shortages, attributable to various factors, are said to limit school improvement (Dalin, 2005; Hawk & Hill, 1997). In *Schools' Use of Operational Funding*, a report by ERO (2006d), some schools in the medium to high decile range reported a dependency on locally raised funds for their day-to-day operation. Some schools in this category stated they struggled to raise funds and / or raised funds by diverting school managers into fund raising activities. ERO noted this may be detrimental, monetarily and educationally, to both schools and students. The report indicated that low decile schools were more likely to experience a lack of financial and strategic expertise with ensuing planning / budgeting problems for teaching / learning.
- Tensions surrounding accountability: Findings from the AUSAD report (Timperley et al., 2004) reveal that links between accountability and governance, related to student achievement, are tenuous for parent board members. Reporting on lay governance in New Zealand schools, Timperley et al., (2004) note, "Board members rarely participated in any discussion, but rather adopted a listening role...it was the accepted way things were done" (p. xiv). The authors confirm that problems lie more with the complexity of tasks: "It is challenging to expect boards of trustees to have adequate knowledge of the highly contentious issues surrounding achievement, target setting and monitoring of programmes to the extent that they could hold the professional to account" (ibid, p. xiv). This is just one issue related to tensions experienced in the area of board accountability;
- Socio-economic factors: Challenges facing schools in low decile areas are acknowledged as limiting school improvement by the Ministry of Education, educators / researchers (Hawk & Hill, 1997; McCauley & Roddick, 2001) and ERO (2000) as outlined in a report on *Multi-cultural Schools in New Zealand*;
- Continuous demands for improvement: Ongoing reform agendas and the push for continuous change leave some schools struggling to cope. Elmore (1995) makes the point that schools, in their quest to keep up with change demands, end up altering structures and 'adding-on' programmes which strain their ability to operate strategically;

- Changes in the community dynamics: ERO (2000) in *Multi-cultural Schools in New Zealand* (2000), claim that many teachers work with student populations that are diverse and schools are likely to become even more multi-cultural. This, they note, results in a range of challenges, problems and opportunities;
- Raising achievement levels of Maori and Pacific Island students: In the report *The Achievement of Maori Students* (ERO, 2006b)¹¹, data on 321 schools showed that 13 percent were considered effective or highly effective across all areas evaluated, over half (57 percent) were effective in some areas and needed to improve in other areas and 30 percent needed to improve across all areas. The weakest area concerned monitoring the impact of policy interventions targeted at improving Maori student achievement. Only a quarter of schools were using achievement data to improve the learning opportunities of Maori students and, while nearly 40 percent could demonstrate they were improving the achievement of Maori students, 44 percent provided limited evidence and the remainder could provide no evidence. In *The Achievement of Pacific Students*, ERO (2006c) found only 17 percent of schools were collecting and analysing information on the achievement of Pacific students and 21 percent were collecting and analysing information on attendance and suspension rates. Failing to engage effectively with families and communities to improve educational outcomes of students was also raised as a concern;
- Governance and management issues: Numerous governance and management tensions have surfaced since the advent of *Tomorrow's Schools*¹². These issues receive coverage in Part One of Chapter Two and include, for example, Timperley et al.'s (2004) claim that lack of knowledge of governance and limited participation in educational matters mean boards of trustees are unlikely to exercise their accountability roles effectively. Issues of board contribution towards capacity building for improvement are raised.

Tensions of context have implications for stakeholders faced with building capacity for school improvement. Despite a developing national knowledge base on schooling, research that takes a deeper look at practice to achieve understanding of it in line with capacity building for school improvement is lacking (Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer & Barrett, 2004; Hopkins, Beresford & West, 1998). This research is framed by four aims: to undertake an investigation on processes that enhance improvement – capacity building for school improvement; to define capacity building; to

¹¹ Measures of effectiveness were: teachers' engagement of students in learning, schools collation and analysis of Maori student achievement data, use of achievement data and monitoring the impact of policy initiatives designed to improve Maori student achievement.

¹² *Tomorrow's Schools* (Lange, 1988).

conduct an in-depth study of influences (external and internal) on capacity building for school improvement; and to record the journey of one school's engagement in process.

1.2 This Study

Data from this study suggests that capacity building for school improvement is time and context dependent. Its conceptualisation is unique to setting. Capacity building for school improvement is a response to meeting individual, collective and systemic needs in ways that sustain equilibrium while moving in the direction of improvement. Attributes inherent in its construction are vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. The main practices are: knowledge production and utilisation; switching-on mentality; and division of labour: roles and responsibilities. From attributes and practices emerge four themes: situated activity; connectedness; leadership, governance and management; and outcomes. Attributes, practices and themes explain capacity building for school improvement in one setting.

There are four main reasons for this research. First, the drive for school improvement is an ongoing systemic approach involving national, community and school levels of practice. There is continuous need for more research on processes that enhance improvement and school effectiveness. Second, capacity building for school improvement needs defining in ways that explain situated activity and connectedness. Third, the researcher has had much experience in initiating and implementing school improvement as a senior manager and advisor to schools. After years immersed in the school system, it was considered important to pursue an in depth study of processes, systems and structures that enhance the building of capacity for improvement. Fourth, the study is a means to record one school's journey. It is hoped that the results might be of some assistance to school stakeholders concerned with advancing improvement.

Two assumptions underscore the study. First, it is recognised that external and internal environments play significant and influential roles in shaping, structuring and engineering what happens in schools. They define capacity building and school improvement. Second, capacity building for school improvement involves all stakeholders.

1.2.1 Guiding Principles for this Study

Both assumptions generate the following guiding principles. First, the study necessitates joint construction of meaning. This is achieved by positioning the study in the interpretivist paradigm

and employing a case study approach. Exactly what this constitutes and how the study addresses these principles is addressed in Chapter Three, the methodology chapter.

Second, the study is required to establish 'fit' with participants' world views. Establishing 'fit' is important because it is hoped the study will be of use to educators involved in school improvement. 'Fit' is best achieved if the research produces a theory grounded in data. Use of grounded theory methods to achieve 'fit' is explained in Chapter Three.

Third, the study is meant to produce a balanced account of processes involved in building capacity for school improvement. Such an account demands an appreciation of the views of all stakeholders. Participants involved in this inquiry are outside agencies, parent representatives and school staff. Although current research positions students at the heart of all activity and actively pursues students' voice (Busher, 2006), students were not directly involved in this study. Student voice was gained through interviewing parents and staff. The aims of this research focus on factors that enhance capacity building, defining the concept and establishing links to school improvement. Attention is on systems, processes and structures. Moreover, as the setting for this inquiry is a primary school, it was felt students' voices could be captured in other ways (through interviews with parents and staff). It is interesting to note that Hawk and Hill (1999) advocate student voice in intermediate and secondary school settings, as at this age, students are wiser and can more readily articulate their needs, concerns and comment about the health of the school.

Fourth, the very nature of this inquiry suggests that capacity building involves a discussion of tensions. The position taken considers tensions as important and discusses them in view of the school's responses – minimising limitations and maximising opportunities. A balanced account means acknowledging the hard work stakeholders have already undertaken in initiating, implementing and sustaining change at the teaching and learning level of practice.

1.2.2 Research Focus

This research aims to provide an in depth examination of capacity building for school improvement in one multicultural, low decile, state primary school in New Zealand. It focuses on a set of broad questions that serve as a 'map' for the inquiry:

- How is capacity for school improvement defined – what are its features?
- How do internal school factors – vision, stakeholder activity, culture and professional development – evolve capacity?

- In what ways do external wider societal factors influence the development of capacity?
- What links exist between capacity building and improvement as evidenced in this school setting?

1.2.3 Research Design

Capacity building for school improvement is a complex concept to investigate. The design adopted is an interpretivist case study with grounded theory methods for data analysis. Interviews, participant and non-participant observations and document analysis were tools used for data collection. The researcher interviewed outside agencies associated with the school, parent representatives and school personnel with various site-related responsibilities. Observations were undertaken at various school sites and home-school partnership events. The researcher also spent as much time as possible in the field. Apart from negotiated observations, interviews and document analysis, a flexible approach to data collection allowed participants to guide and direct the researcher to areas they felt were relevant. Such flexibility facilitated a presence at events and /or critical incidents as they unfolded. A more detailed account is presented in Chapter Three.

1.2.4 Background of the Researcher

The researcher has had over 25 years of teaching experience in a variety of New Zealand primary schools. She has been a teacher, associate principal, deputy principal and acting principal. She has held advisory positions across the sector (primary through to secondary) implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (MOE, 1993b). Her professional background extends to lecturing in undergraduate and post graduate primary teacher training programmes at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, Auckland College of Education and Massey University. At Massey University, she has lectured in the Master of Educational Administration degree course.

For many years, the topic of school improvement has been a major focus of her work. Her involvement in teaching and school administration, both from a practical and theoretical perspective, has provided her with a strong tacit knowledge base which proved an asset in conducting this research. Such a knowledge base also meant the researcher had to 'step back' to ensure an objective perspective was gained, reflective of participants' viewpoints.

1.3 Thesis Outline

This thesis, presented in seven chapters, provides a chronological explication of how the research was conducted and how the capacity building theory emerged from data traceable to the research

questions. The first chapter, Chapter One, justifies the need for this research. The aims of the study are discussed and the research questions introduced. It briefly describes how the investigation was conducted and the background of the researcher.

Chapter Two presents the literature review in two sections. The first contains a discussion of political, cultural and socio-economic forces with implications for capacity building and school improvement. Tensions and challenges faced when attempting to build capacity are illuminated. The second section explores contemporary literature on vision, school culture, leadership and professional development.

The research methodology is considered in Chapter Three. This includes discussion of an interpretivist paradigm, a case study approach and grounded theory methods in data analysis. A description of the case school, personal and professional background of the researcher, entry and exit details and ethical issues specific to this inquiry are outlined. Data collection tools and methods for recording data are discussed. To conclude, issues of verification, reliability and trustworthiness are covered.

Given the depth and complexity of data, the researcher decided to present the findings in two chapters. Chapter Four considers the attributes of capacity building for school improvement, namely: vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. Chapter Five presents key practices that contribute to the capacity building process: knowledge production and utilisation, division of labour: roles and responsibilities and 'switching on' mentality. Data on attributes are presented in a narrative form. Inclusion of participants' voices authenticates and grounds the findings in a reality base. Vignettes, analytical commentaries and flow diagrams are used to portray practice.

In Chapter Six, capacity building for school improvement is explicated using four underscoring themes: situated activity; connectedness; governance, leadership and management; and capacity outcomes. A theoretical framework that explains capacity building for improvement is proposed.

The final chapter, Chapter Seven, answers the research questions and discusses the strengths and limitations of the research. It suggests recommendations based on the findings. The chapter concludes with suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2 Introduction

A literature review was conducted to gain an overview of the current theory base, identify gaps in the research and position this study within the context of current knowledge development. Contemporary literature on school improvement appears profuse in areas of descriptive studies focused on particular school improvement programmes or projects (Harris, 2003). Detailed studies of changes in school organisation and their relationship to teaching and learning are less forthcoming with few comparative analyses of programmes that impact positively on classroom practice (Harris, 2003). On the topic of capacity building for school improvement, Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer and Barrett (2004) note that a paucity of research exists and Hopkins, Beresford and West (1998) suggest the concept lacks clear articulation and definition. Furthermore, despite recognition of the importance of context, national and international research that examines political, cultural and socio-economic influences on school improvement is lacking (Muijs, Harris, Chapman, Stoll & Russ, 2004; Thrupp & Willmott, 2003; Gray, 2000). Capacity building and school improvement are complex constructs and depth of understanding is only achieved by exploring external and internal determinants of contexts that influence their construction.

The review is divided into two sections. Part One examines political, cultural and socio-economic factors with implications for capacity building for school improvement. Aspects discussed are: New Zealand's 'new right', Neo-Liberal reforms of the 1990s; hidden paradoxes in the *Tomorrow's Schools* rhetoric; policy reform initiatives; and funding, accountability and governance issues. School improvement and capacity building are examined accordingly. Part Two presents contemporary theories on leadership, school culture, vision and professional development. It was felt that working from this perspective would promote greater reflection on meanings participants bring to capacity building for improvement. The review is grounded in a social constructivist framework which, in this context, is based on the assumption that "the terms by which the world is understood are social artefacts, products of historically situated interchanges among people" (Gergen, 1985, p. 267 cited in Schwandt, 1994, p. 127).

2.1 Part One: Macro Level Political, Cultural and Socio-economic Influences

Schools are nested within layers of society (Dantley, 2005). Influences from the local community, outside agencies, government and global patterns and trends shape and structure what happens in

them. Schools are also interconnected (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006); that is, leadership in one school affects, “the fortunes of students and teachers in other schools” (p. 3). Indeed, Hargreaves and Fink (2006) contend that the more school systems run on market principles of competition and choice, the tighter their interconnections become. It is only through identifying and examining influential determinants of external and internal contexts that a holistic picture of capacity building for school improvement emerges.

Lam and Punch (2001, p. 29) claim schools are connected to their environment in three ways: the task environment, “relevant to goal setting, goal achievement, effectiveness and organisational survival”, the institutional perspective that presumes conformity to rules and requirements, “imposed by the legal, social, professional and political contexts” and self-management, power devolution and community involvement which means parents have insider status. In terms of the latter, Driscoll and Goldring (2005) explain that parental involvement is more than just politics; parents’ / caregivers’ participation in school affairs is central to the “core of schooling, teaching and learning...supporting the development of human, social and financial capital for schools and their students” (p. 61). The New Zealand context, “assumes and pursues very high levels of parental involvement, as is consistent with the devolution of governance and management to school Board of Trustees and Principals under Tomorrow’s Schools” (McCauley & Roddick, 2001, p. 15). Combined, such claims encourage exploration of capacity building for improvement as a situated, connected activity influenced by external and internal environmental forces.

Over the past fifteen years, public service reform driven by economic rationalism has undergone change in nearly every OECD country (Dalin, 2005). Indeed, Dalin (2005) notes “Programmes are being introduced that seek to decentralise services, simplify regulations, and develop expertise and new management” (p. 4). Privatisation of schools, democratisation of school systems, parent participation and administrative and financial reforms are designed to: increase system productivity by devolving ownership to those closest to the action, increase democratic decision making by situating the process closer to service users and increase relevance and quality of educational delivery by ensuring, “*well-informed, well-educated and experienced teachers draw on theory and practice to reflect over the dilemmas of teaching*” (Dalin, 2005, p. 22 italics in the original). Such changes in the political scene exert powerful influences on what happens in schools. Yet the literature that explores this in connection with capacity building for school improvement appears limited. The objective of Part One is to identify and consider tensions,

constraints and opportunities schools and school leaders face when building capacity for improvement in the current education climate.

2.1.1 Neo-Liberal Reforms of the 1990s in New Zealand

Changes heralded by the *Tomorrow's Schools* policy (Lange, 1988) placed administration of education in New Zealand, “within the orbit of economic policy” (Codd, 2005, p. 193). Prior to *Tomorrow's Schools*, New Zealand's education system was dominated by a Keynesian progressive-liberal ideology. This, Boyd (1998) suggests, served three main functions: integrative (integration of youth into mainstream society), egalitarian (equalisation of the skills gap and reduction of extremes of wealth and poverty) and developmental (personal and moral development). The 1990s saw this liberal democratic ideology subsumed by Neo-Liberal ideas advancing individual freedom and choice through market forces; as Boyd states (1998, p. 5), “the market becomes the regulatory mechanism, and government intervention can be reduced to a minimum”. Calls for reforms were backed by arguments that, “parents, teachers, students and local communities (needed) more say in educational decision making and school government” (Barrington, 1981, p. 68) and, “instead of uniformity there may be an appropriate diversity, reflecting variations in local needs and circumstances” (p. 68). The 1984 Labour government instituted reforms to:

- Reduce the role of the centre;
- Eliminate bureaucratic layers between funding and delivery of service;
- Clarify the roles and separate the responsibility for policy, funding and service provisions; and
- Give service providers greater autonomy and responsibility for management of resources and outcomes achieved

(Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) / Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) Conference, 1994, p. 3).

Codd (1990) notes, “reforms of the past three years have gone much further than the restructuring of educational administration. They have changed, perhaps permanently, the very nature and context of educational policy formation in this country” (p. 17). Furthermore,

New forms of control and accountability have emerged informed by theories of economic rationalism and passed on a culture of mistrust...Increasingly, schools have become commercialised, functioning more like small business firms and less as institutions with an educational mission (Codd, 2005, p. 194).

Tomorrow's Schools policies were a response to heavily centralised, rule-bound, inflexible, central and regional administrative structures (Dalin, 2005), combined with worsening economic conditions (Codd, 2005; Dalin, 2005; Boyd, 1998; Whitty, Power & Haplin, 1998). Such policies were also a reaction to assertions that schools were unresponsive to parental concerns (MOE, 2005). The Taskforce to Review Education Administration (*Administering for Excellence*, 1988) proposed increasing educational administration efficiency by decreasing government operational involvement in schools. This led to the 'direct resourcing experiment' (Whitty, Power & Haplin, 1998), initiated in 1988, to give school leaders freedom to respond to local community needs while satisfying government policy requirements for accountability (Leithwood, 2001) and efficiency (MOE, 2005). The rhetoric promoted self-management and self-governance but within legislative guidelines and an accountability-driven political agenda (Leithwood, 2001).

Leithwood (2001) claims that the markets, decentralisation, professionalisation and management approaches are the government's ways of advancing accountability. Each approach is grounded in different assumptions about reform problems confronting schools and the nature of desirable solutions. Within a management approach, school choice, privatisation plans and the creation of charter or magnet schools promote accountability through interschool competition, a funding formula that follows students and public ranking of schools based on aggregated test scores. Market advocates argue that interschool competition, school choice and parents, staff and students' support for 'schools of choice' increase student achievement, attendance and educational attainment. Decentralisation attempts to increase accountability occur through community control or self-management policies. The argument purported here is that professional responsiveness to community priorities increases when, "the power to make decisions is in the hands of the parent / community constituents of the school" (Leithwood, 2001, p. 222). Professional approaches hold schools more accountable for making the best use of available knowledge in achieving effective practice. Here, school leaders' ability to generate professional learning communities holds precedence. Management approaches hold school leaders, staff and others answerable for making effective strategic decisions, establishing clear priorities, designing explicit strategies for task accomplishment and engaging in, "continuous cycles of monitoring and strategy refinement" (p. 228). Leithwood concludes that each of the four approaches places unique demands on school leaders to lead and manage school reform effectively. Data from this study acknowledges the impact of each approach as creating tensions in practice. Furthermore,

such approaches and respective tensions shape and define school stakeholders' perceptions of capacity building for school improvement.

Robinson et al. in *Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara* (2005), provide a critique of the 1990s reforms. These authors suggest that freedom to manage does not imply reduced accountability to the government. Rather, government priorities remain prominent but with a shift from accountability of inputs and procedures (money spent and processes employed) to outputs (services) and outcomes (results). Furthermore, results-oriented accountability has been difficult to achieve because boards of trustees' attention is continually diverted to compliance and legislative requirements, fiscal responsibilities, health and safety matters and delivery of the curriculum. School self-management, designed to increase efficiency, has proven deficient in responding to local community needs. Indeed, such policies have created problems. Abolishment of enrolment zones, for example, has increased a competitive market place in education, while locally based democratic school governance has induced school-based bureaucracy (Thrupp & Willmott, 2003).

Currently in New Zealand, boards of trustees govern state and integrated schools. Boards are composed of elected parents, the principal and a staff representative. Boards have legal authority for school governance and management (ERO, 1999). Each state school has its own distinctive charter based on *The National Educational Guidelines*. The charter, approved by the Ministry and signed by the Minister, is a contract between the school, local community and Ministry. It ensures compliance to aforementioned mandates. Regular reviews conducted by Education Review officials ensure board compliance within mandated guidelines. Governance is meant to be a reflective mix of democratic and managerial ideals aimed at increasing administrative efficiency and parental responsiveness (MOE, 2005).

Board governance linked to school improvement is, however, tenuous with limited empirical evidence to substantiate claims for improvement (Dalin, 2005). Indeed, on lay governance ERO comment that, "while this approach has worked well for many schools, it is questionable whether it is appropriate for the small number of school boards which are still struggling to understand their governance role and meet the requirements placed on them" (ERO, 1999, p. 11). Related to this study, the following questions promote a deeper investigation of issues aimed at understanding limitations in initiating capacity for school improvement. To what extent do the values and ideals that have shaped the reforms contribute to capacity building for school

improvement? To what extent do staff and parents / caregivers contribute to the process of building capacity? If boards fail to understand their responsibilities or are unable to effectively fulfil mandatory task requirements, what impact does this have on capacity building? What constitutes capacity building for improvement given the involvement of various stakeholder groups?

After 16 years of *Tomorrow's Schools*, there is general acceptance of the reforms with few calls to return to a former system of centralisation (ERO, 1999; Wylie, 1997; 1999). *Tomorrow's Schools* policies have, however, created a climate of paradoxes that appear contentious. Paradox, Sergiovanni (2006) notes, is bringing “together ideas that seem to be at odds with each other” (p. 10). In terms of capacity building for improvement, some examples of tensions involve encouragement of local decision-making but within strict legislative guidelines; high expectations in terms of school improvement yet inadequate resourcing to successfully implement new innovations and parental involvement in decision-making without thought of compromising professional autonomy (Dalin, 2005). What follows is a discussion on hidden paradoxes in the *Tomorrow's Schools* rhetoric, policy reform initiatives and financial, accountability and governance platforms linked to schools' capabilities to build capacity for improvement.

2.1.1.1 Hidden Paradoxes in the *Tomorrow's Schools* Rhetoric

Critics of *Tomorrow's Schools* policies suggest that transfer of responsibility to schools as ‘self-managing units’ is generally accompanied by a strengthening of accountability to the centre (Dalin, 2005; Robinson et al., 2005; Leithwood, 2001). Dalin (2005) states, “Developments in New Zealand are an attempt at radical decentralisation coupled with a strongly governing central role” (p. 17) and Codd (2005) continues, “over critical political areas such as the curriculum, the assessment of learning and teacher professional development” (p. 200). Retention and extension of conservative policies appear to privilege the middle class, extend managerial and prescriptive directions and enhance privatisation plans as ‘good’. This leads critics to claim that New Zealand reforms are amongst the more radical, aggressive and coherent examples to date (Dalin, 2005; Thrupp, 2001). Overzealous support of managerial ideals and values and cultures of performance produce technical rationality, external accountability and pursuit of ‘quality’, “reduced to key performance indicators, which can be measured and recorded” (Codd, 2005, p.201).

Dalin (2005) in *School Development Theories and Strategies*, identifies three dangers of decentralisation. First, although educators express satisfaction with underlying tenets of self-

governance and self-management, limited empirical evidence fails to confirm that site-based governance improves pupil performance or engenders school improvement. Second, despite devolution of authority to schools and the centre continuing to drive and support the reform agenda, schools in their pursuit of improvement disregard and / or fail to access additional government support. Third, site-based reforms tend to be focused on management and organisational change and are generally dismissive of modification to instruction. Such factors, Dalin suggests, disadvantage schools. Rae (2005) comments that they create teacher overload and excessive paperwork; principals forced into more administrative work with less time for pedagogical functions; and role complexities that have the potential to cause conflict among boards, staff and principals. Inherent tensions, Robinson et al. (2005) claim, divert vital energy away from learning, teaching and capacity building. Instead, they orientate movement towards fulfilment of managerial task requirements and invite assertions that the reforms have had, “little to do with pupils or good teaching” (Dalin, 2005, p. 19).

One recognised positive aspect of the reforms is that schools gain from having a greater say in managing their own affairs (Dalin, 2005). The argument advanced is that devolution of authority to schools leads to empowerment and a growing sense of duty to improve based on local decision-making. In reality, schools confronted with increased autonomy face management, process and outcomes related challenges not easily “achieved by *fiat*” (Dalin, 2005, p. 5) but requiring lengthy learning, adjustment, negotiation and changes in school culture (Leithwood, 2001). Indeed, the notion of ‘improvement’ has the potential to evoke broad disagreement among various stakeholder groups (Ministry, staff and parents / caregivers). With this in mind, this research maintains a focus on determining internal and external influences on capacity building for school improvement. As such, the following questions assume importance: Confronted with capacity building and reform choices, who sets the decision-making agenda? Who makes the decisions? How easy is it to define capacity building dimensions given complexities of setting and diverse aspirations of stakeholder groups?

2.1.1.2 Policy Reform Initiatives

The government has, over the last decade, initiated many policy reforms aimed at raising achievement and reducing disparity¹³. Despite much support for government initiated measures to improve schools, such policies are critiqued as compromising improvement; a challenge Honig

¹³ Refer Chapter One

and Hatch (2004) define as policy ‘incoherence’ and where Rae (2005) suggests, “diversion of the scarce energy of busy people...will only be loosely related to classroom concerns of teachers and students – and of their families” (p. 95).

According to Honig and Hatch (2004), policy reforms generally adopt one of two approaches: first generation systemic and standard-based reforms which address school improvement by initiating policy at the centre and second generation systemic reforms which focus on solutions within schools. The authors claim neither has remedied the effects of policy incoherence as each contains limited conceptualisation of what coherence means. Honig and Hatch explain that ‘outside the school in’ and ‘inside the school out’ reforms contain an essentially traditionalist view of coherence as objective outcomes. They fail to consider that:

both schools and agents outside school boundaries...have important roles to play in helping schools strategically use external demands to strengthen school performance and overlooks the political and subjective realities of implementation that makes alignment an unrealistic and unproductive goal (p. 17).

Policy coherence as process or craft is advocated by Honig and Hatch. Given current positioning of schools as nested within layers of society (Dantley, 2005), the concept defined as, “ongoing investments in the institutional capacity of schools and district central offices to engage in practices that may help schools manage multiple external demands productively” (Honig & Hatch, 2004, p. 27) is important in understanding what constitutes capacity building for school improvement. ‘Crafting coherence’, Honig and Hatch note, requires ongoing processes where schools and central agencies work together to manage external demands by:

- Schools determining their own goals and strategies that are specific and open-ended as well as adaptable and developed through organised participatory activities;
- Use of goals, strategies and central agency input as a basis for bridging and / or buffering encounters with the external environment. The position taken is that the external environment should not, “present a problem to be solved but an ongoing challenge to be managed, a potential opportunity for schools to increase necessary resources, and an important arena for organisational activity” (p. 27); and
- Schools as central players need to define what is or is not important to them. This challenges the stereotypic role of policy makers as primary decision makers, replacing them with supportive roles for schools and their decisions.

Levin (2001), on the topic of reform, identifies a variety of instruments or levers employed by governments to implement policy. He draws attention to mandates, inducements, capacity-building, system-changing and opinion mobilisation measures¹⁴. Each strategy has its uses in initiating school capacity for improvement. Each strategy also embodies distinct assumptions about implementation which can appear complementary or contradictory (Levin, 2001). Levin comments, "Mandates tend to be antithetical to capacity-building unless they are explicitly accompanied by efforts to improve capacity" (p. 154). Consultation, "as a way of building understanding, improving commitment or trying to deal with particularly difficult aspects of implementation" (p. 153) also exerts pressure to change. Consultation based on a desire to move an organisation forward can be, "a useful way to gather information and promote learning" or, in reverse, "may be simply a way of trying to defuse opposition" (p. 153). Regardless of lever used, capacity building and improvement are unlikely to be generated automatically but depend on the extent to which, and the manner in which, a programme is adopted by those it is designed to serve; that is, given their interpretation of the intervention strategies (Coburn, 2003). However this, Harris (2003) suggests, is "still not clearly understood" (p. 371) and, Raudenbush (2005) claims, needs addressing so teachers can act on policy initiatives in ways that will improve student learning.

In today's educational climate, policy implementation is increasingly placed in the hands of schools (Timperley & Robinson, 2001). Schools purchase services of outside agencies to assist them negotiate 'fit' between external demands of government and internal school goals and strategies (Honig & Hatch, 2004; Coburn, 2003). Deep and consequential change leading to capacity building requires outside agencies working with teachers on reform packages that cause a rethink of pedagogical beliefs in ways that promote effective practice. As findings from this study suggest, building individual and collective capacity is not just about altering structures and / or 'adding-on' programmes (Elmore, 1995), but making deep changes (Honig & Hatch, 2004) or, as Barth (1990) suggests, improving and developing from within. Here Coburn's (2003) ideas on 'scale' have appeal.

¹⁴ Levin (2001) notes "Mandates rely substantially on legal authority and include such measures as legislation and regulation. Inducements include strategies intended to promote attention to policy goals, often through some form of additional funding. Capacity-building rests on the belief that policy adoption requires a set of institutional skills and systems that must consciously be built and supported through means such as training. System-changing focuses on changes in structures to support particular policies. Opinion mobilisation refers to efforts by governments to change the way in which actors see the system, and thus affect its practice through non-mandatory pressure" (pp. 152-153).

Scale, Coburn suggests, is traditionally focused, “on the number of schools reached by a reform” (p. 3). This definition, however, masks, “the complex challenges of reaching out broadly while simultaneously cultivating the depth of change necessary to support and sustain consequential change” (Coburn, 2003, p. 3). Coburn argues for a multi-dimensional conceptualisation of policy reform with attention to change in classroom practice, sustainability of improvement and spread of norms and beliefs that endorse ownership and self-generation. Coburn’s conception of scale emphasises depth, sustainability, spread and shift in ownership of reform from one that is government directed to more site-based.

‘Scaling up’ reform that aims for depth, sustainability, spread and ownership creates its own tensions. For a start, the process is “likely to be resource-intensive, which may limit developers’ ability to expand as broadly” (Coburn, 2003, p. 9) and, “the more challenging a reform is to teachers’ existing beliefs and practices, or the more aspects of classroom or levels of the system it engages, the more it may need well-elaborated materials and sustained, ongoing professional development to achieve depth” (p. 9). As Coburn notes, successful transference of policy reforms depends on site-related conditions and school cultures that support, “aspects of the reform to emphasise or adapt” (p. 9).

Professional development focused on school clusters with similar needs or aspirations is one measure of ‘scaling up’ reforms to achieve spread across schools (MOE, 2004). Coburn (2003) likens this to achieving critical mass in bounded areas inclusive of numbers of teachers and schools. However, although expansion across many settings is attractive, Coburn claims “it says nothing about the nature of the change envisioned or enacted or the degree to which it is sustained, or the degree to which schools and teachers have the knowledge and authority to continue to grow the reform over time” (p.4). Points made by Coburn are important when determining processes that enhance capacity building for school improvement. In other words, how is it possible to generate capacity for school improvement from within?

Findings from the New Zealand study, *Schools Support Project Evaluation*, conducted by McCauley and Roddick (2001), suggest that effecting positive change in schools is not straightforward and a great deal is still to be learnt about processes and strategies involved. School improvement, McCauley and Roddick suggest, is complex, diverse and evolutionary and, because the needs of schools vary, support should not be conceived as a single programme with a

uniform set of short term goals. The authors agree, however, that schools are likely to share longer term goals such as improving student achievement, improving school performance and strengthening school and community links. Findings from their evaluative study identified the following positive aspects of Ministry support to schools as important in enhancing improvement: creation of learning cultures; access to a variety of support structures; establishment of positive relationships with the Ministry, other schools and the community; access to additional funds whereby environmental changes can be made; and buy-in of consultants and advisors for extra guidance and support. Findings from their study proved useful in understanding how the case school aligned its practices to promoting situated activity and connectedness, two key themes underscoring capacity building for school improvement.

2.1.1.3 Funding, Accountability and Governance

Government policies most directly involved in capacity building for school improvement are those of funding, accountability and governance. Raudenbush (2005) claims policymakers' attempts to influence teaching and learning are related indirectly to, "providing resources, increasing accountability, and transforming school governance" (p. 26). However, in terms of funding, empirical research in countries such as the United States indicates that such input has had only marginal impact on improving the quality of classroom learning (Raudenbush, 2005). Raudenbush (2005) explains, "Given the current weakness in knowledge about how best to organise, coordinate, and enact effective instruction, it is hardly surprising that simply investing in new resources would have, at best, marginal effects on student outcomes" (p. 26).

In New Zealand, state and integrated schools receive an operations grant from the Ministry of Education that is calculated on student numbers. The operations grant covers every expense, excluding teaching staff salaries. Schools are allocated further monies according to decile ranking: Targeted Funding for Educational Achievement (TFEA), Special Education Grant (SEG), Careers Information Grant (CIG) and Decile Discretionary Funding. Fundraising, school donations, foreign fee paying students and the like attract other monies. The argument purported by various authors (Codd, 2005; Hawk & Hill, 1997) suggests the current funding formula is inadequate in sustaining school improvement. Instead, they argue, it encourages interschool competition for students in educational environments best described as 'enterprise cultures' (Codd, 2005). Roll reduction leads to funding cutbacks which negatively affect staffing, resources and teacher professional development, thus impeding attempts to generate capacity for school

improvement. This 'ripple effect', Hargreaves and Fink (2006) suggest, demands better ways to construct the reform agenda.

Increasing the funding ratio is argued as one means to encourage and sustain improvement (Hawk & Hill, 1997). However, in Annan, Fa'amoe-Timoteo, Carpenter, Hucker and Warren's (2004) report, *Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara Outcomes Report July 1999-June 2002. A Three-Way Partnership to Raise Student Achievement*, new evidence suggests reconsideration of this funding / improvement debate. Two schools in the *Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara* (SEMO) project demonstrated improvement disconnected from additional government funding but related instead to strong professional and trustee leadership, effective supervision of classroom teaching and educational links between schools, staff and parents. Similar findings were reported by Earl and Lee (1998) in their eight-year evaluation of a school improvement project in Manitoba. Their findings revealed little direct relationship between additional funding and success of individual schools. Rather, funding proved a catalyst for additional pressure and support. As an alternative, Earl and Lee identify utilising a critical friend for ongoing knowledge and advice in the facilitation of school improvement. Findings from both reports seem to support Raudenbush's (2005) assertion that, "resources, by themselves, do not improve teaching and learning. Knowledge about how to use resources in instruction is the key, yet woefully lacking" (p. 26).

As noted earlier, use of public funds in education has increased accountability (Leithwood, 2001; Robinson et al., 2005). Decentralisation, that followed the launching of *Tomorrow's Schools*, shifted accountability for student learning and school improvement from government to schools (Leithwood, 2001; Codd, 2005). The ability to exercise flexibility, modify practice in line with school and community needs, democratise school systems and build capacity was heralded as promoting improvement. Yet, self-managing schools and lay governance policies, as the literature and findings from this study suggest, promote tensions that become apparent in practice.

Accountability induced tensions involve, for example, meeting ethnic diversity issues (MOE, 2004; Alton-Lee, 2003) and legislation claims for equal learning opportunities. *The National Education Goals*¹⁵ emphasise the need for equity and extends enactment of this to all New

¹⁵ Goal 1: The highest standards of achievement, through programmes which enable all students to realise their full potential as individual and to develop the values needed to become full members of New Zealand society. Goal 2: Equality of educational opportunity for all New Zealanders, by identifying and removing

Zealand schools. Section 63 of the Education Act (1989)¹⁶, now subsumed by the Education Standards Act (2001), deems every charter must contain, “the aim of developing for the school concerned policies and practices that reflect New Zealand’s cultural heritage”. Likewise, *The New Zealand Curriculum* reflects the multi-cultural nature of New Zealand society. Legislative mandates, as noted, necessitate responsiveness to cultures represented by students enrolled in schools. However, Donn and Schick’s report to the Ministry, *Promoting Positive Race Relations in New Zealand Schools: Me Mahi Tahi Tatou* (1995), suggest this may not always be acknowledged by schools. ERO (2000), in response, suggest that terms contained in the goals (such as ‘values’, ‘barriers to achievement’ and ‘respect’) are nebulous, making it difficult for schools to tell if targets set have been achieved. Furthermore, as outcomes differ according to the nature of individual schools and while flexibility is desirable, practical guidance on implementation of goals is required, but lacking (ERO, 2000). A further tension ERO raises concerns respecting ethnic diversity while simultaneously acknowledging the place of Maori. The tension this creates is between the bi-cultural partnership as established in the Treaty of Waitangi and the multicultural make up of society. Without explicit guidelines, schools are left to resolve these issues for themselves (ERO, 2000). Although government policy expects schools to attend to cultural diversity, without immediate practical assistance complex issues of diversity add to the limitations faced when building capacity for school improvement.

ERO (2000) suggest problems of multiculturalism go beyond culture. Multicultural schools are generally located in poorer socio-economic areas and find it harder to get parents involved in supporting students learning. The quality of governance, management and curriculum delivery may also be lower than in high decile schools. Potential governance and management issues that result include:

- Tensions between the need to maintain solidarity with rules and expectations that apply to all and the need to acknowledge specific cultural values;
- Parental pressure brought to bear if policies and procedures favour a particular group;
- Curriculum demands that determine what is possible;

barriers to achievement. Goal 10: Respect for the diverse ethnic and cultural heritage of New Zealand, with acknowledgement of the unique place of Maori, and New Zealand’s role in the Pacific and as a member of the international community of nations (cited in ERO, 2000).

¹⁶ Changes to the Education Act (1989) through the passing of the Education Standards Act (2001) confirms that the national administration guidelines will continue to provide direction for issues that schools should consider when planning. In addition to statements of mission and school values, school charters are required to have a section that sets out the school’s strategic plan. This includes: goals for improved student achievement (3-5 years); an annually updated part that sets out the school’s improvement targets for the current year; and planned activities the school plans to achieve its strategic goals.

- Centralised curriculum demands constraining cultural recognition of needs;
- Teachers not well prepared to deal with multicultural issues;
- Increasing difficulty finding and retaining teachers with relevant language skills;
- Diversity as a source of conflict among the students themselves; and
- Difficulty obtaining resources for teaching (ERO, 2000).

Meeting accountability demands is not just limited to issues of cultural diversity. In the years that have followed *Tomorrow's Schools*, a number of criticisms and challenges related to board performance in governance have emerged. The 1996 ERO report on schooling in Mangere and Otara attributed performance failure of schools to poor governance and management and weak or failed teaching provisions. Criticisms were directed at trustees' inability to understand and undertake their financial and decision-making roles effectively and at principals assuming more than their fair share of work with less assistance than was originally intended by legislation.

The third and final ministerial evaluation report on SEMO, by Robinson et al. (2005), confirmed board ineffectiveness to three 'big' ideas. First, participants considered 'governance' a highly formalised activity where conformity to school-based and national policy requirements and guidelines was considered essential (Robinson et al., 2005). Emphasis on formal positions and role demarcation did not imply shared understanding of role requirements. Indeed, the researchers witnessed conflicting viewpoints related to particular governance tasks. Commonly agreed board views identified 'good' governance with compliance to standardised ways of operating (Robinson et al., 2005) as opposed to critical inquiry of practice.

Second, good governance was understood as acting in accord with internalised understandings of what counts as good practice. However, the report indicates that trustees:

have little, if any, first hand experience of the tasks and activities which they are governing ...they struggled to explain how boards should monitor student achievement and how principal's appraisal should be conducted. Without direct experience of these activities, they are forced to rely on conceptions of good practice grounded in procedural rules rather than in their own experience of the activities (Robinson et al., 2005, p. 19).

Third, conceptions of good governance were concerned with quality of relationships and communication. The report suggested that governance was an interpersonal activity where staff appreciation and minimisation of conflict underpinned action. The data revealed, "that such

cordiality may come at the price of mutual accountability, challenge and capacity building. It was rare for interviewees to use any of these criteria to judge the quality of communications and relationships” (Robinson et al., 2005, p. 19).

In terms of board accountability, Robinson et al. (2005) claim that lay governance appears neither educational nor democratically beneficial. Furthermore, there appears to be little effect on teaching, learning and achievement. The absence of educational discourse in governance was a noted area of concern. While trustees acknowledged that they represented local community interests, they did not articulate this nor were such interests related to governance. Possible explanations were trustees’ limited educational knowledge, difficulty in appreciating or serving local community needs and absence of legislative information to help them understand the democratic nature of their roles and responsibilities. Swamped with legislative task requirements, the authors note that there appears neither time nor inclination for trustees to pursue educational purpose or engage in dialogue pertaining to learning or teaching. Such tensions have implications for capacity building for school improvement. It may be safe to assume that overtly managerialist tendencies and limited knowledge of school systems limits trustees’ involvement in capacity building activities that promote school improvement. Further, that *Tomorrow’s Schools* has fostered school-based bureaucracies with limited scope for authentic school-community partnerships and articulation of ‘multiple’ voice in school governance. Implications for school stakeholders focus on ensuring democratic, participatory practices in the building of capacity for school improvement.

2.1.1.4 Summary

Capacity building for school improvement is situated in context. Any research on the topic needs to be mindful of the impact layers of tensions and hidden paradoxes have on schools. The self-managing rhetoric and policy reform initiatives, when deconstructed, present both limitations and opportunities for stakeholders’ intent on building capacity for school improvement. The situation invokes a need to think past site-based aspects of capacity building to incorporate wider political, cultural and socio-economic frames of reference. Deconstructing ‘school improvement’ and ‘capacity building’ within situatedness of context is vital to achieve a more authentic take on the concept. In this study, tensions associated with funding, parent / caregiver involvement, accountability and compliance, low decile socio-economic factors and multi-ethnic issues emerge as influential determinants on capacity building for school improvement. Data suggests they determine both nature and scope of capacity building linked to improvement.

2.1.2 School Improvement

School improvement, for the purposes of this inquiry, is discussed in terms of underpinning ideological and pedagogical assumptions related to student achievement. In accordance with *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993) and curriculum documents, achievement is defined as social, academic and cognitive / intellectual growth and development of students.

School improvement is a constantly evolving concept. Potter, Reynolds and Chapman (2002) observe that, over the last 15 years, defining elements of school improvement and corresponding calls for action have changed. The late 1970s to early 1980s, exemplified by the OECD's *International School Improvement Project* (ISIP), (Hopkins, 1987), defined school improvement as, "systematic, sustained effort aimed at change in learning conditions and other related internal conditions in one or more schools, with the ultimate aim of accomplishing educational goals more effectively" (van Valzen et al., 1985, p. 48). Although careful planning, management and implementation were emphasised, many initiatives of the period were, "free floating, rather than representing a systematic, programmatic and coherent approach to school change" (Potter, Reynolds & Chapman, 2002, p. 244). Organisational change, school self-evaluation and stakeholder 'buy-in' (Fullan, 1991) were loosely connected to student learning outcomes (Potter, Reynolds & Chapman, 2002) and had little impact on classroom practice (Reynolds, 1999; Hopkins, 2001).

The early 1990s heralded support for a merged school improvement and effectiveness perspective (Reynolds, Hopkins & Stoll, 1993). School effectiveness was said to contribute value-added methodologies for judging and explaining 'what works' to raise student achievement (Teddle & Reynolds, 2000). School improvement was defined as a, "distinct approach to educational change that enhances student achievement as well as strengthening the school's capacity for managing change seriously" (Hopkins, Ainscow & West 1994, p. 3). In an era of burgeoning decentralisation, inclusion of the term 'capacity' called for: self-management, 'taking charge' of change, developing ownership, setting own directions and adapting mandates to fit organisational vision. In reality, Barth (1990) notes, such points proved unconvincing. They presented an oversimplified picture of school improvement which, Hopkins et al. (1998) observe, "tells us little about how one affects the other" (p. 116).

Over the last five or six years, researchers have relied on findings from large scale projects as: *Improving the Quality of Education for All* (IQEA) in England, *The Manitoba School Improvement* (MSIP) in Canada and *Success For All* (SFA) in the United States, to define improvement. The IQEA project is grounded in the belief that schools are most likely to enhance outcomes for students when work is conducted in ways that are consistent with their own aspirations as a community and within the current reform agenda (West, Jackson, Harris & Hopkins, 2000). West et al. (2000) claim five principles underpin the IQEA project:

- School improvement focuses on enhancing the quality of students' learning;
- School vision has to embrace all members as learners and contributors;
- Schools have to develop structures that engender collaboration and empowerment;
- All school staff need to promote enquiry and monitor and evaluate quality; and
- Schools need to be able to see that in external pressures for change, important opportunities to secure internal priorities exist.

The IQEA project emphasises change at all levels of the organisation with positive flow on effects to the classroom. Its framework provides teachers with opportunities to share 'good' practice and trial new pedagogical approaches (Harris, 2003). Improving internal school conditions is said to lead to development of internal capacity for change through staff development, leadership, collaborative planning, school wide co-ordination of activities and on-going enquiry and reflection (Hopkins et al., 1998).

The *Manitoba School Improvement Programme* (MSIP) was funded by the Walter and Duncan Gordon Foundation. Schools with 'at risk' students were invited to participate in this study. Funding preferences were given to schools demonstrating a commitment to building learning communities with other schools and the community. Schools were expected to work on individually constructed plans for improvement with support from allocated funds. To establish professional learning communities, schools were provided with professional development, release time and some professional resources. An evaluation of this project suggested little direct relationship between funding and success of individual schools. Rather, funds appeared a catalyst for pressure (planning, implementation and accountability) and support (personnel, support activities and relationships) (Earl & Lee, 1998).

Success for All (SFA) is built around assumptions that every child can read. The SFA programme involves a number of key requirements. The first focuses on prevention which equates to,

“providing excellent pre-school and kindergarten programmes, improving curriculum, instruction and classroom management...assessing students frequently...and establishing co-operative relationships with parents” (Harris, 2003, p. 374). The second concerns provision of early intervention which means not only buy-in to a prescribed curriculum and instructional framework but also systems for monitoring progress. Parents are considered important team members in supporting student learning. The third demands a strong commitment to the programme by participating schools. This equates to provision of organisational support, preparation time for teachers to work together and restructuring time, resources and responsibilities to aspects of programme development considered essential. Findings from the SFA study reveal that all three aspects prove important in creating professional learning communities.

IQEA, MSIP and SFA projects maintain a focus on what happens in classrooms and the importance of learning. The emphasis is on specific learning outcomes rather than general learning goals. Within each project there is clear articulation of an instructional framework that guides developmental activity and this provides teachers with a shared pedagogical focus to try new strategies and share new experiences. In all three projects, teacher professional development and professional learning communities are given high priority. The importance of reflection is emphasised. Providing teachers with opportunities to work together and enquire into pedagogical practice is seen to foster positive collegial relationships, promote shared values, norms and agreed goals and build group trust and respect. Underlying principles and practices from all three projects prove particularly relevant for this study. Indeed, findings from this study confirm aforementioned principles and practices establish and sustain a sound capacity base for ongoing improvement.

A review of contemporary New Zealand research also confirms a focus on organisational and pedagogical change to advance school improvement. For example, Timperley, Robinson and Bullard, in *Strengthening Education in Mangere and Otara: First Evaluation Report* (1999), recommend a shift from ‘over collecting’ student achievement data to analysis aligned with the national curriculum exemplars. Robinson (2000) notes that the connection between poor academic achievement of many students in Mangere and Otara is related to gaps in teacher pedagogy and curriculum knowledge, success or failure of measurements used to gauge progress, issues of power and control and preservation of student self-esteem. Timperley and Robinson (2001) suggest that challenging and changing teacher mindsets and their curriculum and pedagogical knowledge has a direct affect on raising student expectations. These authors contend

that when schools stop blaming parents and children for low academic achievement and focus instead on their own internal conditions, attainment levels of students start to rise. They also suggest that external agents play an important role in changing teacher beliefs and practices. External change agents were seen to motivate teachers to experiment in more effective strategies to improve practice.

Contemporary research suggests school improvement is harder to achieve in low decile settings because of socio-economic challenges. Hawk and Hill, in the three reports attached to their *Achievement in Multi Cultural High Schools* (AIMHI) study (1996; 1998; 2000), confirm direct relationships between low socio-economic status schools and student achievement (as defined by retention and external examination results). They claim, external influences make schools powerless to affect change. In a paper presented at the NZARE conference, Hawk and Hill (1997) note, “It is not as simple as saying that, if there is a good leadership and governance, student achievement will follow. This view trivialises the seriousness and magnitude of the external issues which directly impact on the performance of the students and the schools” (p.3).

Low socio-economic location factors identified by Hawk and Hill (1997) as: “low incomes, high unemployment or high over-employment, large families, dysfunctional families, poor housing, overcrowding, poor health, lack of private space and lack of furnishings and household equipment” (p. 4) are said to create a wide range of learning, health, social, economic and welfare needs. At the time Hill and Hawk’s report was published, certain government policies were also considered detrimental to improving student learning opportunities. Such policies related to staffing, funding, zoning, school competitiveness, abandonment of contestable and short term funding, teacher shortage, ERO review processes, publication of negative review reports and nature and type of school leaving qualifications. Although there have been changes to government policies and ERO’s review and reporting processes, it can be still argued that low socio-economic factors and government policy have profound implications on low-decile schools’ capacity to improve learning opportunities for students.

Defining school improvement in lieu of such complexities is challenging (McCauley & Roddick, 2001) and, as Harris and Young (2000) note, the ‘black box’ of school improvement means poor knowledge is available about how effective and / or improving schools came to be that way. Thrupp and Willmott (2003, p.93) contend that the school improvement literature considers, “problems and solutions essentially the same regardless of their social setting”. Judiciously, the

question Mitchell, Cameron and Wylie (2002) raise, 'What does school improvement look like to those who support schools or implement policy?' is of particular relevance to this study.

In the New Zealand study *Sustaining school improvement: Ten primary school's journeys* (2002), Mitchell, Cameron and Wylie identify three underlying approaches to improvement. First, school improvement as 'development' adopts an institutional perspective generated by those in schools within local contexts of values, relationships and national and international frameworks. Improvement is defined as a continuous and evolving process, 'the way things are around here' (Mitchell et al., 2002). Schools are described as 'learning communities' with active stakeholder engagement in learning and problem-solving.

Second, school improvement as lifting performance is endorsed mainly by the Ministry of Education and Treasury officials (Mitchell et al., 2002). Government assistance is linked to policy interventions in support of change and safety net assistance for individual, 'at risk' schools unable to meet their legal obligations; a 'more serious intervention'. The role of school culture, values and ownership of needs analysis and goals continues to be emphasised as fundamental to any change attempts.

Improvement through external incentives (Mitchell et al., 2002), the final approach, emphasises meeting national or international academic standards within a competitive setting. In today's climate, this discourse appears unavoidable; part of the educational landscape schools and school leaders confront daily.

Although no one definition aptly captures school improvement, McCauley and Roddick (2001), in *An Evaluation of Schools Support*, identify the following as success factors:

- Identification of shared goals and strategies based on a thorough needs analysis and ongoing development and renewal cycle;
- Establishment of external connections for expertise and guidance;
- Development of strong school-wide leadership;
- Expansion of teachers' knowledge in and use of student achievement data; and
- Ensuring change occurs at multiple levels within a school.

Harris and Young (2000) distinguish the following as crucial to success:

- Internal and external agency input;

- A focus on specifics and not general teaching and learning goals;
- Devolved leadership; and
- Formative and summative evaluation that is data driven.

Regardless of definition, school improvement is complex. The quote from Annan et al.'s report to the Ministry on strengthening education in Mangere and Otara (2004) captures the situation best: "A one-size fits all approach to schooling improvement is not going to cater for the development needs of all schools" (p.36).

2.1.3 Capacity Building

Fink (1999) in *Deadwood Didn't Kill Itself* suggests that schools with capacity to grow must not only know how to solve problems but also how to identify problems and avoid complacency. Stoll, Bolman, McMahon, Wallace and Thomas (2006) suggest successful educational reform depends on teachers' individual and collective capacity alongside school capacity to promote student learning. Stoll et al. (2006) describe capacity as a "complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organisational conditions and culture, and infrastructure of support...(that) gives individuals, groups, whole school communities and school systems the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time" (p. 221). Hopkins et al. (1998) define capacity as 'enabling conditions' that allow 'process' to affect 'product'. Enabling conditions include staff development, enquiry and reflection on progress, involvement of students in the teaching and learning process, distributed leadership, collaborative planning and co-ordinated school-wide activity that establishes coherence. Despite such definitions, Hadfield, Chapman, Curryer and Barrett (2004) suggest many practitioners consider 'capacity' and 'capacity building' foreign terms. Furthermore, researchers are only just starting to query: What important competencies, abilities and attitudes better manage and sustain improvement? What is the school's current potential to improve?

Capacity implies a deeper understanding of school change, more than, "just translating school level characteristics into 'doing words'" (Hopkins et al., 1998, p. 117). Capacity, Maden (2001) suggests, "is the single most important matter in trying to identify how and why some schools maintain and sustain improvement" (p. 320). Fullan (2005) describes the concept as, "developing the collective ability – dispositions, skills, knowledge, motivation, and resources – to act together to bring about positive change" (p. 4). Stoll et al. (2006) suggest the concept links best to sustainable school improvement achieved in professional learning communities. Professional

learning communities, they define as a group of people sharing and evaluating practice in ongoing, reflective, collaborative, inclusive and learning-oriented ways.

An expanded perspective of school capacity building, as advanced by Goodman, Baron and Myers (2005), relates to building community capacity. Based on empowerment or enhancement theory, these authors advocate that people (parents/caregivers) can change conditions provided they have access to appropriate knowledge. In other words, partnerships with families enhance student and school improvement. Gold et al. (2005) note parent communities with self-efficacy are better able to combat the demands placed on them by those in positions of power. They claim that parents' / caregivers' community capacity adds value and sustains vision and momentum for change over time. Community capacity creates political will that motivates officials to take action. In an era of decentralisation, such arguments hold appeal. They are equally applicable to low decile schools where families, "continue to be characterised as lacking in the skills and values necessary to support their children's education" (Gold et al., pp. 238-239). Research in this area of community capacity is, however, limited and what is available pursues a narrow conception of parental involvement in, for example, voluntary assistance in schools (Driscoll & Goldring, 2005).

Any inquiry into capacity building must consider factors that serve as limitations. Hadfield et al. in *Building Capacity. Developing your School* (2004) identify the following:

- Improvement policies with unrealistic expectations and pressures that damage chances of sustaining improvement by not managing the external environment;
 - Inability to sustain individual development over longer periods;
 - Lack of a common language around teaching and learning; and
 - Challenges surrounding traditional notions of leadership versus delegated responsibilities.
- Findings from Hadfield et al.'s study suggest that leadership which is less hierarchical and traditional is more suited to building capacity.

Capacity building is difficult to conceptualise due to uniqueness of setting. That it is a slow process, embedded in context and with an ever present fragility is not in doubt, especially if processes that account for its construction are ill-conceived. From the literature reviewed, it is possible to suggest that external and internal determinants affect its construction. Findings from this study suggest that capacity building for school improvement is a response to meeting

individual, collective and systemic needs in ways that maintain equilibrium while advancing in the direction of improvement. The concept is time and context specific.

2.2 Part Two: Leadership, Culture, Vision and Professional Development

In Part Two, the focus shifts to internal school factors that influence capacity building for school improvement. The decision to review the literature on leadership, school culture, vision and professional development was made on the basis that these themes are advanced as underpinning school improvement. Information on each is profuse. Management of such copious quantities of information meant scouring the literature for relevant material aligned to the aims of this study and context specificities of this school's location.

2.2.1 Leadership

Literature linking effective leadership to school improvement is profuse (see for example, West et al., 2000 & Fullan, 2002). King and Youngs (2000, cited in Fullan, 2002) claim school capacity is the crucial variable affecting instructional quality and corresponding student achievement and, at the core of capacity building, are principals focused on the development of teachers' knowledge and skills, developing professional communities, initiating programme coherence and building technical resources. Leadership in raising achievement and reducing disparity is emphasised by the Ministry of Education. Howard Fancy, in his speech to the New Zealand Educational Administration and Leadership Society conference (2006), emphasised the critical role leaders play in: ensuring success (individual and collective); developing effective partnerships among iwi, Pasifika communities, families and parents; developing effective teaching strategies; adopting broader views of quality and outcomes; utilising modern communication technologies to engender effective practice; emphasising needs based learning pathways; and analysing and utilising information to improve student outcomes.

In the past twenty years, the picture of leadership has changed. Re-modelling of schools in terms of governance and management and their subsequent positioning in complex, diverse, accountability and compliance-driven contexts has created a plethora of alternative and competing leadership constructs (West et al., 2000). Sergiovanni (2006) compares this to a, "concept boutique on the one hand and metaphoric repository on the other" (p. 2). Some models claim leaders, "establish a clear and consistent vision" (Sammons, Thomas & Mortimer, 1997, p.199) while others suggest leadership is 'increasingly managerialist' (Slee, Weiner & Tomlinson, 1998), or 'leading professional' (Pollard, Broadfoot, Croll, Osborn & Abbott, 1994)

and 'transformational' (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1990; 1999; Fullan, 1992). Sergiovanni's (2006) 'one's heart, head and hand' metaphor adds a moral, purpose-driven dimension to the mix. Moral leadership, Dantley (2005) notes, "takes seriously students' academic achievement, demands a deep investment of the school leader's genuine or authentic self, and dares to ask the hard questions regarding the purposes of schools and who are most ably served by them" (p. 35).

In critique of such models, Bush and Glover (2003) claim many lack empirical support and contain imposed artificial distinctiveness. Thrupp and Willmott (2003) suggest a more critical focus on leadership is needed as most models are, "frustratingly free floating ... (with) little discussion of the broader social context" (p. 165). Leithwood (2001) affirms they do not cover the full repertoire of what leaders are expected to do. He encourages a deeper exploration of leadership in context. Indeed, Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) claim that the introduction of site-based management has placed considerable public pressure on schools, teachers and leaders to perform. Furthermore, accountability for and auditing of performance together with testing and national examinations has resulted in increased managerialism whereby the drive for efficiency, effectiveness and productivity has witnessed the emergence of new leadership roles and responsibilities. Re-distribution of leadership, for example, has led to, "the net effect of restructuring leadership and creating additional albeit complex levels for securing commitment to organisational purposes" (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006, p.44).

Yet another perspective on leadership is provided by Leithwood (2001) who links the concept to government approaches of accountability – markets, decentralisation, professionalisation and management. Market approaches, he notes, assumes of leaders skills in marketing their schools, developing good 'customer' relationships and monitoring 'customer' satisfaction. Decentralisation requires leaders to empower others. Leaders are expected to be team players and encourage participatory decision-making in construction of 'better' decisions. Professional approaches demand of leaders an ability to stay abreast of 'best' practices and assist staff in identifying professional standards to improve work outputs. School leaders are expected to take the lead in setting expectations, creating conditions for professional learning, monitoring progress of staff in achieving professional standards, acting as buffer against environmental distractions and keeping parents updated on professional expectations. Management approaches demand of leaders abilities to collect, interpret and utilise data to improve outcomes.

Given today's political, cultural and socio-economic climate and the need to continuously engage in capacity building for school improvement activities, what roles and responsibilities are leaders expected to fulfil? Indeed, how is the concept of leadership defined in the current education milieu? How do the many situational tensions and dilemmas determine its nature and type? For the purposes of this research, a review on leadership was conducted on four main themes: leadership and management, transformational and post-transformational paradigms, distributed leadership and leadership in the development of professional learning communities.

2.2.1.1 Leadership and Management

When confronted with change and challenges of building capacity for school improvement, two issues confront school leaders. The first is articulated by Davies (2001, p. 196) as, "The "urgent" agenda imposed on heads and increasing accountability demands for managerial responses". The second is articulated by Day (2000, p. 56) as, "essentially building and maintaining a sense of vision, culture and interpersonal relationships". As witnessed in the case study school, this dichotomy between leadership and management is played out on a daily basis. It creates tension between compliance related behaviours and performance that concern inquiry into process. Excessive pressure on schools to be accountable, raise achievement, reduce disparity and coordinate and monitor organisational activities is seen to create tensions between system management and leadership that emphasises vision and its implementation. In terms of capacity building for school improvement, how might leaders maintain systemic productivity that deals effectively with management obligations and pedagogical support and purpose fulfilment? How is it possible to shape and structure roles and responsibilities of school stakeholders, as leaders, to build capacity for improvement?

To manage administrative demands and workload complexities, Hallinger and Snidvongs (2005) suggest transference of principles and practices of business to education. These authors suggest that such transference helps increase, "productivity of educational systems" and "the capacity of schools to implement educational reforms" (p.2). In other words, business principles could offer a way to increase administrative efficiency. In today's reality, any useful definition of leadership necessitates a closer inquiry of leadership and management in practice. The position taken in this review, and endorsed by this study's findings, confirms Leithwood and Jantzi's (1999) stance; that is, leadership and management are both crucial in achieving systemic stability and sustaining the drive for continuous improvement.

Dalin (2005) draws attention to the following principals' administrative duties as crucial in maintaining organisational stability and sustaining improvement: "planning, decision-making, coordination, guidance, development of an institutional culture, and communication between individuals and groups" (p. 71). Such administrative functions, Dalin explains, are necessary to achieve school objectives. They involve monitoring and ensuring observance to rules and policies, setting budgets, raising routine efficiency and creating infrastructures of support that promote collective decision making and responsible action. Management, part of a systems orientated approach, is also advocated by Senge (1990) in creation of advantageous networks of support and task accomplishment. In a knowledge economy, Hallinger and Snidvongs hallmark the following management attributes and skills as important: project management, decision-making, customer relationship management, quality management and strategic management.

Arguments in favour of leadership and management (see for example, Hallinger and Snidvongs (2005); Dalin (2005); and Senge (1990)) make sense in an environment where workload pressures on principals and teachers are rapidly increasing and causing stress. The workload study on primary teachers conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) in collaboration with the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) reported that principals on average worked 58 hours each week with no statistically significant difference between teaching and non-teaching principals (ACER, 2005). Increasing workloads were attributed to pace and frequency of change, legislative demands, added 'paperwork', frequency of meetings, and provision and timing of professional development.

Aligned to managing increasing workloads and sustaining the impetus for capacity building and school improvement, artificially imposed boundaries around leadership and management prove ineffective. Management roles and responsibilities, for example, require buy-in to certain ways of working that express values and beliefs. Enacted in practice, management can be viewed as a form of leadership. Constructing strategic plans, for example, requires both management and leadership skills to achieve successful outcomes (Hill, Hawk & Taylor, 2001). Strategic plans, as data driven, rational, future focused, achievement orientated documents (Bryson, 1995), require not only objective creation of goals and action in response, but transformational agency to embed values and beliefs of stakeholders. Both leadership and management skills are required in, for example, assessing the school's current position relative to its environment, summarising strengths and weaknesses in human and financial terms, reviewing organisational aims against strategic audits, formulating objectives, and prioritising and developing long-term and annual

plans that meet organisational aims (ibid.). The line that separates leadership from management is increasingly blurred in a task orientated environment and, while leadership is something more than management, management skills are essential in meeting legal obligations and organisational stability. Such reasoning makes the ‘colonised’ label attached to leadership by management – suggested by Thrupp and Willmott (2003) – harsh, given today’s legislative demands. In many ways, capacity building for improvement requires of leaders management skills to cope with a work environment that is administratively more demanding. Although the role of ‘leader’ or ‘manager’ continues to be debated and redefined through job descriptions, the act of transforming organisations to promote student learning remains high priority.

2.2.1.2 Transformational Leadership and Post-transformational Paradigms

Leaders have a deeper influence on the organisation beyond maintaining standards and accomplishing managerial tasks. To generate capacity for school improvement, many authors claim that leadership of the kind that works with people and teams is needed (Fullan, 2002). West et al. (2000) argue that the kind of leadership needed to bring about cultural change is that of transformational leadership. The transformational leadership model fits well within the school improvement tradition because the focus is on people, their relationships and transformation of feelings, attitudes and beliefs. Northouse (2004) defines transformational leadership as:

concerned with emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals, and includes assessing followers’ motives, satisfying their needs, and treating them as full human beings. Transformational leadership involves an exceptional form of influence that moves followers to accomplish more than what is usually expected of them. It is a process that often incorporates charismatic and visionary leadership (p. 169).

Transformational leadership models are open to critique. According to Northouse (2004), “a tendency to see transformational leaders as individuals who have special qualities that *transform* others ...accentuates a trait characterisation of transformational leadership” (p. 186 italic in the original). West et al. (2000) argue the model does not capture the dynamic nature of leadership in schools and is unsustainable over a longer period. The model is also regarded as elitist, antidemocratic and suffering from hero biases, criticised for its failure to acknowledge collective group activity, distributed leadership and community involvement. Ethical issues, frequently raised, surmount to who determines if the new directions are ‘good’? Who decides if the leader’s values are better than those of the followers? In an attempt to address such queries, Fullan (2002),

Sergiovanni (2006), Dantley (2005) and West et al. (2000) advocate expansion to the original transformational model to encompass 'post-transformational' frames of reference.

Based on their work with consistently improving schools in the IQEA Project, West et al. (2000) note post-transformational leadership assumes a dispersed leadership model with built-in 'opportunistic' and 'intrapreneurial' characteristics. Underpinning leadership action are values and focus on purpose. The emphasis is on individual initiative informed by common purpose. Coaching and mentoring practices represent significant aspects of leadership. Leaders, operating within this frame, tend to have a wider social repertoire which encourages openness and building of relationships whilst wrestling with ambiguity. They enforce 'values leadership'; the building of consensus around higher order values which everyone can relate to and believe in. Leadership of this kind encourages 'active participation' or 'active democracy' at all levels (West et al., 2000) and a 'learning to study learning' mentality which leads to development of schools as learning systems. The following nine propositions, noted by West et al. (2000) as underscoring post-transformational leadership, proved useful in considering the types of leadership activities stakeholders perform in building capacity for school improvement:

- A focus on creation and expansion of improvement capacity which supports continuous organisation and professional renewal;
- Shared values and beliefs that form the basis of all activity;
- Leadership that challenges traditional barriers to school improvement;
- Focused attention on building leadership capacity in others;
- 'Giving away' leadership and coaching others to be successful leaders;
- Reconceptualising professional learning to ensure pedagogical and leadership density;
- Evolving leadership repertoires and styles to fit the organisation's changing status;
- Operation in coaching activities, cultural transmission and values articulation; and
- Encouraging students as co-leaders in the drive for school improvement.

Within the range of post-transformational models, leadership that is moral and purpose driven appears to be drawing a following. Fullan (2002) defines moral purpose as social responsibility to others and the environment. Reporting on a 1998 study commissioned by the National Association of Headteachers, Day (2000) notes successful heads in schools were: values led, people centred, achievement oriented, inward and outward facing and able to manage a number of ongoing tensions and dilemmas. These leaders valued and demonstrated care, equity, high expectations and achievement. Day notes that successful leaders not only set directions and

organised, monitored and built relationships, but also modelled values and practices consistent with purpose. They demonstrated moral, purpose driven leadership as a way of life. The key to understanding the nature and function of moral, purpose driven leadership is provided by Sergiovanni (2006) as inclusive of the following eight management competencies: attention, meaning, trust, self, paradox, effectiveness, follow-up and responsibility.

Management of attention is a focus on values, beliefs, goals and purposes that brings people together and justifies what matters. It concerns enactment of vision, “the covenant that the school shares” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p.9). The ability to commit others (stakeholders) to school values, purposes and vision is considered management of meaning. Leaders connect others to ‘the way things are done around here’ (Deal and Kennedy, 1982; 1983). Management of trust is a leader’s, “ability to be viewed as credible, legitimate and honest” (Sergiovanni, 2006, p. 9). Codd (2005) notes, “restoration of a culture of trust in education requires a form of accountability...that recognises the ethical obligation on the part of professionals to offer an account of (or justification for) their actions” (p. 203). Trust is the key in developing social capital (Sergiovanni, 2006) and Southworth (2004) suggests schools with high levels of social capital depict high levels of trust and strong collaborative networks. Management competencies are seen to increase self-efficacy; belief in oneself to defend one’s beliefs in times of adversity. In an era of competing values, vision and advancement of the common good forms the basis of management of paradox. Management of effectiveness is focused on values as benchmarks for gauging success, while management of responsibility are steps taken to ensure that success is achieved. Sergiovanni concludes that all eight management competencies, once mastered, sustain leadership with moral purpose.

Moral, purpose driven leadership places values and value debates at the centre of all activity. In an increasingly managerialist climate, values of efficiency and effectiveness are consistently juxtaposed with those of a contextualised school / community perspective characterised by cooperation and consensus (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2006). The contestation that results serves to illuminate issues and dilemmas leaders face when making moral and ethical decisions. Indeed, authors such as Furman and Shields (2005) suggest moral leadership is needed to drive social justice. Social justice, they claim, provides a map that steers the way to achieving a democratic community. It means adopting an ethical stance with, “absolute regard for individuals, their communities, and their cultural traditions and for processes of open dialogue and critique” (p. 129). Lindsey, Roberts and CampbellJones (2005) suggest the concern of leaders must always be

on honouring, “the differences among cultures, viewing diversity as a benefit, and interacting knowledgeably and respectfully among a variety of cultural groups” (p. xviii). Capacity building for improvement in pluralistic societies demands consideration of different value sets. In this respect, Shields and Sayani (2005) argue for “a more robust way of thinking about (and doing) *educational leadership in contexts of diversity*” (p. 385 italics in the original). While various aspects of post-transformational models, for example, are appealing, they do not fully address complexities of meeting diversity and / or the heavy work demands leaders face on a daily basis. For this reason, in today’s educational climate, the latest catch cry of distributed leadership attracts attention.

2.2.1.3 Distributed Leadership

Calls for democratic workplaces, self-managing schools, ‘professional learning communities’ and capacity building (West-Burpham, 2004; Fullan, 2002) have heightened interest in distributed leadership practices. As Barth (1990) claims, “It is impossible for one person to run an institution as complex as a public school. The person who attempts to do it all may get some measure of control and uniformity but pays for these successes with ineffectiveness and exhaustion” (p. 60).

Leader-centrism (subordination of teacher-follower roles), heroic forms of leadership and anti leadership arguments have spurred movement towards leadership substitutes and shared or distributed practice (Gronn, 2002). Indeed, Mulford, Silins and Andrew (2003), in their study on organisational learning, suggest traditional transformational models create change initially but this eventually leads to dependency, mediocrity or failure. Further, traditional practices do not address the social component of contemporary workplaces where, “individuals and groups decide, on the basis of their values and interests, the preferred arrangement or configuration of tasks” (p. 427). Leadership in today’s complex environment requires the efforts of, “many rather than the few” (Harris and Lambert, 2003, p. 4) to create change. The concern is less with control and more on support and capacity building.

Distributed leadership is grounded in sociocultural and socio cognitive frameworks (Prestine & Nelson, 2005). Gronn (2002), a strong proponent of distributed leadership, situates his argument within a ‘division of labour’ paradigm. Division of labour is, “the totality of the tasks, and the technology capability (i.e., tools and knowledge) for the completion of those tasks by workers” debated within contexts of “new tasks and new task requirements and ... adoption of new technologies” (Gronn, 2002, p. 426). Multiple aggregated activity (group action) and concertive

action, a result of conjoint agency, attest to new ways of working in contemporary work settings. Three forms of distributed practice are highlighted by Gronn: spontaneous collaboration where two or three people team up, pool their resources, solve problems and disband; intuitive working relationships where two or more individuals rely on each other for task completion in a shared role space; and institutionalised traditions where designed, adapted or mandated structures 'regularise' informal sharing of practice. All three involve collective task accomplishment but the third results in distributed leadership.

Distributed leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of individuals (Gronn, 2000), offers a contrast to traditional, hierarchical practices (Harris, 2004). Harris (2004) notes the principal's responsibility here, "is primarily to hold the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship...maximising the human capacity within the organisation" (p. 14). Harris (2004) adds that although such leadership is likely "to contribute to school improvement and build internal capacity for development" (p.13), empirical research, in support, is missing.

Two studies that do attest to the benefits of distributed leadership as part of successful leadership in school improvement are the 1999 National Association of Headteachers' (NAHT) research which demonstrated that successful heads led both the cognitive and affective lives of the school by combining structural, political, educational and symbolic leadership principles with distributed practice (Harris, 2004), and the 2001 National College for School Leadership (NCSL) research conducted in schools experiencing challenging circumstances. The latter study found that low socio-economic schools that exhibited distributed, less directive and transformational practices were more successful in initiating improvement (Muijs and Harris, 2003). Further, teacher 'buy-in', collective involvement and consultation were also transformational and distributed. Both studies emphasise less concern with the individual and more on development of collective leadership to build capacity for improvement.

Distributed practice paves the way for a discussion on teacher leadership and the impact this has on capacity building for school improvement. As Harris (2004) notes, "distributed leadership is characterised as a form of collective leadership in which teachers develop expertise by working together" (p. 14). York-Barr and Duke (2004) suggest teacher leadership encourages shared practice because it is embedded in the language and practice of educational improvement. In daily life, teachers are seen as core players in all school activities. Teacher leadership is of pragmatic value in that excessive administration demands and completion of complex tasks becomes

manageable (Harris, 2004). Hattie (2003), for example, suggests that teachers' accountability, in raising achievement, ensures greater sharing of responsibility in improving teaching and learning.

York-Barr and Duke (2004) recount the many benefits of teacher leadership as: involvement in decision making, new learning, increased self-efficacy and higher levels of morale. Negative connotations relate to difficulties in switching roles between teacher and leader, stress associated with dual role demands and conflicting interests from altered collegial relationships and control. In addition, Harris (2004) suggests that overcoming restraints of a traditional school culture ranks high on the list as an obstacle in initiating and sustaining teacher leadership.

An expanded conception of teacher leadership is advocated by Andrews and Crowther (2002) as 'parallel leadership'. Findings from their five year study provide new dimensions by which to define teacher / principal leadership. Andrews and Crowther found that the concept of teachers as leaders centres on their work practices rather than personal characteristics and, as such, contributes to conceptualisation of working life as a 'community'. Teacher leadership, they note, results from principals building meaningful relationships with staff defined as 'parallel'. Such relationships contribute to mutual respect and trust, a sense of shared directionality and allowance for individual expression. Andrews and Crowther suggest 'parallel leadership' enhances school wide professional learning, pedagogical inquiry and culture building. The practice fosters, "mutualistic working relationships while asserting their individual values, thereby enriching the school's philosophical purpose and pedagogical practices. The result is enhancement of the school's distinctive identity, thereby sharpening the focus of professional practice and creating the foundations for capacity building" (p. 156).

In today's climate, meeting demands of a 'new professionalism' based upon mutual trust, recognition, empowerment and support of others is asked of leaders. New ways of conceiving leadership, Muijs and Harris (2003) note, reclaims "school leadership from the individual to the collective, from the singular to the plural and offers the real possibility of distributed leadership in action" (ibid., p. 445). This point is particularly important in understanding the role of all stakeholders in capacity building. Barth (1990), with reference to teacher leadership, comments, "When teachers have legitimate authority, sanctioned by the principal and faculty, they find the courage to make demands on their colleagues in one instance and to comply with their colleagues' demands on them in another" (p. 61). Findings from this research confirm collective stakeholder involvement and contribution builds capacity. Furthermore, such activities build

collegial relationships in solving school problems that ultimately lead to development of collaborative cultures.

Although arguments for distributed leadership are powerful (Harris, 2004), a “dearth of extended, analytical discussions” (Gronn, 2002, p. 2) exists making theorising speculative (Bennett, Harvey, Wise & Wood, 2003; York-Barr & Duke, 2004). A lack of operational depth has Gronn (2002) and Hopkins and Jackson (2002) suggesting distributed leadership is still a technique or, as Bennett et al. (2003) note, “a way of thinking about leadership” (p. 2). West et al. (2000) suggest the concept requires rethinking about structure; that is, “relinquishing the idea of structure as control, and viewing structure as the vehicle for empowering others” (p.34). Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) contend that, “given too the traditional structures of schools, serious questions must be raised concerning who these leaders might be, and how the attachment of the label ‘leader’ or ‘leadership’ to the work of adults in schools actually describes the nature of their practice” (p. 46). Although the concept holds appeal, issues such as power-balance reconfiguration, organisational inertia, over-cautiousness, insecurity and internal member conflict require investigation. Until this happens, distributed leadership is likely to still be considered a ‘tool’ of practice (Harris, 2004).

2.2.1.4 Developing Leadership for Learning Communities

Building capacity for improvement necessitates learning. Rosenholtz (1989) notes a ‘learning enriched school’ is where the excitement and motivation of learning forms part of daily life. This view is endorsed by Barth (1990) who talks about improvement from within:

Whereas many attempts to improve schools dwell on monitoring adult behaviour, on controlling students, on the assurance of student achievement, and on the visible attainment of prescribed skills, the central question for a community of learners is not, ‘What should students, teachers, and principals know and do, and how do we get them to know and do it?’ Instead, the underlying question is, ‘Under what conditions will principal and student and teacher become serious, committed, sustained, lifelong, cooperative learners?’ (p. 45).

The current popularity of professional learning communities is connected with movement in the direction of inquiry of practice, reflection and self-evaluation (Stoll et al., 2006). Such ideas are traceable to Schon’s (1983) ‘reflective practitioner’ model. Professional learning communities with emphasis on ‘learning’ and ‘community’, make leading for learning a promising construct to

achieve “capacity building for sustainable improvement” (Stoll et al., p. 221). However, as Fitzgerald and Gunter (2006) note, “the extent to which teachers are able to exercise a degree of agency with regard to the leadership of learning will be affected by the extent to which they position themselves in the role and how schools enable this positioning to occur” (p. 47). Existing roles, school structures and processes present challenges related to the nature and status of learners and learning, teachers and teaching and leaders and leadership. Confronted with such challenges, how is it possible to re-build schools as learning communities and reposition teachers as leaders of learning in the capacity building for school improvement process?

Stoll et al. (2006) draw attention to five characteristics that enhance the development of professional learning communities: shared values and vision, collective responsibility, reflective professional inquiry, collaboration and promotion of group and individual learning. In the study by Bolman, McMahon, Stoll, Thomas, Wallace, Greenwood, Hawkey, Ingram, Atkinson and Smith, *Creating and sustaining effective professional learning communities* (2005) funded by England’s Department for Education and Skills (DfES), NCSL and General Teaching Council (GTC), an additional three features were added. These were mutual trust, respect and support; inclusive membership; and openness, networks and partnerships. The concept of professional learning communities is appealing in that it has “the capacity to promote and sustain the learning of all professionals in the school community with the collective purpose of enhancing pupil learning” (Bolman et al., 2005, p. 145).

Stoll et al. (2006) suggest leaders create learning communities. Indeed, Schein (1985) comments, “the only thing of real importance that leaders do is to create and manage culture” (p. 2). Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999, cited in Stoll et al., 2006, p. 236) note that leadership in professional learning communities embeds professional development in practice and creates learning through ‘situated cognition’. Leaders, they state, promote reflective practice through emphasising research and evaluation, utilisation of a systematic approach to collecting, analysing and employing data for daily practice and employment of new research to improve practice. Stoll et al. (2006) add that leaders as developers of professional learning communities ensure the human side of change is addressed by exercising emotional intelligence and creating a community of pedagogical leaders. The authors advocate for partnership with parents, governing bodies, service agencies and businesses in the creation of professional learning communities with potential to promote networking and extend growth and development.

Findings from Fitzgerald and Gunter's comparative qualitative research project that examined leadership in schools in New Zealand and England suggested that leadership for learning occurs in multiple ways and is not necessarily bound by hierarchy or structures. The authors note:

Leading learning at any level in a school involves the act of influencing and working with others in a highly collaborative, collegial and supportive environment that encourages risk taking and innovation and which places learning at the centre of all activities. The leadership of learning is not necessarily undertaken solely by those with formal responsibility that is denoted by a title or label...the term *leading teacher* might be more appropriately applied to those teaching professionals leading learning in schools and who occupy a post between students (as learners) and the principal / head (p. 53 italics in the original).

In a decentralised educational climate, the literature reviewed implies that leadership for learning increasingly involves a community approach. In pluralistic contexts, challenges leaders face are not just about creating professional learning communities (Bolman et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006) but also engineering conditions where minority groups participate in the learning process and exercise voice (MOE, 2004). Indeed, Shields and Sayani (2005) assert, "An educational leader must consider the spaces of the school, both physical and metaphorical, as locations for inclusion, acceptance, and respect, or alternatively as locations of marginalisation, exclusion and despair" (p. 385).

Conceptualisation of 'community' is problematic in itself (Starratt, 2003 cited in Shields & Sayani, 2005). According to Shields and Sayani (2005), community involves more than "traditional, positivistic, and homogenous understandings...centred around existing shared norms, beliefs, and values (which) appear to be exclusive and exclusionary, leaving little room for new perspectives and changed norms" (p. 386). What is required is reconceptualisation of the concept to one more accepting of the voices of minority groups as well as those of the dominant culture. Shields and Sayani advocate the development of 'community of otherness' or 'community of difference', dismissing attempts to homogenise or assimilate, "members into an established set of shared values, common beliefs, and preferred practices" (Shields & Sayani, 2005, p. 387). Working within a paradigm of acceptance, otherness and difference, they claim, draw in those on the periphery and encourages participation in collective cultures of learning. Furthermore, in more inclusive professional learning communities, relationships and dialogue need to be legitimised in spaces that encourage hybridity, diversity and the generation of unique

identities (ibid.). Although such ideas express the ideal, exercising leadership in the building of more inclusive professional learning communities is riddled with complexity. An authentic take on inclusive professional learning communities and capacity building requires deconstruction of complex and highly integrated organisational and ethnic issues facing schools on a daily basis.

2.2.1.5 Summary

In reform orientated contexts, leaders face numerous challenges. For example, the demand to manage administrative tasks is often seen as detracting time and energy away from exercising transformational changes that help develop learning communities. The evolution of different value sets represented by pluralistic societies places additional demands on leaders. Here, Notman (2006) states, “as societal values become more disparate and contestable, some community members may turn to schools and their principals to provide moral leadership in the form of guiding sets of learning and social values” (p. 13). It is little wonder that such challenges have generated a plethora of different leadership models with various tasks, roles and responsibilities. Aligned to the aims of this study, topics such as leadership and management, transformative and post-transformative models, distributed leadership and leadership in developing learning communities, not only focus attention on ways to construct leadership, but also illuminate tensions involved in building capacity for school improvement.

2.2.2 School Culture

Since the 1980s, researchers have emphasised school culture as a way of improving schools (Stoll, 1999; Hopkins et al., 1994). Mulford, Silins, and Andrew (2003) contend that any or all school reforms are likely to fail in the face of cultural resistance. Daft (2002) advises that, when an organisation’s culture is not in “alignment with the needs of the external environment (and) the values and ways of doing things may reflect what worked in the past” (p. 516), cultural gaps occur making enactment and actualisation of reform doubtful. Edwards (2003) observes:

when we have an understanding of the prevailing culture and an awareness of how best to move values and norms in new directions without causing anxiety, disruption, alienation and opposition, then we can, for example, effectively accomplish things such as managing change and moving an organisation forward (p. 11).

Culture is an integral part of any educational experience (ERO, 2000). Indeed, ERO (2000) notes that nothing schools do is culturally neutral. As this study seeks to define capacity building for school improvement, a literature review was undertaken to provide background information on

culture, describe and define its key components and understand the role culture plays in organisational change. Organisational culture, as opposed to climate, remains the focus justified on the basis that, “The culture of an organisation exerts powerful influence on the development of climate...(it) influences the way that participants perceive events and make sense of those events” (Owens, 1991, p. 175). Furthermore, “Organisational culture is the body of solutions to problems that has worked consistently for a group and is therefore taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think about, and feel in relation to those problems” (p. 204). To fully comprehend culture and its links to capacity building for school improvement, use of qualitative research methods (as seen in this study) are advocated to produce rich, detailed descriptions of what happens in school. As argued by Owens (1991), a better understanding of a school’s culture lends itself to a more detailed study of its climate; that is, “the study of *perceptions* that individuals have of various aspects of the environment in the organisation” (Owens, 1991, p. 175 italics in the original). The discussion that follows defines culture, examines culture and structure links, explores selected typologies (particularly the ideal of a collaborative culture) and defines ‘reculturation’.

2.2.2.1 School Culture Defined

Customs, rituals, symbols, stories and language form an organisation’s cultural ‘artefacts’ (Schein, 1985); they communicate shared values, beliefs and norms of its members (Sergiovanni, 2006). While acknowledging the value of artefacts, Schein (1985) suggests they do not sufficiently capture the essence of culture. This, Schein suggests, is, “reserved for the deeper level of basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic ‘taken-for-granted’ fashion an organisation’s view of itself and its environment” (Schein, 1985, p. 6). In terms of school improvement, Schein (1992) awards external adaptation and survival, and internal integration importance. He suggests when solutions to both are achieved, schools are better able to attain their goals and have the means to foster sense-making, work type activities. A more encompassing definition of culture, in line with this study, is that it is, “a pattern of shared basic assumptions that the group learned as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to problems” (p. 12).

Culture is situated in practice. Each school’s mindset or ‘the way we do things around here’ (Deal and Kennedy, 1982) is embedded in its history, external environment, staff, students, parents and

wider community aspirations and needs (Stoll, 2003; 1999; ERO, 2000; Thrupp, 1997). With time and change (from staff turnaround, motivation, performance and shifts of energy), culture's composition alters (Southworth, 2004). Authors such as Stoll (1999) suggest that an organisation's maturational status defines specific cultural characteristics with implications for improvement. For example, in the early growth phase of organisational life, the founder's values form the 'glue' that holds everyone together. Culture is explicit, shared with newcomers and depicted as a positive force for improvement (Stoll, 1999). In 'midlife', culture becomes increasingly implicit, embedded, less conscious and harder to articulate and comprehend. Sub-cultures and micro-politics exert powerful influences which make change problematic (Stoll, 1999). The maturity, stagnation and / or decline phase of an organisation poses additional problems for educators engaged in school improvement. Here, the organisation has ceased to adapt and change and any or all improvement attempts meet with resistance (Stoll, 1999).

Apart from an organisation's maturational status, context influences culture. Primary and secondary schools' compositional distinctiveness mean they exhibit specific cultural traits. Hargreaves (1999) notes that larger schools, departmental structures and academic orientations of secondary schools display degrees of balkanisation, collaboration and individualism at times. Findings from Southworth et al.'s *Primary School Staff Relationship* (PSSR) project suggest that, in primary schools, collaborative, socially constructed and maintained cultures foster security and trust:

When trust was present in the schools it was also clear that the concomitant mutual support and encouragement, alongside security and openness, created organisational resilience – that is, the capacity to cope with exceptional events with few signs of strain – while interdependence created overlapping roles and responsibilities which encouraged adaptability, flexibility and collective strength (Southworth, 2004 p. 126).

Community demographics affect a school's culture. In New Zealand, almost 40 percent of primary schools are faced with an increasingly multi-cultural student population (ERO, 2000) and ERO warn that if schools fail to make adjustments to educational delivery that encompass more than one cultural group, students of other cultures may be forced to be assimilated into the dominant culture provoking in them insecurity and feelings of worthlessness that are disruptive to learning. ERO argue that ideally, a school's culture must acknowledge its cultural diversity by: the form a school's charter and policies take, teaching techniques and curriculum adjustments, and cultural composition of the board of trustees and staff. A more inclusive culture, they claim,

generates closer connection with the community, positively influences student learning, acknowledges and weaves cultural distinctiveness into curriculum delivery and creates an atmosphere of respect, tolerance and harmony. Cultural hallmarks of an ideal multicultural school, as noted in their report, *Multi-Cultural Schools in New Zealand* (2000), include:

- The school's mission statement, charter and policies acknowledges other cultures;
- Boards of trustees reflect cultural diversity in their composition;
- Teachers and support staff represent different cultures;
- The school advocates positive role models from different cultures;
- School processes reflect the individuality of students;
- Barriers to learning are identified;
- If possible, students are taught in their own languages;
- Active support is provided for non-English speaking students;
- Perspectives of other cultures are intertwined in the curriculum;
- Career guidance is responsive to other cultures;
- Cultural differences are recognised and celebrated;
- Students are encouraged to take pride and maintain their cultures;
- School signs and symbols reflect cultural diversity;
- Inclusion of a range of cultural activities enhance appreciation of other cultures; and
- An atmosphere of inclusion and respect for other cultures prevails in the school.

Influences on culture vary. Culture is a social construction (Rogoff, 1990), constantly being reconstructed (Hopkins, Ainscow & West, 1994), renewed and created as members enter and leave (Stoll & Fink, 1997) and formed by people working together, using and adapting tools of their predecessors (Rogoff, 1990). It must be emphasised, however, that its conceptualisation is far from simplistic. The ideal of a more inclusive culture, for example, is essentially problematic as alluded to by ERO (2000) in their report: *Multi-Cultural Schools in New Zealand*. As a product of social action, however, culture is also its determinant. In this respect, members not only learn the culture but are able to influence it (Nias, Southworth & Yeomans, 1989) by talk and interaction. Influence extends to systems, structures and processes operating in the school. This inquiry into capacity building for school improvement not only seeks an understanding of culture but also culture / structure links. For example, how do member interaction and structural arrangements serve as controlling elements of culture? How does culture influence capacity?

2.2.2.2 Culture and Structural Links in School Improvement

Hopkins, Ainscow and West (1994) note that structure and culture are interdependent and the relationship between them is dialectical. Structures are regarded as basic arrangements, generating cultures which not only allow the structures to work but also justify or legitimate them. Any change in culture can change underlying structures. Here, Hopkins et al. (1994) note that it is easier to change structures than culture. However, if structural change occurs too radically and without attention to culture, then, the appearance of change may be realised but, real change may be unsubstantiated. In terms of school improvement, Hopkins et al. (1994) suggest that equal attention be paid to both as one affects the other.

Hopkins et al. (1994) draw attention to three structural dimensions shared by all schools in terms of their management arrangements and with implications on culture. These include: frameworks, roles and responsibilities and ways of working. They note, “*Frameworks* provide the structures within which action for change takes place; *roles and responsibilities* comprise elements of both structure and culture; while *ways of working* are mainly cultural” (p. 88 italics in the original). In the current educational climate of compliance, accountability and improvement, a number of national frameworks offer infrastructures of support to schools. Policies and procedures, monitoring systems and planning, for example, have specified processes or structures but their content and purpose is left to the school and its stakeholders to determine. Structural dimensions with the potential to support school level implementation of change, and that have direct impact on capacity building activities can be argued as reflective of organisational culture. For example, school structures that generate staff interaction promote a culture of collaboration. Nias et al. (1989) in, *Staff Relationships in the primary School: A Study of Organisational Cultures*, observe that successful schools planned times for interaction. Staff forums provided scheduled time for meetings and unplanned get-togethers provided opportunities to gather in response to informal requests. In addition, principals engineered and controlled staff interaction not only by coordinating staff work themselves, but encouraging interaction when and if required. Such practices, over time, led to schools evolving their own patterns of collaboration and social interaction that enhanced systemic improvement.

2.2.2.3 Typologies

Determining a school’s culture according to particular type or typology has gained in popularity with heightened calls for school improvement. While cultural typologies fail to capture the subtleties of individual culture, they offer a starting point for deciphering cultural hallmarks that,

when compared to an ideal, is meant to stimulate movement towards improvement (Stoll, 1999). For example, Hargreaves (1994) uses dimensions of independence and collegiality to identify four teacher cultures: fragmented individualism where teacher autonomy and isolation prevail; collaborative cultures hallmarked by engagement in joint work; contrived collegiality where teachers are expected to collaborate on agendas devised by administrators and balkanisation where small groups are awarded more attention than that of a unified whole. Although Hargreaves suggests collaborative cultures offer most promise in advancing school reform, Little and McLaughlin (1993) caution, "Reform initiatives have pressed teachers into collaboration and collegiality with a fervor that far outstrips our present understanding of the conditions, character, and consequences of such relationships" (p.2).

Rosenholtz (1989) distinguishes between the 'moving' and 'stuck' school. Moving schools display positive work conditions and produce much higher outcomes for students than so-called stuck schools. In stuck schools, a 'freedom from' rather than 'freedom to' mentality exists. Boredom, punitiveness and self-defensiveness characterise teachers' work. Building on Rosenholtz's description, Hopkins et al. (1994) promote four cultural types representative of degrees of dynamism that affect schools in their journey towards improvement. Stuck or failing schools display poor conditions, mediocrity, isolated teaching and powerlessness. Culture here is a given and cannot be changed. The school is 'buffeted' by change. Wandering schools experience too much innovation with appearance of change but little transference of this to reality. Movement here does not resemble any clear direction or 'agreed to' purpose. Promenading schools are traditional schools with stable staff that have, in the past, enjoyed success. In such schools, "Maintenance is all, development is regarded as being quirky" (Hopkins et al., 1994, p. 91). A moving school is the ideal with, "a healthy blend of change and stability, and balanced development and maintenance... as it adapts successfully to an often rapidly changing environment" (p. 91).

Hargreaves' (1995) typology, based on social control and task orientation (instrumental domain) and social cohesion through positive relationships (expressive domain), identifies four school types:

- traditional, where low cohesion, high social control dominate and custodial, formal, approaches are common;
- welfarist, where low social control, high social cohesion produce a relaxed and caring climate;

- hothouse, where high social control and high social cohesion promote climates that are claustrophobic and pressured; and
- anomic where low social cohesion, low social control lead to insecurity and alienation.

A fifth, improving or effective school culture, Hargreaves (1995) states is said to denote optimal social cohesion and control and high expectations with built in layers of support for improvement.

By way of a final example, Stoll and Fink (1996) draw on change as a foundation for their typology. They note that, as change makes standing still impossible, schools are either getting better or worse. Utilising dimensions of effectiveness-ineffectiveness and improving-declining, they suggest moving schools are effective in their value added dimensions and have staff working together to achieve change. Cruising schools are perceived as effective but have norms of contentment, avoidance of commitment, goal diffusion, conformity, nostalgia and denial (Stoll and Fink, 1998). Strolling schools are neither effective nor ineffective. They emit conflicting aims that inhibit improvement. Struggling schools, albeit ineffective initially, expend considerable energy but eventually succeed (Stoll, 1999). Sinking or failing schools are not only ineffective but have staff unprepared or unable to change. They exhibit norms of isolation, self-reliance, blame and loss of faith.

In an environment that pushes for reform, aforementioned cultural typologies can be useful as diagnostic tools. They do not, however, fully capture complexity of setting or the needs of a multicultural, pluralistic society. The matter of parent / caregiver involvement in school affairs is also dismissed. In terms of this research and from the literature reviewed, collaborative cultures do, however, appear most promising in initiating and sustaining school improvement.

Hopkins et al. (1994) denote collaborative cultures as facilitating teacher development through mutual support, joint work and broad agreement on educational values. As such, collaborative cultures provide a way of minimising problems of individualism, balkanisation and contrived collegiality. Hargreaves (1991, cited in Hopkins et al. 1994) describes collaborative cultures as:

- Spontaneous: Emerging from teachers themselves as a social group;
- Voluntary: Collaborative work relationships valued for experience, inclination and / or working together in enjoyable and productive ways;
- Development oriented: Teachers initiating change by working on externally supported or mandated initiatives to which they have an allegiance;

- Pervasive across time and space: Working together encompasses, “passing words and glances, praises and thanks, offers to exchange classes in tough times, suggestions about new ideas, informal discussions about new units, sharing problems or meeting parents together” (p. 94); and
- Unpredictable: The outcomes of collaboration are often uncertain and not easily predicted which makes collaborative cultures incompatible in school systems that are highly centralised.

In Nias et al.’s study (1989), a culture of collaboration was seen to embody a set of societal and moral beliefs about desirable relationships between individuals and communities and not from beliefs about epistemology or pedagogy. Two main points were that individuals should be accepted and valued and so too should the interdependence that exists between groups and teams. Interdependence, the authors note, lead to “mutual constraint, and it is the resulting security which encourages members of the culture to be open with one another in the expression of disagreement and of emotion” (p. 74). Furthermore, shared understandings and agreed behaviours among members of a group enabled trust and learning from each other to flourish. Nias et al, on collaborative work arrangements, comment, “the relationships which they create in the process are tough and flexible enough to withstand shocks and uncertainties from within and without. Collaborative staff tended to be both happy and resilient” (p. 74).

2.2.2.4 Reculturation

A school’s culture is, as Nias et al (1989) suggest, a complex and fragile social construct of reality where conflict and change are just as much a part of life as consensus and stability. Movement in the direction of an ‘ideal’ implies change and change connected with transforming cultures and gaining commitment can create resistance. As Nias et al (1989) note, “A school’s culture will always contain within itself the capacity for conflict, modification and development, as personal change and circumstances in the wider environment alter” (p. 15). Here Fullan’s (2002) guidelines on change management need attention:

- The goal is not to innovate the most but to do so selectively and with coherence;
- Leaders need to help others assess and find collective meaning and commitment to new ways of doing things;
- There needs an accompanying appreciation of the implementation dip;
- Redefining resistance and reculturing is required; and
- An acceptance of complexity, as part of change management, is necessary.

In implementing change, Fullan (2002) raises the notion of reculturing; that is, transforming cultures and changing what people in the organisation value and how they work together to accomplish goals. Stoll (2003) describes reculturing as developing new values, beliefs and norms. Morgan (1997) notes it is:

a challenge of transforming mind-sets, visions, paradigms, images, metaphors, beliefs, and shared meanings that sustain existing ... realities and of creating a detailed language and code of behaviour through which the desired new reality can be lived on a daily basis ... It is about inventing what amounts to a new way of life (p. 143).

Changing a culture requires people to move from something familiar and important into an empty space and, once there, to build new sets of meanings and norms (Sergiovanni, 2000). This can be threatening as it promotes doubt and some form of dissatisfaction with current state. It is misleading to assume that every display of doubt signifies the existence of conflict. Schechter (2004) suggests 'raising doubt' or, "inquiry into routine and habitual perceptions and assumptions, (is) generally conceived as appropriate within some social system of values and beliefs" (Schechter, 2004, p. 172). Doubt, that seeks opinion, scrutiny and analysis of dissatisfaction with present state, challenges the status-quo, the homeostasis or equilibrium of an organisation. Conceived in such a way, doubt is considered, "an honourable moral objective in any education system because it facilitates growth of individuals as human beings" (Schechter, 2004, p. 173). Doubt that equates action with consequences engenders reflection. Managed sensitively, reflection on evidential data leads to modification of teaching practice and motivation to pursue and support cultural and pedagogical change within a collective. Regular conversations and opportunities to meet and affirm shared meaning in relation to professional attitudes, values and beliefs can create change of culture. Gradual influence on culture, within a collective, avoids reculturation considered a form of manipulation (Bates, 1987). Instead, reculturation occurs but as a product of negotiation or shared meaning (Morgan, 1997).

2.2.2.5 Summary

A school's culture is constructed by its members and manifested in the symbolic, practical, linguistic interactions of social structures in existence. A school's culture is not a unified whole but composed of sub-cultures. While sub-cultures reflect many of the facets of the whole organisation, they also display their own foci and hallmarks. The various typologies presented in this review are useful in diagnosing existing cultures. Although there is general agreement that

collaborative cultures are said to be ideal in terms of school improvement, their contribution to capacity building for school improvement, in context, needs examination. Indeed the whole concept of organisational culture reflecting the dominant macro and local cultures of society in which it is embedded needs deconstructing to discover the impact rules, language, ceremonies and rituals of wider society have on the establishment of school identities and ways of doing things. To conclude, Schein (1992) provides a useful framework for thinking about culture. He suggests culture:

- Gives meaning to human endeavour;
- Generates shared values, beliefs and assumptions;
- Serves as a sense-making device that guides and shapes behaviour;
- Creates a socially shared and transmitted knowledge base of what is right;
- Ensures consistency of action;
- Creates a sense of identity;
- Serves as a social glue; and
- Provides a common purpose; that is, the goals and values an organisation works towards.

2.2.3 Vision

Establishing a vision is something all theorists agree is essential if change is likely to have any chance of real success (Barth, 1990). Shared vision, the glue or shared values that bind the school together, constitutes a moving force that provides the synergy to effect and sustain change (ibid.). West et al. (2000), in the *Moving Schools Project*, note that, “The evolution of vision becomes a stage which makes meaning of the improvement journey as it evolves” (p. 39).

Weller, Hartley and Brown (1994) define vision as an all encompassing driving force of organisations to express their unique purpose and philosophy. According to Barth, (1990) visions are inspirational. They depict, “an overall conception of what the educator wants the organisation to stand for; what its primary mission is; what its basic core values are; a sense of how all the parts fit together; and, above all, how the vision maker fits into the grand plan” (p. 148).

While vision is said to originate from the leader (Day, 2000), most authors advocate its development as an act of stakeholder collaboration (Fullan, 1993). Fullan (1993) captures this as:

Vision comes later for two reasons. First, under conditions of dynamic complexity one needs a good deal of reflective experience before one can form a plausible vision. Vision emerges from, more than it precedes action. Even then it is always provisional. Second,

shared vision, which is essential for success, must evolve through dynamic interaction of organisational members and leaders. This takes time and will not succeed unless the vision-building process is somewhat open-ended. Visions coming later does not mean they are not worked on. Just the opposite. They are pursued more authentically while avoiding premature formalisation (Fullan, 1993, p. 28).

2.2.3.1 The Blunting of Vision

Personal educational visions represent dreams practitioners have of the way they would like their school to be. In this sense, visions offer a sense of direction, a destination, something people are prepared to work towards and even fight to preserve. However, as Barth (1990) states, visions are likely to, “become blurred by the well-meaning expectations and lists of others...a personal vision becomes blunted by exhaustion and compliance” (p. 148). In the current educational climate of increased managerialism and technical rationality, blunting of vision or visions going underground may result from an over insistence of efficiency, standards, marketisation and consumer choice governing behaviour.

Barth suggests that vision disillusionment can also occur if schools jump into premature implementation of vision. In this respect, he suggests visions need to be savoured, allowed to permeate through organisational layers, enjoyed and celebrated before being subjected to the ‘hard knocks’ of rapid demands for improvement. Furthermore, he adds that if visions are, “too hopeful, entertaining high or exacting in expectations...they are doomed to disappointment and failure” (p.157). Perhaps the questions that confront educators in pursuit of capacity building for school improvement are: Whose vision is being promoted? How is vision linked to capacity building for school improvement? And, what processes lead to collective vision generation?

2.2.3.2 Vision Construction – A Collective Process

Vision construction is a formidable task which, Barth (1990) suggests, requires of leaders, “a kind of moral imagination that gives them the ability to see schools not as they are, but as they would like them to become” (p. 147). Vision construction requires of leaders an understanding of organisational values embedded in daily activity.

According to Barth (1990), school practitioners’ input in vision is important. He argues that stakeholders have, “rich insights, hammered out of years of practice (which) give(s) richness and

credibility to the visions” (p. 150). In other words, a school’s vision needs collective, joint construction from a baseline of evidence for it to be successful (Barth, 1990).

Having vision and being given the chance to implement it in practice is empowering. According to Stoll (1999) visions contribute positively towards a community of learners / community of leaders’ approach to school life. Transmitted by stakeholders in practice, vision unlocks the energy or synergy it takes to drive and achieve change (Barth, 1990). However, Barth cautions that practitioners who do not formulate and articulate their own visions of how they want their school to be, “invite random prescription from outside”. Furthermore, “a school without vision is a vacuum inviting intrusion...Schoolpeople must either propel themselves in some direction, be towed, or sink” (p.152). The process of defining, prioritising and structuring vision to achieve operational depth has, however, so far proved unsuccessful in school improvement efforts. Indeed, leadership, understanding and motivation do not go far enough to explain alignment between vision and practice.

2.2.3.3 Summary

That vision plays an important role in school improvement is not in doubt. Vision offers an organisation a sense of direction and unified purpose. The literature reviewed, however, suggests gaps in empirical research that support or confirm linkage between vision and capacity building for school improvement. In addition, attention given to the influence of external factors on vision construction is lacking.

2.2.4 Professional Development

The literature on professional development of teachers is linked to initiating and sustaining systemic reforms in promoting student learning (see, for example, Fullan & Mascal, 2000; Boyle, Lamprianou & Boyle, 2004; Day & Sachs, 2004; Alton-Lee, 2003). Raising student achievement and reducing disparity through teacher professional development is reinforced by the Ministry of Education and enacted through policy and legislative mandates. The *Professional Standards: Criteria For Quality*¹⁷ (1999b), for example, requires teachers to engage in

¹⁷ “The standards describe the key elements of performance rather than provide an exhaustive list of responsibilities.

The performance standards build on existing PMS (performance management system) requirements so that the system now contains the following components:

- a) **Professional standards** – key knowledge, skills and attitudes that all teachers are required to demonstrate in carrying out their roles.
- b) **Performance objectives / expectations** – outcomes or results the teacher is expected to achieve.

professional development to develop, “critical knowledge, skills and attitudes needed to perform a particular role effectively” (MOE, 1999b, p.4). The *National Administration Guidelines* requires boards of trustees to develop a strategic plan which documents how they will meet *The National Education Guidelines* through policies, plans and programmes, including those for curriculum, assessment and staff professional development (MOE, 2000).

Legislative directives linked to professional development appear to emphasise an accountability agenda. For example, formal evaluation of teachers and systemic reviews are considered powerful means of promoting teacher professionalism and school growth. Barth (1990) argues that such formal evaluation procedures, however, have only limited influence on staff development. Formal evaluations are meaningless rituals or, at worst, a recurring occasion that heightens anxiety and distance between the teacher and principal and increases competition among teachers themselves. Formal evaluation, Barth claims, is often used to:

- Induce teachers to adhere to lists or a prescribed curriculum;
- Organise around the needs of the school to assemble competent staff;
- Determine who should be hired, rehired, promoted, granted tenure or dismissed; and
- Promote a form of accountability to ensure the school is enforcing rigorous expectations and is getting the most from its employees.

Barth (1990) claims formal forms of evaluation also serve the needs of principals in, for example, exercising power over teachers, getting teachers on their side, earning respect and avoiding conflict. The purpose is forgotten; that is, to help teachers learn and subsequently help students learn. Barth’s definition of staff development encourages teachers to state, ‘Here’s what I want to try’ (p. 57) and then providing assistance or encouragement in as many ways as possible to achieve stated goals. Implementing this conception of staff development carries with it a powerful potential for professional growth and ownership. Indeed, Barth claims, “When teachers stop growing, so do their students” (p. 50).

A central concern of this section on professional development is how schools develop their capacity for improvement by promoting a context for personal and professional growth. The focus is on examining factors that create an environment where teachers are willing to critically

c) **Development objectives** – planned improvements in performance, including the professional development activities the teacher will undertake to achieve these” (Ministry of Education, 1999b, p. 4).

examine their practice in ways that generate learning and system transformation. Fullan and Mascall (2000), on the New York City School District #2 project, suggest that strategic use of teacher professional development for systemic development relates to the following principles:

- “everything in the system is about instruction and only about instruction;
- instructional change is a long multistage process;
- shared expertise is the driver of instructional change;
- good ideas come from talented people working together setting clear expectations and then decentralise follow up action and
- collegiality, sharing and respect” (Fullan & Mascall, 2000 p, 36).

Effectiveness of professional development for teachers is a contentious issue requiring subjective judgement. In accountability-driven contexts, effectiveness is aligned with raising standards. While arguments persist that improved student outcomes serve as motivators for professional development, Boyle, Lamprianou and Boyle (2004) argue that student performance alone cannot define effectiveness and professional development does not necessarily confirm changes in teaching and learning. If, as Barth (1990) suggests, teachers’ professional growth leads to the development of a capacity to observe and “analyse the consequences for students of different teaching behaviours and materials, and to learn to make continuous modifications of teaching on the basis of cues students convey” (p. 49), then an adequate explanation for professional development is required. In connection with this study, the literature reviewed explores two main themes: the changing face of professional development and collaborative professional development: the importance of collective dialogue.

2.2.4.1 The Changing Face of Professional Development

Contemporary thought on effective professional development expresses dissatisfaction with one-day workshops (Boyle, Lamprianou & Boyle, 2004), criticised for creating a narrow perception of change (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Boyle, Lamprianou & Boyle, 2004). According to Duncombe and Armour, (2004), ‘one-day’ workshops produce decontextualised learning with few opportunities for follow up or progression. Fullan and Mascall (2000) add that they emphasise individuality, are unrelated to work and reinforce passive learning. Hoban (2002) argues they present, “a technical view of education ...(which does) not encourage a way of thinking that considers how aspects of education have a dynamic effect on one another” (p. 13). Hoban claims, “without a framework to support long-term teacher learning (one-day workshops) tends to reinforce existing practice and maintain *status quo*” (p. 13 italics in the original).

Recent research emphasises collaborative professional development as an alternative. Collaborative professional development positions teachers as active, life-long learners in control of their own professional growth. Such a focus is said to sustain learning, build self-efficacy, develop community relationships, bridge the theory-practice gap, encourage curriculum reform and develop professionalism (Clarke & Hollingsworth, 2002; Boyle, Lamprianou & Boyle, 2004). Elmore (2002) claims collaborative professional development stimulates and supports site-based initiatives for improvement while Sparkes (1999) and Senge (1990) attest to its value in terms of systems thinking and seeing the whole as sets of working relationships. Duncombe and Armour (2004) define collaborative professional development as, “any occasion where a teacher works with or talks to another teacher to improve their own or others’ understanding of any pedagogical issue” (p. 144).

Collaborative professional development draws on notions of peer mentoring (Barth, 1990), collegiality and collaboration (Little, 1990) and an apprenticeship learning model (Rogoff, 1990). Here the emphasis is on shared, public and active experience and sustained interaction on site-based issues. Professional development, construed as a collaborative enterprise, is embedded in a social constructivist framework where collective dialogue holds appeal. Wink and Putney (2002) identify the following principles as underscoring learning in a social constructivist paradigm:

- Knowledge is constantly changing and mutually constructed;
- Knowledge creation, generated through collaborative social and culturally constructed opportunities, is tied to experience;
- Sharing of expertise and understanding leads to collective and individual development;
- Teachers as learners and learners as teachers are involved in peer mediation, mentoring and actuation type activities; and
- Active co-construction and self negotiation of meaning encourage learners to be active thinkers, explainers, interpreters, inquirers, social participators, sense makers, problem solvers and members of a community of learners.

A social constructivist lens highlights context or situated practice as integral to learning. It advances collective knowledge generation from construction and negotiation of meaning. A social constructivist lens emphasises the ‘social’ in learning. Here, Wertsch (2000, cited in Budwig, Uzgris & Wertsch, 2000) offers two explanations. In the first sense a process is said to be social or ‘social interactional’ if, “two or more people interact to carry it out” (p. 18). In the

second sense a process is said to be social if it has to do with the broad sociocultural context in which it occurs; that is, a specific cultural, historical and institutional context which influences action. Both apply to learning in the social constructivist paradigm.

Characteristics of effective professional development, as noted by Hill, Hawk and Taylor (2002), reflect a social constructivist framework. Here, the authors note:

- Learning is for everyone and involves people working together to respond to a changing context;
- Improving practice occurs through risk taking and experimentation in new forms of pedagogy;
- Learning needs to be relevant;
- Professional development needs to be much more than attendance on courses; the focus needs to be on deep learning that requires individuals to alter their ways of doing things;
- Teachers need to be able to learn, observe and network at both formal and informal levels of practice; and
- Professional development should make a difference to teaching and learning and ensure opportunities and outcomes for students improve.

To initiate this in practice, Hill et al. (2002) recommend:

- Development of a learning culture;
- Focus on tangible outcomes for the school and teachers;
- Development of a comprehensive induction programme;
- Planned programme development so as to avoid dangers of overload;
- Meeting prioritised need;
- Paying attention to pedagogy; and
- Active involvement of principals in their own professional development as well as that of their teachers.

Hill et al. note that one of the issues faced in improving student learning relates to monitoring and evaluating student data and subsequent utilisation of information to inform practice. They suggest the focus needs to be on determining relevant data to collect, analyse and report so accurate messages are conveyed to boards of trustees and parents. They conclude that collaborative

professional development plays a vital role in ensuring the school becomes a learning environment.

2.2.4.2 Collaborative Professional Development: Importance of Collective Dialogue

Current thought in the area of collaborative professional development suggests that knowledge and skills of teachers can be increased through collegial opportunities to solve authentic problems through collective dialogue (Fullan & Mascal, 2000). This, Fullan and Mascal suggest, requires “a collective approach to learning, throughout a school, or even school system” (p, 34). The value of collective dialogue in changing teacher practice, beliefs and improving student achievement is substantiated by three New Zealand studies.

Timperley and Robinson (2001), in a study examining changing teachers’ schema leading to improved schooling, noted that dialogue between teachers and external agents helped with analysis of data and consideration of pedagogical alternatives. Learning conversations and corresponding shifts in thinking stopped teachers from blaming the external environment for low student achievement scores and led to questioning their own teaching pedagogy. The study by Symes, Jeffries, Timperley and Lai (2001), that evaluated a school-based approach to literacy professional development, noted that an expert employed to work with teachers on a structured programme of more effective literacy teaching resulted in (after two months) improved students’ achievements in reading. Finally, the study by Phillips, McNaughton and MacDonald (2001), that had an expert focus on developing teacher talk on reading and writing data followed by structured in-class support and further scrutiny of the data, noted shifts of attainment in students’ reading and writing from well below national average to close to national averages. All three studies highlight the potential of using teacher talk to improve practice. All three involved an ‘expert’ who engaged teachers in dialogue on student achievement, encouraged critique of beliefs and practice and promoted improved teaching and learning strategies.

The nature of collaborative professional development linked to collective dialogue or ‘learning talk’ with power to improve practice is reinforced by Annan, Lai and Robinson (2003). These authors suggest that engagement in conversations compel teachers to focus on evaluating and improving their own and others’ teaching practices. Learning talk, they suggest, can be divided into analytical talk which analyses the impact of teaching practices on student learning; critical talk that evaluates the outcomes of analysis; and challenging talk that deals with making changes to ineffective practices by creating more effective ones. Learning talk is defined as: “talk about

teaching which analyses, evaluates, and/or challenges the impact of teaching practices on student learning outcomes, and/or creates more effective practices to replace ineffective ones” (Annan et al., 2003, pp. 289-290). Challenges that limit such activity in schools are: cultures that do not encourage analysis, critique and challenging practice; non-existence data bases from which to proceed with inquiry of practice; and teacher talk on peripheral issues. The authors note that most school based decision making, “focuses on programmes, products and associated management processes and not on teaching practices and student learning” (p. 292). They caution that such issues need addressing to pave the way for professional development that stimulates learning talk.

The study by Knight (2003), on the quality of teacher feedback to students in an attempt to raise achievement levels, highlights some interesting points. Feedback, Knight suggests, is a key to facilitating learning. Although her study concerns feedback by teachers to students in the area of mathematical thinking, similar comments can be applied to teacher work to improve pedagogical practice. Knight notes: feedback should make reference to the quality of work and ways to improve it; it should be about learners becoming more effective learners; and evaluative and descriptive types of feedback create the most powerful support for learning. The research conducted by Knight, albeit small scale and focused on students, acknowledges the importance of feedback in supporting learning.

2.2.4.3 Summary

Professional development, considered an essential component of school improvement, is advanced by many authors. Elmore (2002), for example, claims professional development of teachers stimulates and supports site-based initiatives if grounded in knowledge about teaching, models constructivism, offers intellectual, social and emotional engagement with ideas, is respectful of teacher professionalism and provides sufficient time and support for implementation and integration of ideas in practice. Professional development that emphasises teacher learning is inextricably linked to student achievement which makes scrutiny of nature, type and delivery of professional development extremely important. The literature reviewed suggests professional development is most powerful when shared by all in combination with time for reflection, exploration and classroom research (Eagle, French & Malcolm, 2005). In this review, the changing face of professional development and hallmarks of collaborative professional development are discussed within a social constructivist paradigm. As such, learning is conceived as “not only a concept of the group as a learner and constructor of knowledge, but also an understanding of the centrality of the group’s vision of social justice that drives it to act”

(Kilgore, 1999, p. 191). Ideas raised are useful frames by which to consider the nature, type and outcomes of professional development that build capacity for school improvement.

2.3 Conclusion

Capacity building for school improvement is a relatively new field of inquiry. As Stoll et al. (2006) note, it is a 'hot' topic for investigation. Frequently raised in connection with school improvement, there is, however, a paucity of available research on the topic. In the first part of this review, an investigation of political, cultural and socio-economic issues unearthed much tension and confusion surrounding the concept. Yet, despite the many issues and tensions faced, school stakeholders strive to build capacity for improvement. In the second part, current theories on leadership, school culture, vision and professional development were presented. The literature reviewed, albeit structured to reflect the specific aims of this inquiry, draws to the surface more unsolved questions than it reveals answers. Parts One and Two legitimise the need for this study. They raise the following research questions that serve to guide this investigation:

- How is capacity for school improvement defined – what are its features?
- How do internal school factors – vision, stakeholder activity, culture and professional development – evolve capacity?
- In what ways do external wider societal factors influence the development of capacity?
- What links exist between capacity building and improvement as evidenced in this school setting?

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3 Introduction

This inquiry investigates capacity building for school improvement in one low decile, multicultural, state primary school in New Zealand. It examines external and internal site-related factors that define and advance capacity building. It explores links between capacity building and school improvement. The study is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm. Stories and lived experiences of practitioners are placed at the forefront to present, “the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures” that constitute reality (Geertz cited in Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 150).

This chapter presents and justifies the interpretivist paradigm within which the research is conducted. It explains the choice of case study as approach and use of grounded theory methods in data analysis. Data collection, analysis and ethics are explicated accordingly.

3.1 The Perspectives of this Study

Capacity building is, by its very nature, a public enterprise which can be described as, “a passing event, which exists only in its own moment of occurrence into an account, which exists in its inscriptions and can be re-consulted” (Geertz cited in Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 158). As such it necessitates understanding the world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it (Locke, 2001). The concern is with participant perceptions of capacity building, a subjective reality (Locke, 2001). Notions of capacity are not given but built through shared history, experience and dialogue; “what is taken for ‘reality’ is what is shared and taken for granted as to the way the world is to be perceived and understood” (Locke, 2001, p. 9). This inquiry adopts a relativist ontological stance, subjectivist epistemology and naturalistic methodological procedures – key features of this qualitative research study.

3.1.1 Interpretivist Paradigm

Interpretivists believe that to understand a particular social reality, they must engage with, participate in and actively interpret the social world that is the object of their inquiry (Locke, 2001). This view contrasts with those who believe in, “discovering universally applicable laws or structuring principles to explain behaviour and with the elimination of personal subjective judgement expressed in notions such as verification and testability” (Locke, 2001, p. 9). Interpretivists conceive methods as tools that assist judgement rather than methods that eliminate it (Locke, 2001). Such a stance creates tension for the researcher between, “interest in the first-

hand subjective experience of those they study and their equal interest in constructing an external, even objectified, account of that experience” (Locke, p. 9). Although researchers in the interpretive paradigm aim to be up front and open about their values and interests affecting interpretation, there is general acceptance that researcher subjectivity in judgement calls cannot be eliminated.

There are two essential elements in this inquiry which dictate an interpretivist approach. First, it is important to investigate capacity building for school improvement through the eyes of participants; that is, to examine the phenomena, “as consisting of the intrinsic meanings shared by members of a social group which are sustained by the actions and interactions of the members” (Clark, 1997, p. 37). Ontological¹⁸ questions, pertain to perceptions of how stakeholder activity, professional development, school culture and vision contribute to capacity building for school improvement; how external factors influence the building of capacity; and perceived links between capacity and school improvement. Epistemologically¹⁹, the need for personal renditions, albeit subject to change and reconfiguration, position the researcher and participants in joint construction of meaning to achieve understanding of processes, motives, desires, beliefs, values and attitudes of individuals and groups in the capacity building process. Subjective meaning, understood within a social context of shared concepts and common language, indicates there is no one ‘correct’ way of perceiving reality, nor is there an absolute truth. Indeed, as Clark (1997) points out, there is constant deliberation over whose interpretation receives greater credence in terms of conflicting accounts. Failure to reach agreement suggests a relativist stance where different interpretations provide multiple views of reality. A relativist ontology and joint construction of meaning requires a methodology²⁰ that is participative and collaborative.

The second justification for using the interpretivist paradigm reasons that human action affects perceived reality. As Clark (1997) argues, “meaning is internal to action, it is what makes an act an act rather than just being behaviour; it gives it intelligibility” (p. 38). This research is concerned with perceptions of capacity and the external and internal factors that underpin it. Capacity is not independent of human involvement; human action is an essential part of the process. For such perceptions to be validated, Clark (1997) maintains research must “(1) co-

¹⁸ The ontological question: “What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it?” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 108).

¹⁹ The epistemological question: “What is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be-knower and what can be known?” (ibid.).

²⁰ The methodological question: “How can the inquirer (would-be-knower) go about finding out what ever he or she believes can be known?” (ibid.).

ordinate the various meanings into a coherent framework, (2) meet the evaluation criteria of the research community and (3) satisfy the evaluation criteria of the research participants” (p. 39). Positioning the research in the interpretivist paradigm suits the aims and focus of this inquiry.

Although capacity building for school improvement advocates an interpretivist stance, layers of external influences, for example policy and legislative mandates, assume an objective reality separate from human interaction within the school. Furthermore, as a connection is sought between the external environment and capacity building, and capacity building and school improvement, some analysis of historical school data related to change is required. Although an interpretive stance is adopted for the majority of the research, analysis of student achievement data and identification of environmental influences necessitates a more objective approach in data collection and analysis. As this inquiry concerns capacity building in one school setting, a case study approach is considered most suitable.

3.1.2 Case Study

Stake (2003) suggests, “Case study is not a methodological choice but a choice of what is to be studied” (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 134). Hakim (2000) notes, “The case study is the social research equivalent of the spotlight or the microscope: its value depends crucially on how well the study is focused” (p. 59). Bassey’s (2003) prescriptive account of what constitutes worthwhile case study research is particularly relevant. Such a study, Bassey notes, reinforces collection of sufficient data which enables the researcher to explore significant features of the case, create plausible interpretations, construct a worthwhile argument or story, relate the argument or story to existing literature and convey the findings to an interested audience.

Stake (2003) identifies three types of case studies. Intrinsic case studies are undertaken if the researcher wants a better understanding of a particular case. Here, the case itself is of interest and the purpose is not theory building or generic phenomenon construction. Instrumental case studies provide insight into an issue or ‘redraws a generalization’ (Stake, 2003). In this instance, “The case is of secondary interest, it plays a supportive role, and it facilitates our understanding of something else” (Stake, 2003, p. 137). The choice is made to advance understanding of another interest over and above particularities of the case. Collective case studies are instrumental studies extended to several cases because understandings achieved will lead to better theorising about a still larger collection of cases.

Yin (1994) denotes case studies as being exploratory, explanatory and descriptive with each having the potential to be single or multiple case inquiries. Exploratory cases achieve a similarity to aforementioned intrinsic studies. Explanatory cases suit causal designs, while descriptive studies require the researcher to begin with descriptive theory which leads to the formation of hypotheses of cause-effect relationships.

This research adopts a case study design that is instrumental (Stake, 2003); it seeks deeper insights of the concept capacity building for school improvement in one school site. It is also explanatory (Yin, 1994; 2003) as answers to “how” and “why” process related operational questions in the building of capacity for school improvement are sought. The study seeks to explain the “phenomenon within its real-life context” (Yin, 2003, p. 13). It is situated within a localised boundary of space and time and investigates how participants of one, multi-cultural, low decile, state primary school build capacity for school improvement (Stake, 2003; Bassey, 2003). The singularity and specificity of this case necessitate a deeper investigation of external and internal factors that advance capacity. In addition, connection between capacity and school improvement is required as this is a study of capacity building for school improvement.

3.1.2.1 Strengths of Case Studies

There are benefits attached to case study research (Yin 1994, 2003). Anderson (1990) argues that as education is a process, the need exists for research methods to be process-oriented, flexible and adaptable to change in circumstances or evolving contexts. Case studies answer the ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ questions in context (Stake, 2003). Multiple sources of evidence and flexibility provide a rounded and complete account of social issues and processes (Hakim, 2000). Indeed, a strong argument for case studies is that by incorporating a chain of evidence, internal validity is secured (Anderson, 1990). Case study research, with a focus on the particular, facilitates examination of complexity. It connects ordinary practice, in natural settings, to abstractions and concerns of diverse academic disciplines. It tells its own story (Stake, 1994). The researcher can be a teacher, teaching what has been learnt; and learner, gaining propositional and experiential knowledge by joint construction of meaning (Stake, 1994).

3.1.2.2 Limitations of Case Studies

A frequent criticism is that dependence on a single case and lack of statistical tests renders case study research incapable of generalisation (Anderson, 1990). In other words, critics claim that case studies lack reliability and that replication is impossible (Anderson, 1990). In defence,

Anderson states that good case studies incorporate multiple sources of data. They go beyond, “a single questionnaire or set of interviews. They incorporate all types of data and look for converging lines of inquiry” (p. 163). Although external validity is not so easily addressed (Anderson, 1990), Yin (1994) argues that, in any research, the goals of a study need adherence and, as such, a single case is applicable provided it meets established objectives. Furthermore, satisfying the tenets of qualitative research by describing, understanding and explaining, ensures methodological rigour.

Concern with lack of rigour is raised by many authors (Yin, 2003; Hakim, 2000; Anderson, 1990). Yin (2003) argues, “Too many times, the case study investigator has been sloppy, has not followed systematic procedures, or has allowed equivocal evidence or biased views to influence the direction of the findings and conclusions” (p. 10). Such comments infer accounts of case study research are shaped strongly by the interests and perspective of the researcher. Ethical problems that arise may mean the researcher is accused of failing to observe, or taking into account, all relevant factors. The report produced may be a partial, unpersuasive or biased account of the situation which would account for case objectives only partially achieved, “at the implementation phase, particularly if the aims are left vaguely defined or repeatedly altered” (Hakim, 2000, p. 71). Critique is also aimed at the length of time taken to complete the research and accumulation of massive amounts of data (Yin, 2003; Anderson, 1990).

This inquiry is focused on the instrumental, explanatory value of the case. Attention remains on participants in the immediate setting. A range of data gathering tools provides rich data which enhances trustworthiness and authenticity. Data gathered from observations, interviews and document analysis construct a worthwhile story; a substantive theory of capacity building. Rigour of data analysis and interpretation is ensured by meticulous use of grounded theory methods.

3.1.3 Grounded Theory: An Introduction to Method

In 1967, Glaser and Strauss published *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. This book outlined their approach to handling and interpreting qualitative data that was related to a participant observation study of a hospital staff's care in the management of dying patients. Their approach involved inductive generation of theory; theory emerging from the data and not a result of any preconceived theorising (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Glaser and Strauss' approach was a call for qualitative research to move towards theory development.

Grounded theory is “a general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 273). The intent is to generate theory reflective of the interplay between analysis and data collection and further analysis, the constant comparative method²¹ (Glaser, 1992). Charmaz (2003) explains, “Throughout the research process, grounded theorists develop analytic interpretations of their data to focus further data collection, which they use in turn to inform and refine their developing theoretical analyses” (p. 250). The generation of substantive theory²² and the doing of social research become two parts of the same process. The major difference between this methodology and other qualitative approaches is that the building of theory is grounded in data.

This study is essentially a case study that has taken an interpretive approach based on the careful use of grounded theory methods. As would be expected, the literature exerts some influence. The major thrust of emerging thinking, however, resulted from in-depth analysis of the data. From this analysis a substantive theory – the theoretical model of capacity building for school improvement – was generated (see Figure 8, p. 248).

3.1.3.1 Essential Properties of Grounded Theory

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory methodology requires consideration of four properties: fit, understanding, generality and control. It is a methodology that builds theory through discovery of patterns and connections. The theory has to ‘fit’ the data and only then is it considered useful. In other words, the theory must achieve close correspondence to the daily realities of the substantive area and not to personal wishes, biases or predetermined constructs of the researcher. In this inquiry, the researcher entered the field with a desire to explore ‘capacity building’. Through the constant comparative method, a substantive theory – a theoretical model of capacity building – evolved that demonstrated ‘fit’ in accordance with participants’ world views.

²¹ Constant comparison method: “generate concepts: categories and their properties to extend and saturate the theory” (Glaser, 2001, p. 40).

²² Substantive theory: “Since substantive theory is grounded in research on one particular area (work, juvenile delinquency, medical education, and mental health) it might be taken to apply only to that specific area. A theory at such a conceptual level, however, may have important implications and relevance, and become almost automatically a springboard or stepping stone to the development of a grounded formal [or as is more usually said, “general”] theory....Substantive theory is a strategic link in the formulation and generation of grounded formal theory. We believe that although formal theory can be generated directly from data, it is more desirable, and usually necessary, to start the formal theory from a substantive one” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 79).

Second, a clearly stated grounded theory must be understood and make sense to the people working in the substantive area. The rationale behind 'understanding' is that practitioners who might use the theory are more likely to engage in its application if the theory is understood in practice. In terms of application to practitioners' lives, Glaser and Strauss (1967) note, "the theory tends to engender a readiness to use it, for it sharpens their sensitivity to the problems they face and gives them an image of how they can potentially make matters better" (p. 240).

Third, the theory should have 'generality'. This means that the scope of the theory should not be so specific that it is only applicable to a small group of people or to a specific situation. Glaser and Strauss (1967) explain, "the theory (has to be) flexible enough to make a wide variety of changing situations understandable, and also flexible enough to be readily reformulated, virtually on the spot, when it does not work in application" (p. 242). It needs noting that in this study, a substantive theory or theoretical model emerged from the data specific to a single site. Additional research is required if theory / theoretical model application to other sites is considered.

Finally, a good grounded theory has to have 'control'. Practitioners or other people using the theory require control of the phenomenon that is explained by the theory. Glaser and Strauss (1967) maintain, "The substantive theory must enable the person who uses it to have enough control in everyday situations to make its application worth trying" (p. 245). •

3.1.3.2 Critique and Defence of Grounded Theory Methods

Recent debate has called for a reassessment of grounded theory based on claims that the method does not pay sufficient respect to the views of participants in portrayal of their stories (Charmaz, 2003 cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003). Such criticisms imply that grounded theory methods gloss over meaning inherent in stories by fracturing the data aimed at, "analysis rather than the portrayal of subject's experience in its fullness" (ibid., p. 269). Charmaz (2003) notes, by way of summary, that grounded theory:

limits entry into subjects' worlds, and thus reduces understanding of their experiences; (b) curtails representation of both the social world and subjective experience; (c) relies upon the viewer's authority as expert; and (d) posits a set of objectivist procedures on which the analysis rests (in Denzin and Lincoln, 2003, p. 269).

In defence, Glaser and Strauss (1967) confirm fracturing the data leads to creation of codes and categories. The authors recommend fracturing the data as a way of managing and organising

copious quantities of data. For reasons mentioned, microscopic analysis of the data proved useful in this research study.

Use of grounded theory methods provides a systematic approach to analysing qualitative data by enlisting a set of explicit strategies. Charmaz (1990) explains that these strategies can cause confusion. She notes that “A number of criticisms of grounded theory reflect an incomplete understanding of the logic and strategies of the method” which leads to, “applying inappropriate criteria on which to judge the method” (p. 1163). Leaving the reading of the literature until after the categories have been developed is one example cited, by Charmaz, of researchers not understanding the underpinning logic of this central grounded theory tenet. Charmaz states that reading and integrating the literature coming later in the research process is, “a strategy to prompt *exploring* various ways of analyzing the data... (and) means only *delaying* the literature review, not overlooking it or failing to use it”. Furthermore, it “decreases the likelihood that the researcher will already be locked into preconceived conceptual blinders upon entering the field and in interpreting the data” (p. 1163 italics in the original).

Additional weaknesses, Charmaz (1990) notes, are attributed to, “premature commitment to a set of analytic categories, unnecessary jargon, and a lack of clarity about key terms such as theory, category, and saturation” (p. 1164). Locke (2001) adds, “Grounded theory has underscored the active and central role played by researchers in assigning meaning” (p. 84) and this generates contradictions. Contradictions, highlighted by Locke (2001) include: total immersion in the data in order to fully assimilate the situation and, then, to gain sufficient perspective away from the data in order to critically conduct the analysis; creating names that achieve a close fit to the data as opposed to those at an abstract level aimed at high levels of generality; and, “holding in abeyance existing theoretical frameworks so that they do not foreclose potential interpretations and drawing on and cultivating theoretical sensitivity in order to compose categories and a theoretical scheme” (p. 85).

Such contradictions require ability to, “contend with and move back and forth between both the subjective and objective aspects of the analytic process” (Locke, 2001, p. 85). Accordingly, Charmaz (1990) suggests, researchers need to examine their own, “epistemological premises as well as those imbedded in their use of the grounded theory method. Doing so could clarify the relation between the subject and object, sharpen the research process, and delineate the theory of reality to which the researcher subscribes” (p. 1171). Such a theoretical perspective can guide

questions asked of data and provide conceptual depth and breadth while still situating the theory in the discipline. The emerging theory, “would neither contradict nor negate prior work, but would supplement and extend earlier ground-breaking efforts” (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1171).

3.1.3.3 Grounded Theory Methods for Data Analysis: A Personal Choice

Grounded theory, developed in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, has continued to grow and evolve. Strauss, in collaboration with Corbin, initiated a shift in a different direction when they co-authored: *Basics of Qualitative Research: Grounded Theory Procedures and Techniques* (1990). As Charmaz (2003) points out though, both positions remain embedded in a positivistic paradigm. Strauss and Corbin, however, adopt a more interpretivist stance. Although they assume an objective reality and aim for unbiased data collection through a set of technical procedures that espouse verification, they also advocate for participants’ expression of voice, representation and articulation of own reality (Charmaz, 2003). Charmaz (2003), by adopting a constructivist stance, adds to the ongoing evolution of grounded theory. Constructivism, Charmaz suggests, assumes multiple social realities, mutual creation of knowledge by the researcher and participants and aims to achieve interpretive understandings of meaning (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). This inquiry adopts a similar position to that of Charmaz because the topic of capacity building for school improvement is situated within an interpretivist paradigm and relies on participants’ perception in terms of conception. Such an approach advocates for joint construction of meaning, flexibility, accumulation of ‘rich’ information through multiple use of data collection methods and analysis of data reflective of context. Rigour associated with development of a substantive theory through use of grounded theory methods is strictly maintained. As Charmaz (2003) confirms, “diverse researchers can use grounded theory methods to develop constructivist studies derived from interpretivist approaches. Grounded theorists need not subscribe to positivist or objectivist assumptions” (in Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 252).

Grounded theory, noted for its rigour, provides a systematic way of constructing theory that illuminates human behaviour (Charmaz, 1990; Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). In contrast to theory generated by the logical-deduction approach, theory that is grounded is the result of ‘discovery’ through concurrent data collection and analysis – the constant comparative method. Grounded theory can be “used to obtain the intricate details about the phenomena such as feelings, thought processes, and emotions that are difficult to extract or learn about through more

conventional research methods” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 11). Theoretical sensitivity²³ (thinking about data), using emerging theoretical categories to shape data collection and ask further questions, and theoretical sampling²⁴ – checking, filling out and extending theoretical categories of the emerging theory while distant from the field – builds substantive theory (Charmaz, 1990). In this inquiry, achieving methodological thoroughness has meant showing concern with developing a range of relevant conceptual categories²⁵, saturating those categories, and successively peeling back the layers to reveal the substantive theory. For example, the researcher pursued, clarified and developed the category of parents as stakeholders in the capacity building process by attending ‘Friends of the School’ meetings and home-school functions. Observations at such events yielded rich data, expanded on initial parent involvement categories and ultimately led to inclusion of parents as a covariate property²⁶ of capacity building.

Grounded theory is promoted as a useful tool in areas which have little or no prior investigation and where no applicable conceptual framework is available within which to investigate the phenomenon (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). As noted in Chapter Two, there is a paucity of literature on capacity building for school improvement. Furthermore, available literature fails to sufficiently address macro level political, cultural and socio-economic issues with implications for stakeholders’ intent on building capacity for school improvement. Glaser and Strauss’ (1967) perspective on theory building is apt here. In such situations, Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate ‘construction’ of theory rather than theory ‘testing’. Theory, grounded in the rigours of observation, is allowed to emerge. In addition, Glaser and Strauss promote two types of theory using a grounded approach. The first is substantive theory that emerges, “from the study of a phenomenon situated in one particular situation context” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 174). The substantive theory, in this inquiry, concerns capacity building for school improvement in one school setting. The second type of theory is formal theory²⁷ developed, “for a formal, or

²³ Theoretical sensitivity: “The ability to respond to the subtle nuances of, and cues to meanings in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 35).

²⁴ Theoretical sampling: “Sampling on the basis of emerging concepts, with the aim being to explore the dimensional range or varied conditions along which the properties of concepts vary” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 73).

²⁵ Categories: “Concepts that stand for phenomena” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101).

²⁶ Covariate property refers to a property that is related to other properties but is not causal.

²⁷ Formal Theory: “More formal theories are less specific to a group and place, and as such, apply to a wider range of disciplinary concerns and problems. Formal theories usually are derived from studying phenomena under a variety of conditions such as researching disclosure/nondisclosure under conditions of people acting as spies, engaged in illicit relationships, carrying out illegal activities such as theft, belonging to secret societies and groups, or picking up on someone in a bar or on a street corner” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 23).

conceptual, area of sociological inquiry” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. 32). Formal theories are less specific to a group or place and are usually derived from studying the phenomena under a variety of conditions. In this research, a potential formal theory of capacity building could extend the substantive theory (see Figure 8, p. 248) to application in other sites. Researchers contemplating school improvement may determine which parts of the substantive theory to apply and / or are valid in new settings and whether modifications are necessary (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Theory building at “various levels of generality” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 6) is appealing. In terms of this inquiry, it may legitimise knowledge growth from low-level theory in the substantive area to potential usage at a more abstract level.

Grounded theory allows “prediction and explanation” and gives “the practitioner some understanding and control of situations” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 3). The theory brings the researcher closer to basic processes and issues experienced by them. For this research, rigours of process meant constant recourse to data collection and analysis as part of ongoing field work. Constant comparison of data and development of initial codes ensured a “match between scientific categories and participant reality” (LeCompte and Goetz, 1988, p. 43). Use of grounded theory methods enabled the researcher to capture and record this school’s journey as experienced by participants.

Grounded theory methods promote discovery; theory emergence when the researcher understands and appreciates the relatedness and meaning of the data in context (McCaslin & Scott, 2002). Personal engagement in the ‘discovery process’ meant that the researcher was able to bring her philosophical, theoretical and methodological interests to the study. As such, the researcher’s practical and theoretical knowledge and experiences allowed her to appreciate school processes and build in “special data-gathering questions” (Charmaz, 1990, p. 1165). Her tacit knowledge assisted in understanding complexities associated with capacity building for school improvement. However, as Charmaz (1990) claims, the challenge was always one of:

When wedded to concepts in their disciplines, researchers may neither see beyond them nor use them in new ways...Using the grounded theory method, on the one hand, necessitates developing, refining, revising, and transcending concepts within the discipline. Often a social constructionist stance elicits a fresh look at existing concepts. That alone contributes to revising and refining them. On the other hand, using grounded theory means dealing with the rendering of actual data (p. 1165).

In this inquiry, Strauss and Corbin's approach is adopted. For example, the researcher employed the paradigm framework to systematically analyse data in revealing relationships between vision, school culture, stakeholder activity and professional development to capacity building (see Chapter Five). The method addressed concerns by Locke (2001) related to case study research producing first-order, factually based, descriptive accounts of a case. Use of grounded theory methods avoided criticisms of case study research related to "The procedures... are not always clear and do not seem to be codified" (p. 17). In this study, rigors of categorising and coding the raw data provided systematic data analysis.

3.1.4 Unique Characteristics of the Research Design

This research is an interpretivist case study utilising grounded theory methods in data analysis. The design's unique characteristics establishes appropriate 'fit' with both the researcher's set of beliefs and values underpinning the research and the aims of this study.

The researcher's involvement with schools has increased her awareness of the complexity and subtleties of setting that generate capacity. She is aware of work accomplished by stakeholders in building school capacity. Interviews provided opportunities for participants to narrate their stories in ways that were both personal and emotional. Exploring capacity through use of interviews meant examining the data with sensitivity and care, particularly towards participants' past experiences linked to the school's complex and, at times, turbulent history. The process meant building strong bonds of researcher-participant trust in pursuit of joint construction of meaning.

In this inquiry, fieldwork and the generation of data depended on participant support. The researcher's background in teaching allowed her to contribute in numerous ways to the corporate life of the school. She relieved in classes, helped out at functions such as the 'Fun Fiesta' night, assisted in the painting of the school library mural and undertook the role of 'Critical Friend' in the latest ERO review. Lending a hand in all school activities cemented relational trust and credibility in the researcher's ability to conduct such a study (see Appendix A). Total immersion in the field added an ethnographic dimension to the inquiry. The intention was to capture and derive knowledge of capacity building as events unfolded naturally. In the undertaking of fieldwork, the researcher acknowledged potential for role conflict and worked cooperatively with participants by structuring and negotiating data collection so as to avoid harm. At all times the aims of this study were firmly upheld and data collection undertaken in an overt manner. Built in

opportunities for participants to ask questions and raise issues of concern maintained an overt stance in the collection of data.

Capacity building for school improvement is complex. Capacity building for school improvement is also unique to site. Perceptions of members' involvement in the capacity building process provided insights from which to build a substantive theory, a theoretical framework of capacity building for improvement. The design facilitated the emergence of complexity. For example, data collection was eclectic. Apart from negotiated observations, interviews and document analysis, the researcher's flexible stance allowed participants to guide and direct her actions in data collection. Such flexibility necessitated additional time spent in the field witnessing the unfolding of events and / or critical incidents, engaging in informal conversations and always displaying a readiness to learn from participants who were eager to 'show and tell' (see Appendix A).

The topic demands depth of data to appreciate complexity. Schools, it is argued, occupy nested positions; they are part of a wider circle with influences on them from the local community, national government and global patterns and trends. To comprehend this notion of complexity, the researcher interviewed outside agency representatives associated with the school, parent representatives from the local community and school personnel with various site-related responsibilities. Observations were undertaken at various school sites and home-school partnership events. Appendix B presents an overview of interviews and observations and documents used for analysis. Data sources were planned to obtain maximum information and depth of coverage of practice and school events.

Utilising grounded theory methods demands of the researcher flexibility to accommodate unanticipated information. It requires a rethinking of position and method based on emerging data. In this inquiry, researcher flexibility was exercised in numerous ways. Use of interview guidelines altered as deeper insights into the phenomena developed and the researcher became more familiar with the grounded approach. The term "Leadership" changed to "Stakeholders as change agents" to portray what was indicated by the empirical data. The researcher undertook additional data collection such as attending the Year 6 graduation ceremony to fully appreciate stakeholder contribution in facilitating capacity building. In line with emerging data, the focus and title of the inquiry changed from 'Vision-led school improvement: Building Capacity for Organisational Learning' to 'Capacity Building for School Improvement'.

3.2 Role of the Researcher

Case study and utilisation of grounded theory methods for data analysis draw on practical, theoretical knowledge and experiences of researchers in, for example, naming and comparing of data and generating codes (Locke, 2001; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Researchers are forced to spend time attending to and working with the data (Locke, 2001). Such activity demands flexibility, openness and acceptance of ambiguity (for example in coding changes) throughout the research process. Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that, as the researcher is the main instrument in data collection and analysis, attention to, “appropriateness, authenticity, credibility, intuitiveness, receptivity, reciprocity, and sensitivity”, (p. 6) are essential. They emphasise:

- “The ability to step back and critically analyse situations
- The ability to recognize the tendency toward bias
- The ability to think abstractly
- The ability to be flexible and open to helpful criticism
- Sensitivity to the words and actions of respondents
- A sense of absorption and devotion to the work process” (ibid., p. 7).

In practice this involved the researcher being present on site and open to participants’ stories, following up on leads as suggested by participants, engaging in preliminary examination of the data, keeping memos that recorded emerging categories and refinement of the substantive theory and maintaining a presence in the school till data saturation was reached.

3.2.1 Personal and Professional Background

As noted in Chapter One, the researcher has had over 25 years of teaching experience in a variety of New Zealand primary schools and held a variety of senior management positions. In her advisory role, she worked with schools across the sector (primary through to secondary) implementing *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework*. Her professional background extends to lecturing in graduate and post graduate courses at the Faculty of Education, University of Auckland, Auckland College of Education and Massey University. All experiences have generated a wealth of knowledge in leadership and teaching.

As part of senior management teams in schools, the researcher has had the privilege of working alongside principals, educational authorities, iwi and Pasifika groups initiating school improvement. She has had first hand experience in turning around a school categorised as ‘failing’. She brings to the study considerable tacit knowledge which enabled her to empathise

with site participants engaged in system change (Patton, 1990). She was able to achieve greater understanding of participant activity and practice in advancing capacity building for school improvement. In terms of data interpretation, she was better able to articulate participants' experiences from an insider perspective (Patton, 1990). Her professional knowledge and experiences have been invaluable in the undertaking of this research.

3.3 The Research Process

In this section, the following aspects of process are discussed: choosing a research site, the context of inquiry – a brief description, gaining entry and managing exit and ethical conditions.

The fieldwork phase of data collection extended over a period of twelve months. During this time, the researcher established a pattern of negotiated entry with the senior management team. Days scheduled for data collection were staff and team meeting days. On-site days meant the researcher would arrive at school and spend the day relief teaching, teaching art to children with special abilities and attending meetings (see Appendix A). Full immersion in the setting provided opportunities to learn from practice. The researcher kept a journal and took photographs as part of her field text records. Clandinin and Connelly (1994, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) suggest field texts are created to represent aspects of field experience relevant to the inquiry. Journal entries and photographs were a means of reflecting on data collected and participants' stories and experiences in context. Photographs were another way of capturing what had been observed (Patton, 1990). Journal entries provided descriptive accounts of specific actions and conditions. They recorded the researcher's feelings, reflections and reactions to experiences encountered. Field texts were used to facilitate interpretations, commence analysis and cope with numerous complex issues that accompanied gradual emergence of theory.

An interpretive case study and use of grounded theory methods meant field work could not be fully confirmed prior to implementation in practice. While inquiry aims, plans for observations, interviews and document analysis were initially devised, the actual design unfolded as the fieldwork commenced. Design flexibility relates to the open-ended nature of this inquiry and a pursuit of understanding complexity (Patton, 1990). For example, on numerous occasions the principal, deputy principal and other staff members would invite the researcher to meetings they felt were pertinent to the research. All invitations were accepted. In the early phase of the research, such opportunities provided additional information to saturate emerging categories and themes. Towards the final phase of data collection, such opportunities confirmed and verified

decisions made. The researchers stance is succinctly captured by Patton (1990) when he states, “The point is to do what makes sense, report fully on what was done, why it was done, and what the implications are for findings” (p. 62).

3.3.1 Sampling Strategy - Selection of School

This inquiry is a qualitative study. It is focused on achieving depth of understanding of capacity building in a single case, purposefully selected. Patton (1990) explains, “The logic and power of purposeful sampling lies in selecting *information-rich cases* for study in depth. Information rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research, thus the term *purposeful sampling*” (p. 169 italics in the original). Patton (1990) offers 15 purposeful sampling strategies from which to select information rich cases. In this research intensity sampling, snowball or chain sampling, criterion sampling and opportunistic sampling have been utilised in site selection.

The sampling strategies employed relate closely to the researcher’s progressive association with the selected school, extending back to the time when she received an invitation to attend the newly appointed principal’s powhiri in October 2001. In June 2002, the researcher received an invitation to attend a meeting with Ministry of Education officials, an outside agency representative and cluster principals. The idea was to brainstorm ideas on school improvement that could draw a halt to and / or reverse a dysfunctional ethos prevalent in the school at the time. The invitation was issued because it was felt that the researcher could share her recently acquired school improvement knowledge, initiated at her own school, with participants of this school. At the meeting, barriers to school change were identified and action plans discussed. Barriers included a negative school culture, low academic standards, non-productive (verging on violent) in and out of class student behaviour, community demographic changes and property issues – vandalism and generally run-down environmental conditions. Such factors created a negative school image, a falling roll (families by-passing the school to attend neighbouring schools) and low staff morale. The researcher’s input, at this meeting, was one of collegial support.

In January 2003, the researcher was invited to attend a ‘teacher only day’ as an observer. At this meeting, staff reviewed their achievements resulting from the PATH chart (initial vision) initiated and implemented in September 2002. Opportunities to review the vision and move the school forward were witnessed. The review revealed that the school had made considerable progress in areas of process, system and structural change. This resulted in development of a positive school

culture. The school was gaining a reputation for making a difference to student outcomes. Educators involved in the school and known to the researcher actively promoted the school's remarkable turnaround in educational networks of which the researcher was a member.

Purposeful sampling strategies utilised in site selection involved intensity sampling (an information-rich case that manifests the phenomenon of interest intensely but not extremely) and snowball or chain sampling where information is gleaned about the case from people who know people who know about the information richness about the case (Patton, 1990). For example, groups such as Resource Teachers for Learning and Behaviour (RTLBs) and TEAM Solutions²⁸ openly discussed site-based initiatives leading to changes in pedagogy and resulting in positive student behaviour. Such information and events witnessed at school meetings that were attended motivated the researcher to consider using this school for her study. This suggested the use of opportunistic sampling strategy.

By mid 2003, the school showed signs of being a 'moving' school (Stoll & Fink, 1996). It displayed the following characteristics: a strong drive for organisational change based on the school's vision, professional leadership exercised at all levels of the school, an emphasis on student achievement, teaching and learning, a supportive school culture and well supported, on-going professional development associated with staff development and student learning.

School selection was further reinforced by the school meeting the aforementioned criteria, which reinforced employment of 'criteria' or 'criterion' sampling strategy in site selection. By way of summary, this school's selection was more than serendipity. Essentially the researcher employed purposive and convenience sampling in site selection (Patton, 1990).

3.3.2 A Brief Description of the School

This state primary school is located in Auckland. It is a contributing (Year 1-6) school with a decile two ranking. The roll generated entitlement is approximately 16 teachers. Combined with other staffing entitlements, the school has just over 20 teachers. At the time of data collection in 2004, the roll was approximately 330. The school's gender composition included 53% girls and 47% boys.

²⁸ TEAM Solutions is an external agency that offers assistance to schools. TEAM Solutions is government subsidised.

This school is a multicultural school that serves a diverse community. Its ethnic composition includes: New Zealand European/Pakeha, 16%; Samoan, 14%; Tongan, 11%; Indian, 11%; Maori, 10%; Ethiopian, 6%; Somalian, 5%; Niuean, 4%; Cook Island, 4% and “other”, 19%. These figures were taken from the latest ERO report (2005). The ethnicity of the school’s student body reflects changes that have taken place within the local community over the past decade. The low socio-economic background of many students, combined with the influx of refugee migrant families, presents this school with many challenges in, for example, curriculum delivery and meeting the needs of a diverse student / community population. The local community have, and continue to exercise influence on capacity building for school improvement.

This school is acknowledged by the educational community as having achieved a remarkable turnaround over a short time span of two years. The latest ERO (2005) report claims students express pride in their school, meet high expectations set for them, benefit from a wide range of learning and cultural experiences, engage in positive student-staff relationships and take advantage of opportunities to participate in school-wide decision making. Of interest are ERO’s comments on professional learning, leadership, and school and community partnerships. The school is acknowledged as having a professional learning culture aimed at improving teaching and learning. Extensive professional development and teaching practices aligned to the school’s strategic and annual plans makes for effective teaching and learning practices. Staff work collaboratively and collegially in ensuring high quality teaching and learning practices. The principal’s open, collaborative and consultative leadership style is noted as empowering others to develop their leadership skills. She is a strong advocate for the school. Senior managers are acknowledged for their expertise and knowledge. Members of the board of trustees are clear about their governance roles. They ensure the school is well governed with clear policies and procedures underpinning systemic operations. All school stakeholders are involved in strengthening home-school partnerships. A strong focus on developing community is evident in efforts to promote parental involvement in school life.

3.3.3 Gaining Entry and Managing Exit

Entry to the site can best be described as evolving and fluid. Association with the school commenced in October 2001 with the researcher being invited to attend the newly appointed principal’s powhiri. Between 2002 and 2003, the researcher attended an official advisory and school staff meeting related to initiating school-based improvement. In both situations the researcher’s role was one of supporter and observer. Attendance at these meetings was at the

request of the principal. In hindsight, such meetings (albeit sporadic) proved invaluable. They provided opportunities to meet staff and become familiar with school structures and processes. Towards the end of 2003, the researcher invited the principal and staff to participate in this study and was delighted with the positive response she received from all school stakeholders.

In March 2004, the researcher ran three formal, explanatory meetings to officially gain site entry. Regardless of past associations, considerable time and meticulous planning went into preparing for entry and site access. For the researcher, it was imperative participants understood the parameters and goals of the study. Negotiated entry and access lasted a couple of months. Participant involvement in the research was based on their willingness to contribute and not on any form of coercion imposed by the researcher.

Initially, the researcher met with the principal and senior management team to present and discuss the research and to answer all queries. She attended a board of trustees meeting where presentation of the study took place and permission to undertake this study was granted (see Appendix C). In addition, a full staff meeting was attended where details of the proposed study were discussed. At all meetings, participants received information sheets (see Appendix D) and formal consent forms (see Appendix E). Ethical issues were addressed in written form via information provided in the research information package. They were also addressed verbally by the researcher answering individual queries during and after each presentation.

Design decisions to end the study required just as much thought as those of entry and access to site (Bogdan & Biklen, 2003). As Janesick (1994, cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) states, "The researcher must decide when to leave the field setting, often an emotional and traumatic event because of a close rapport that can develop during the course of the study" (p. 214). Following data collection, the researcher initiated a gradual 'easing out' or transition from the field by reducing her observations and time spent in the school from two or three days to one day per week and then to attending 'normal', end of the year, celebratory functions. Data collection completion, coinciding with what happens normally in schools at the end the year, seemed a fitting way to eventually stop the visits altogether. As Bogdan and Biklen (2003) suggest, "this transition is probably psychologically helpful to both researchers and subject" (p. 108).

In stopping field work, it was also important to leave the door open for returning to fulfil certain obligations such as the delivery of a final report. An approximate time for this was negotiated

with the principal prior to leaving. In the months that followed completion of field work, the researcher continued to maintain her contact with participants. She has returned to the school with overseas visitors keen to explore school improvement in a New Zealand school. Periodically her return visits have also involved saying farewell to staff leaving the school. The researcher has not totally said goodbye. A final goodbye will eventuate when the final report is delivered and this rests on completion of the thesis.

3.3.4 Ethical Issues

Stake (2003) comments, “Qualitative researchers are guests in the private spaces of the world. Their manners should be good and their codes of ethics strict” (p. 154). The researcher was aware that unethical practice in, for example, misreporting or underreporting the truth, could seriously disadvantage the school and its participants. Great care was taken to ensure that all research activity met Massey University’s *Code of Ethical Conduct for Teaching and Research Involving Human Subjects*. The researcher applied for and was granted ethical approval for the undertaking of this study from Massey University Human Ethics Committee (see Appendix F).

Ontological, epistemological and methodological beliefs underpinning this inquiry provided a further way of working through ethical issues. The relativist ontological stance infers that there is no one way to perceive reality and subjectivist epistemology and methodology means that what is sought is a socially constructed reality, “selected, built, and embellished by social actors (individuals) from among the situations, stimuli, and events of their experience” (Lincoln & Guba in Lincoln & Denzin, 2003, p. 227). In this inquiry, the concern is not with a single truth but with construction based on individual perception, shared among group members in context. Ethical issues relate to perceptions, described by Lincoln and Guba (2003) as personal, idiosyncratic, plentiful and diverse and identified as:

- Conducting an inquiry dependent on face-to-face contact with participants;
- Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity;
- Building and preserving relationships of trust;
- Open negotiation of meaning with respect to participant views; and
- Framing the study thoughtfully – knowing what to include and exclude and how to represent ‘self’ (Lincoln & Guba, 2003).

In what follows, Lincoln and Guba’s points are discussed in relation to this study and linked to ethical considerations.

As this inquiry is dependent on person to person sharing of information, the researcher became the main data collector; a position, that Lincoln and Guba (2003) note, places the researcher and participant in jeopardy as each gives, takes, shares and teaches the other. It creates "vulnerability as knower and known exchange roles, barter trust, and reconstruct identities" (Lincoln & Guba, 2003, p. 229). Furthermore, "The traditional power relationship between researcher and researched is tipped in favour of the researcher, who has both institutional sanctions and superior substantive background to support his or her personal conclusion" (ibid., p. 229). This argument is pertinent, particularly since the researcher had a previous association, albeit brief, with the school as someone with tacit knowledge on school improvement. The researcher dealt with this by adopting an overt approach. The nature and objectives of the inquiry were clearly outlined at project commencement and integrity of purpose maintained throughout the research through to completion. Research activity was open to scrutiny at all times. Deception was deemed to be unethical practice, in violation of participants' rights to autonomy, dignity, privacy and with the potential to destroy valued trust built up between the researcher and participants.

The need to ensure anonymity, confidentiality and privacy remained a concern throughout the project. There were two aspects to consider in terms of breach of confidence. First, as the case school had endured a recent negative history, reference to past events raised possibilities of apportioning blame. With respect to current participants who may have had past associations with the school, the approach taken was one of acknowledging the past and 'moving-on'. With the exception of student achievement data, data collected related to current events. Discussion of the 'past' was kept to a minimum. Second, while anonymity, confidentiality and privacy were addressed by the use of pseudonyms, and the researcher was scrupulous in not revealing actual data sources, it was inevitable that expressions or particular views may be recognisable. Participants were informed that while all due care would be taken to protect their anonymity and confidentiality, this could not be totally guaranteed. A procedure that enabled participants to have greater control and to feel more secure about their contributions was member checking of data. The researcher returned all interview transcripts to participants for verification. In some cases the process was repeatedly undertaken to ensure authenticity. In addition, the researcher ran a staff feedback session on initial findings related to school culture. This meant school participants could authenticate or negate tentative findings. Throughout the research process, assurances of trust were paramount; anonymity, confidentiality and privacy remained at the forefront of all activity.

Trust, Lincoln and Guba (2003) note, demands, “forthrightness, clear and fair explication of the purposes of the research, and authentic presentation of the researcher’s self—conditions which require time to fulfil” (p. 230-231). The researcher was always open and honest in her dealings with participants. She spent considerable time in the field undertaking research activity with sensitivity and respect to all stakeholders and the school.

Negotiation was another important facet of this inquiry expressed in relationships between the researcher and participants. From the beginning, a participative mode of inquiry was emphasised with locus of control shared between the researcher and participants. It was their story narrated by the researcher. Negotiation was enacted in ways by which data were collected and initially interpreted. According to Lincoln and Guba (2003), gaining participant cooperation, “is the best and only way to proceed in an inquiry marked by face-to-face contact, by relationships which must be re-formed at every stage of the inquiry process, and by intense need to have respondents be the ultimate arbiters of credibility and plausibility” (p. 231).

Two ethical issues required attention in the ‘writing-up’ phase of the project. First, inclusion of researcher ‘self’ had to be considered and, second, choices concerning what to include and exclude became more pronounced as writing-up proceeded. In the ‘writing up’ phase, the researcher had to remind herself that this was the participants’ story, jointly constructed and recounted by the researcher. It was, therefore, important to thoroughly examine the data and construct a story that authentically captured capacity building for school improvement from participants’ perspectives. In terms of choice of what to include and exclude, the decision was also not solely that of the researcher. The report, it was argued, represented joint construction of meaning and inclusive of everyone’s contribution. In a way the research design set guidelines for the written report. Joint construction was considered legitimate practice in data collection and in the early analysis phase of data interpretation (Lincoln & Guba, 2003). Participant validation in the “writing up” phase, concerned returning early copies of the “findings” chapters for accuracy checks. As Lincoln and Guba (2003) state, “When interpretations are negotiated and settled, then data and incidents supporting those interpretations are chosen” and, “cooperation and negotiation between researcher and respondents/participants ...maintain(s) research authenticity” (p. 233).

3.4 Data Collection Procedures

In accordance with the interpretivist paradigm, case study approach and grounded theory methods, data collection tools employed were interviews, participant and non-participant

observations and document analysis. Having said this, however, everything that provided insight on how this school built its capacity for school improvement was considered a source of data. This stance demanded as much time as possible spent in the field. Data collection lasted approximately ten months from entry in March to exit in December. Appendix A presents an example of time and diversification of data collection over a one month period. Time spent in the field and types of data collected varied per month but the focus remained on:

- Stakeholder activity in the capacity building process; stakeholders' visible and invisible roles and responsibilities;
- Processes, systems and structures that build capacity; an examination of practice;
- Frequency, type and nature of outside agency input in capacity building;
- Parent involvement particular to site and in line with this inquiry's aims;
- Professional development provided and processes for knowledge production and utilisation. This included knowledge management with the potential to change practice;
- Description, purpose, quality and nature of site interaction linked to capacity building;
- Cultural artefacts;
- Group norms; and
- Philosophical underpinnings used to define 'work' in this school.

3.4.1 Interviews

Patton (1990) suggests the purpose of interviewing "is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 278). Furthermore, "the task for the interviewer is to make it possible for the person being interviewed to bring the interviewer into his or her world. *The quality of the information obtained during an interview is largely dependent on the interviewer*" (p. 279 italics in the original).

Capacity building for school improvement is a complex construct. Interviews focused on individual and collective experiences, behaviours, actions and activities in defining the concept and establishing a deeper appreciation of practice. Interview data revealed key attributes and practices that build capacity. In addition, data identified goals, intentions, desires and values of participants important in both process and product. In this inquiry, three different types of interviews were conducted: individual in-depth interviews, informal interviews by way of conversations and group interviews.

3.4.1.1 Individual In-Depth Interviews

One of the best ways to acquire information about an individual's thoughts, beliefs, reasoning, motivations and feelings is through in-depth, unstructured interviews. Such interviews allow the researcher to enter the inner world of another person to gain understanding from their perspective (Patton, 1987). In this study, in-depth interviews elicited depth of data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Hussey & Hussey, 1997; Patton, 1990) as participants were encouraged to reflect, discuss and share their assumptions, beliefs, feelings and experiences on capacity building for school improvement.

In the quest for coverage, accuracy and uniformity, an interview guide was designed and used in the early phase of data collection to steer the conversation (see Appendix G). Initially, the researcher posed questions related to topics she wished to explore. It soon became apparent that such questions deflected participants from talking about their ideas and what was of interest to them. The guides appeared to probe areas of interest to the researcher, enforcing a type of uniformity of response. Furthermore, emerging data suggested a shift in focus was required. As signalled earlier, this informed a new way of constructing the topic and data collection. 'Vision led school improvement: Building capacity for organisational learning' was changed to 'Capacity building for school improvement'. Interviews, considered initially to be semi-structured, altered to encompass a more in-depth construction. Interview guides were subsequently used to initiate thought and appropriate an overall sense of direction. In other words, participants' views became the focus with guides proving of minimal use. Interviews presented opportunities to engage in conversations; to discover individual perceptions on capacity building for school improvement.

School participants interviewed were: three senior managers (principal, deputy principal and assistant principal), three senior teachers with syndicate responsibilities, eight classroom teachers, two specialist teachers, four teacher aides and two support staff (see Appendix B). Selection of classroom and specialist teachers resulted from employing purposive sampling techniques. Participants invited to participate had been involved in initiating school improvement over a three year period, had experienced school change and represented different levels of school organisation (junior, middle and senior) with various roles and responsibilities. The researcher also interviewed four parents, two board members and four representatives from outside agencies (Ministry of Education and service providers). Participant selection here was also purposefully determined. Participants invited to participate in the study had experienced school change in various ways over a three year period. They had contributed to and, to some degree, continued to

maintain involvement in this school's on-going improvement drive. One outside agency member did not sign the release of transcript form (see Appendix H) which meant exclusion of this participant's interview data in the study.

All interviews, bar one, were taped. The interview not taped was at the participant's request – stated levels of comfort. Interview protocols that informed participants of their rights and information ownership details were explained prior to interview commencement. The researcher made a note concerning disposal of taped material or return of tapes according to participants' wishes. All interviews were transcribed by the researcher and returned to participants for member checking. Member checks confirmed authenticity and verification of data. It was the intention of the researcher to note gestures and non-verbal expressions as they occurred during the course of the interview. However, this activity counteracted participant-researcher build up of rapport. The ability to convey empathy and understanding was threatened and, as obtaining rich data was considered critical, note taking was quickly dismissed.

3.4.1.2 Informal Interview

Unscheduled, informal interviews are described as being open-ended questions. They assume the form of informal conversations or chats, valued for their ability to clarify points and connect with any incident that may arise spontaneously during the day (Patton, 1990). Informal conversations allowed the researcher to be responsive to individual and situational changes (Patton, 1990). They increased the salience and relevance of questions asked of events observed.

Patton (1990) claims that weaknesses associated with informal interview techniques relate to extra time spent in the collection of systematic information if certain questions do not arise naturally. The technique is also prone to interviewer effect – that is, the researcher's skills to “interact easily with people in a variety of settings, generate rapid insights, formulate questions quickly and smoothly, and guard against asking questions that impose interpretations on the situation by the structure of the questions” (Patton, 1990, p. 282). In addition, data are difficult to pull together and analyse. In other words, different questions generate different responses and the researcher has to sift through all responses to discover patterns (Patton, 1990).

In this inquiry, the spontaneity and flexibility with which these interviews occurred proved invaluable. The researcher used this technique to follow up leads from observations by talking to participants who were more intimately involved in the research (senior managers and participants

who had signed the interview section of the consent form). According to Glaser and Strauss (1967) and Strauss (1987), this technique is integral to theoretical sampling. Informal conversations, in conjunction with observations, permitted the researcher to appreciate the unfolding of events in context. The researcher's prolonged stay in the field facilitated lengthy periods of exposure to all school activity and generated the asking of questions as a natural part of one-to-one interaction.

3.4.1.3 Group Interviews

Two group interviews were held with small groups of school personnel: the senior management team (interviewed in the early phase of data collection) and bilingual support workers and associated teacher representatives (interviewed towards the end of data collection). Participants in each formed a relatively homogenous group.

Senior managers were asked to consider the journey the school had taken towards improvement over a three year period. Participants got to hear each other's responses and made additional comments often in response to what someone else had said. This dialogue produced high quality data with respect to: structures and procedures that led to school improvement, use of outside facilitators in the process, change in terms of school culture, staff development, leadership, use of resources and the emotional impact of the 'journey'.

Participants in the bilingual support group were asked to reflect on how their input facilitated the building of school capacity in terms of home-school partnerships. Data collected related to how changes in community demographics had impacted on the school and ways in which the school had managed issues related to: meeting the diverse needs of 'refugee' parents and students from countries such as Ethiopia and Somalia, restructuring school systems to accommodate cultural differences and tapping into wider community networks to support programmatic change.

Both group interviews had several advantages. They provided a form of quality control as participants tended "to provide checks and balances on each other" (Patton, 1990, p. 336). Topics of interest important to the participants surfaced and it was fairly easy to assess consistency in the shared views expressed. In the case of the bilingual support workers, a collective but, at the same time, individual voice emerged. All participants expressed similar messages of how this school actively promoted parents / caregivers involvement. Advantages of group interviews far outweighed any disadvantages associated with time constraints, note taking difficulties, and

conflicting points of view (Patton, 1990). In both group interviews, the researcher recorded information on large sheets of paper but also encouraged participants to contribute in the recording of data. Collated and typed information was distributed back to participants for feedback and accuracy checks.

3.4.2 Observation

Observation is defined as the watching of behavioural patterns of people in certain situations to obtain information about the phenomenon of interest (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). An advantage of observation is the ability to record actual behaviour rather than reports of intended behaviour. Some recognised limitations of observations are lack of time, cost and that it may not always be possible to determine exactly why people behave as they do. Other concerns relate to ethics, objectivity, visibility, technology for recording what is said or done, boredom and the impact the researcher has on those observed (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

Angrosino and Mays de Perez (2000) define observation as 'context'. They emphasise: conscious adoption of patterns that make sense in the social situation, ongoing negotiation of situational identity, validation of behaviour through use of internal and external criteria and establishment of contextualised meaning of participant reality. Observation, thus framed, remains purposive and appropriate in the natural context.

In this inquiry, direct contact with participants and the phenomena in question had the advantage of drawing the researcher into, "the phenomenological complexity of the world where connections, correlations and causes can be witnessed as and how they unfold" (Adler & Adler, 1994 in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 378). Observations were free from any predetermined categories of measurement or responses. They facilitated a search for concepts and categories that were meaningful to participants. Participant and non-participant observations were both employed but on different occasions and for different purposes.

3.4.2.1 Participant Observation

Participant observation is a technique which involves the researcher entering and being involved with the area being studied. The aim is to obtain a detailed understanding of the values, motives, and practices of those observed (Hussey & Hussey, 1997) in an interpretivist way as opposed to a 'scientific', 'positivist' position (Atkinson & Hammersley in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

Participant observations were conducted at home-school events such as the Fun Fiesta night (see Appendix A; B). Such events provided opportunities to observe and contribute to collective activity that generates capacity; fund raising in association with the Fun Fiesta night, for example. As part of the data collection, the researcher immersed herself in daily school life. Her involvement in teaching and working alongside students and staff (see Appendix A; B) provided numerous opportunities to engage in participant observations.

3.4.2.2 Non-participant Observation

The purpose of non-participant observation is to observe and record what people do in terms of action and behaviour without the researcher being involved (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). The observer, in this respect, is separate from activities taking place. This is a technique closely aligned with objective research that suggests reality is outside of the researcher and can be learned through observation rather than interaction. Such reasoning, however, does not mean exclusion from interpretive research. As argued by Marshall and Rossman (1995), the technique “entails the systematic noting and recording of events, behaviour, and artefacts (objects) in the social setting chosen for study” (p. 79).

In this inquiry, all school stakeholders provided written consent for the researcher to observe at negotiated meetings (see Appendix E). The researcher brought her own tacit knowledge to the observation. This knowledge, as explained earlier, facilitated a deeper appreciation of events as they unfolded. Non-participant observations provided opportunities to observe practice, study interconnections between individuals and groups and listen to teacher talk pertinent to capacity building. Non-participant observation allowed data to be collected in ways that avoided role conflict; the researcher deliberately adopted a detached position when conducting such observations.

The researcher attended school, team and literacy professional development meetings (see Appendix B). Attendance at professional development meetings provided evidence of capacity building practices leading to systemic change. At these meetings individual and group involvement in change management became evident. As evidenced in the data, negotiation and decision making processes were witnessed along with systems, processes and structures that advance capacity. Data from these meetings proved useful in explaining how individual, collective and systemic knowledge were acquired, modified and transferred (vertically and horizontally) to reach all levels of the school. Observational data were also used to corroborate

information gleaned from other sources. The data were later organised into themes and used to saturate emerging categories and sub-categories.

Non-participant observations at board of trustees, 'Friends of the School', cultural group, home-school partnership and 'parent chat' meetings provided opportunities to witness community contribution to the capacity building process. Although aforementioned meetings were open to the public, the researcher sought permission from respective parties such as the principal, board chair, 'Friends of the School' coordinator and Samoan cultural group leaders prior to attending the meetings. Negotiated entry seemed a necessary part of working with people. It continued to place respect for participants at the forefront of all research activity.

3.4.3 Document analysis

Schools are knowledge-based organisations operating in the field of knowledge management. Knowledge, progressively accumulated, acquired, recorded and stored in the form of documents is a ready source of information. March (1999) notes:

Inferences drawn from experience are recorded in documents, accounts, files, standard operating procedures, and rule books; in the social and physical geography of organisational structures and relationships; in standards of good professional practice; in the culture of organisational stories; and in shared perceptions of "the way we do things around here." (p. 83).

There are limitations attached to document analysis. Patton (1990) cautions that documents may be incomplete, inaccurate or subject to errors. They may be selective in that only certain aspects (positive aspects usually) are highlighted. Files and records may vary in quality and detail. However, despite such shortcomings, Patton agrees that document analysis provides a "behind the scenes" look at what may not be observable and "about which the interviewer might not ask appropriate questions without leads provided through documents" (p. 245).

In this study, negotiated access to selected documents provided a way to corroborate evidence derived from other sources (Burns, 1994). Systematic analysis of identified documents provided:

- An impression of patterns and key features of capacity building for school improvement;
- Evidence of conditional pathways of influence of critical events / incidents and practice across the organisation; and
- Corroborated evidence from other sources regarding the phenomenon in question.

The range of documents for analysis included:

- Year 8 Literacy Profile (DOC 1);
- Reading Review (DOC 2);
- Mathematics Review (DOC 3);
- Written Language Review (DOC 4);
- Reviews of Gifted and Talented (DOC 5);
- Strategic Plans (2004 & 2005) (DOC 6);
- School Charter (DOC 7);
- ERO review (2005) (DOC 8);
- Policy manual (DOC 9);
- School newsletters (2004) (DOC 10); and
- The School's prospectus (DOC 11);

3.4.4 Data Recording Procedures

All interviews, except one, were tape recorded. As previously explained, the interview that was not taped was at the participant's request. All interviews were conducted in English. Offers of a translator to facilitate the interview process were declined. Prior to interview commencement, opportunities were provided to ask questions and raise issues pertaining to anonymity and confidentiality. During the interview, note taking, as explained earlier, did not occur.

Observational field notes and other types of field texts were meticulously kept throughout the research process. At all meetings the researcher made journal entries on events observed. When distant from the field, journal entries served as a reminder of action witnessed. In data analysis, field entries proved invaluable as a means of cross checking sources of information and clarifying properties of categories, sub-categories and emerging themes.

3.5 Data Analysis

Data systematically gathered and analysed in the grounded approach is used to develop theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Indeed, grounded theory is, "a general method of (constant)

comparative analysis” (Glaser & Strauss, 1967, p. viii). Theory, as defined by Strauss and Corbin (1994) consists of plausible relationships proposed among concepts and sets of concepts; grounded theory methods are essential in producing conceptually dense theory. To develop ‘dense’ theoretical conceptualisations involves rigorous attention to processes of coding in data analysis.

Strauss and Corbin (1998) define coding as the “analytic processes through which data are fractured, conceptualised, and integrated to form theory” (p.3). In grounded theory, codes serve to build rather than test theory²⁹. Codes act as analytic tools for managing raw data. They provide alternative meanings of the phenomena and assist in the systematic and creative processing of data to identify, develop and relate concepts. This would account for why Strauss and Corbin (1998) claim that codes are the building blocks of theory and, at the heart of theorising, “lies the interplay of making inductions (deriving concepts, their properties, and dimensions from data) and deductions (hypothesizing about the relationships between concepts, the relationships also are derived from data, but data that have been abstracted by the analyst from the raw data)” (p. 22).

In this study, open³⁰ and axial³¹ codes facilitated the development of analytical constructs that explained attributes of capacity building. Both open and axial codes are defined in detail later in the chapter. First level data analysis produced open codes that established categories and properties from the raw data. In order to determine relationships between categories, axial codes were developed. Selective coding that followed open and axial codes indicated core and causal properties of capacity building. The core category which occupied the central component of the capacity building analytical frame was vision. Strauss and Corbin’s paradigm model was used as a structure to examine practice. In the attributes and practices frame, utilised for data presentation (see Figure 1, p. 107), although vision has core category status, practice is situated alongside it. Causal properties of school culture, stakeholders as change agents, professional development and practice surround vision and substantiate its importance. Construction of the framework, explanations of its applicability in practice and presentation of a substantive theory of capacity building for school improvement occurred as a result of undertaking this research. What follows

²⁹ Theory: “a set of well-developed concepts (e.g., themes, concepts) that are systematically interrelated through statements of relationship to form a theoretical framework that explains some relevant social, psychological, educational, nursing, or other phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998 p. 22 italics in the original).

³⁰ Refer section 3.5.2 for definition.

³¹ Ibid.

is an explanation of processes involved in microanalysis of data, open, axial and selective coding and use of the paradigm model as a “package deal” that explains the data analysis process.

3.5.1 Microanalysis

Microanalysis³² is the technique used in developing open³³ and axial³⁴ codes (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). It involves systematic, line-by-line examination of data. Microscopic examination of interview data focused on participant perceptions of vision, school culture, stakeholders as change agents and professional development aligned to capacity building for school improvement (example provided in Appendix I). Microanalysis of observational data focused on data chunks, labelled episodes (an early example provided in Appendix J), in much the same way and for similar reasons. In terms of observational data, the researcher’s recording of events, happenings and actions provided written material from which to conduct the analysis.

Line-by-line, sentence-by-sentence examination of data has been critiqued by Glaser (1992) as forcing the creation of codes. In a letter criticising the Straussian method, Glaser (1992) notes, “The researcher must have patience and not force the data out of anxiety and impatience while waiting for the emergent. He must trust that emergence will occur and it does” (p.4). Glaser, advocates for close scrutiny of data referring to it as, “running the data open” (Glaser, 1978, p. 56). Here, detailed examination is considered creatively opening up of data.

In this inquiry, microanalysis or line by line examination of data proved advantageous. The researcher was encouraged to remain open to a range of ideas. Microscopic analysis facilitated an examination of detail, not just in a descriptive sense, but in analytic ways, “along the level of properties and dimensions and in ways that (allowed) the analyst to break the data apart and reconstruct them to form an interpretative scheme” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 65). It encouraged close listening to participants’ voices to understand how certain events were interpreted. It allowed *in vivo* codes³⁵ to guide the naming of categories. Microscopic analysis generated

³² Microanalysis: “The detailed line-by-line analysis necessary at the beginning of a study to generate initial categories (with their properties and dimensions) and to suggest relationships among categories; a combination of open and axial coding” (Strauss and Corbin, 1998, p. 57).

³³ Open coding: “The analytic process through which concepts are identified and their properties and dimensions are discovered in data” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 101).

³⁴ Axial coding: “The process of relating categories to their subcategories, termed “axial” because coding occurs around the axis of a category, linking categories at the level of properties and dimensions” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 123).

³⁵ *In vivo* codes are taken from or derived directly from the language of the substantive field. *In vivo* codes “tend to be the behaviours or processes which will explain to the analyst how the basic problem of the

‘Who?’, ‘When?’, ‘What?’, ‘How?’ and ‘Why?’ questions of properties, dimensions and conditions, giving emerging concepts greater explanatory power (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Microscopic analysis assisted conceptualisation³⁶ and classification³⁷ of data into categories and sub-categories. Finally, microanalysis encouraged careful examination of taken-for-granted assumptions. Confronting the data in detail resulted in alternative ways of viewing relationships.

3.5.2 Open, Axial and Selective Coding

Open, axial and selective coding are terms that focus on slightly different aspects of naming and comparing data and operate at different levels of conceptualisation (Locke, 2001). While Strauss (1987) introduces all three terms as important in the naming and comparing process, Glaser (1978) speaks of only open and selective coding as being sufficient. This inquiry includes all three forms of coding.

3.5.2.1 Open Coding

Open coding is the initial stage of a grounded theory (Strauss, 1987). It is a process of scrutinising the data very closely to produce provisional concepts and dimensions (Strauss, 1987). Strauss and Corbin (1990) note, “open coding is the part of analysis that pertains specifically to the naming and categorizing of phenomena through close examination of data” (p. 62). Breaking down, labelling and examining the data in the open coding stage is always tentative (Strauss, 1987). As Strauss (1987) suggests, it allows whatever is wrong in interpreting lines and words to eventually be cancelled out through later steps of the inquiry.

As noted previously, the researcher approached the analysis of interview, observation and documentary data on a systematic line-by-line basis (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Such detailed examination of text revealed discrete elements attributed to vision, school culture, stakeholders as change agents and professional development. Individual elements of each were labelled and given a code. Initially, the coding process proved exhausting as numerous codes were produced.

actors is resolved or processed. These codes fracture the data directly because they represent analytic categories as used by the researcher” (Strauss, 1987, p33).

³⁶ Conceptualisation: “A concept is a labelled phenomenon. It is an abstract representation of an event, object, or action/interaction that a researcher identifies as being significant in the data. The purpose behind naming phenomena is to enable researchers to group similar events, happenings, and objects under a common heading or classification. Although events or happenings might be discrete elements, the fact that they share common characteristics or related meanings enables them to be grouped” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 103).

³⁷ Classifying: “indicates grouping concepts according to their salient properties that is for similarities and differences” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 66).

Microscopic analysis and proliferation of codes, Strauss (1987) asserts, “is entirely necessary “for achieving an extensive theoretical coverage which is thoroughly grounded”... (and which) leads to a conceptually dense theory” (p. 31). Although open coding produced copious quantities of codes, continual verification of each code and subsequent modification, saturation and placement of codes in relationships to other codes had the desired effect of slowing the process down. Coded elements were then organised into a pattern of concepts and more abstract categories together with their properties³⁸ (see Appendix K). Strauss and Corbin (1990) define categories as having, “conceptual power because they are able to pull together around them other groups of concepts or subcategories” (p. 65).

In the open coding process, memo writing proved useful. Memo writing was a way of guiding, tracking and, as Strauss (1987) notes, “(moving) the analyst further from the data into a more analytic realm” (p.32). Initially the researcher used memo writing to make sense of initial interpretations. Memos highlighted ideas, hunches and new insights. As the coding process became more intense and delved deeper into concepts and categories, memo writing supported theorising (see Appendix J as an early example of theorising).

In the initial stage of open coding, a memo log was used to record and explain changes to concepts and categories (i.e. the addition of new concepts and / or categories). Category templates, such as the example provided in Appendix K, altered considerably from earlier attempts at open coding through to conclusion of the process. Continued alterations necessitated constant re-examination of data in line with modified concepts and categories. This process again proved exhausting. Benefits, however, meant a thorough examination of the data, saturated codes and grounding of categories in the data. In as much as Appendix J provides an early example of memo writing, tables, flow charts, overviews, and various diagrams indicate later forms of memo writing utilised to examine data sets for the emerging theoretical model.

The issue that emerged as data analysis proceeded was the naming of concepts and categories. Strauss and Corbin (1990) indicate that this process is entirely subjective and very much the researcher’s prerogative. Indeed, Hussey and Hussey (1997) caution the naming or attaching of labels must reflect the nature and content of data. In this inquiry, names were derived from the

³⁸ Properties: “are characteristics and attributes by which the concepts and categories can be recognized. The properties of each category of concepts must be defined along a continuum” (Hussey & Hussey, 1997, p. 266).

literature (professional reading), taken directly from the substantive field by way of “*in vivo*” codes and sourced from the researcher’s professional and theoretical knowledge and experience.

3.5.2.2 Axial Coding

In 1987, Strauss introduced the term “axial” coding. Locke (2001) suggests Strauss’ use of axial coding provides a way to, “formalise the focused naming and comparing activity ...central to fully developing working categories – that is to developing their properties or subcategories and possible relationships to each other” (p. 74). Axial coding, Strauss (1987) explains, “(builds) up a dense texture of relationships around the “axis” of the category being focused upon” (p. 64). It involves, “relating categories to sub-categories along the lines of their properties and dimensions” by asking generative questions such as: ‘Who?’, ‘What?’, ‘Where?’, ‘When?’, ‘Why?’, ‘How?’ and ‘With what consequences?’ Questions invoke responses that illuminate relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 124), promoting an examination of how categories crosscut and link or, as Hussey and Hussey (1997) explain, “whereas the earlier stage of coding involved the breaking down and separation of individual elements, axial coding is the restructuring and rebuilding of the data into various patterns with the intention of revealing links and relationships” (pp. 266-267). It is here that mini theories in the data surface (Hussey & Hussey, 1997). Although the overall theoretical framework is not discovered during the axial phase, mini theories that develop can be incorporated into and form part of the overall theory being generated (Hussey & Hussey, 1997).

In this inquiry, axial coding proved valuable in rearrangement of data into codes that had more conceptual depth (see Appendix L). In terms of each of the four main themes (vision, school culture, stakeholders’ activity and professional development), the axial coding process identified core categories and causal links and relationships among the categories. The researcher was able to devise a combined interview-observation data framework that represented the core categories and sub-categories from across all data sets (see Appendix M). The framework proved crucial in discussing attributes of capacity building (presented in Chapter Four).

3.5.2.3 Selective Coding

Open and axial coding occurs before deciding on selective coding (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss, 1987). In the selective coding process, core categories central to the topic of inquiry become the focus (Strauss, 1987). Selective codes appear more frequently and account for the most data. Strauss explains, “all other subordinate categories and subcategories become *systematically* linked to the core” (p. 69 italics in the original). Here, successive building and

refining of codes through open coding, axial coding and memo writing allowed the researcher to select, systematically, a core category.

In the selective coding process, memo writing was a tool used frequently by the researcher to locate and select the core category. Selective coding to establish the core category also meant searching for disconfirming evidence and variations within and between categories from across all themes. Glaser (1978) distinguishes a core category as

- Being central and mentioned frequently;
- Being naturally connected to other categories with recorded linkages in memos during the selective coding process;
- Not leading to dead ends;
- Having properties that vary; and
- Representing the participant's main concern.

Of the open codes developed, vision was the one that appeared most pronounced. The influence of vision could be traced to all the other data sets. It occupied the core of practice. In this inquiry, and according to Glaser's criteria, the school's vision stood out as the core category. School culture, stakeholders as change agents, professional development and practice codes all relate to vision. Vision was subsequently placed at the hub of the 'Capacity Building: Attributes and Practice' analytical frame (see Figure 1, p. 107).

3.5.3 The Paradigm Model

Two frameworks are provided by Strauss and Corbin for examining relationships and process: the paradigm model and the conditional matrix. Both frameworks are intended to make the emerging theory denser, more complex and more precise (Charmaz, 2003). In this inquiry the paradigm model sharpened explanations of process and relationship between attributes and practices.

The paradigm model is a framework which links the data in ways that reveal, "causal conditions³⁹, phenomenon⁴⁰, context⁴¹, intervening conditions⁴², action / interactional strategies⁴³

³⁹ Causal conditions: Refers to the events or incidents that lead to the occurrence or development of the phenomenon" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 100).

⁴⁰ Phenomenon: "In looking for phenomena, we are looking for repeated patterns of happenings, events, or actions/interactions that represent what people do or say, alone or together, in response to the problems and situations in which they find themselves" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 130).

and consequences⁴⁴” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 99). Aligned to the constant comparison method, the paradigm model was used as a structure that encouraged patterns of practice to emerge (see Appendix N). Practice, directly related to vision also demonstrates a strong relationship to school culture, stakeholders as change agents and professional development. Practice sheds light on the working components of the theoretical model.

3.5.4 Validity and Reliability of the Data

In all forms of qualitative research, the need to establish authenticity is paramount. Although ‘validity’ and ‘reliability’, conceptualised within positivistic frames, are subject to critique in terms of their applicability to interpretivist studies, such concepts are essential in ascertaining research rigour. To ensure the findings from this inquiry reflect internal validity⁴⁵, external validity⁴⁶ and reliability⁴⁷, two sets of criteria are proposed: The trustworthiness criteria of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994) and the authenticity criteria of fairness, namely, “ontological authenticity (enlarges personal constructions), educative authenticity (leads to improved understanding of constructions of others), catalytic authenticity (stimulates action), and tactical authenticity (empowers action)” (Guba & Lincoln, 1994, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 114).

The criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity have already been addressed in various ways and as part of the methodology. For example, both concepts are addressed in this research by the rigorous application of grounded theory methods in data collection, analysis and interpretation. The constant comparative method validates data by comparing: different people in terms of their

⁴¹ Context: “represents the specific set of properties that pertain to a phenomena; that is location of events or incidents pertaining to a phenomenon along a dimensional range...Context...Context at the same time, is also the particular set of conditions within which the action/interaction strategies are taken to manage, handle, carry out, and respond to a specific phenomenon” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 101).

⁴² Intervening conditions: “are the broad and general conditions bearing upon action/interactional strategies” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 103).

⁴³ Action/Interactional strategies: “Grounded theory is an *action/interactional oriented method of theory building*. Whether one is studying individuals, groups, or collectives, there is action/interaction, which is directed at managing, handling, carrying out, responding to a phenomenon as it exists in context or under a specific set of perceived conditions. The interactional component refers to self as well as other interaction” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 104 italics in the original”).

⁴⁴ Consequences: “Action and interaction taken in response to, or to manage, a phenomenon have certain *outcomes or consequences*” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 106 italics in the original).

⁴⁵ Internal validity: “the extent to which a researcher’s observations and measurements are true descriptions of a particular reality” (Knicheloe & McLaren, 1994, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 151).

⁴⁶ External validity: “the degree to which such descriptions can be accurately compared with other groups” (Knicheloe & McLaren, 1994, in Denzin & Lincoln, 1994, p. 151).

⁴⁷ Reliability: “the extent to which the findings can be replicated, or reproduced, by another inquirer” (Denzin & Loncoln, 1994, p. 100).

views, actions and accounts; data from the same person or site at different points in time; incident with incident; data with category; and comparing categories with other categories (Charmaz, 2003).

A traditional take on “triangulation” was also employed to ensure trustworthiness of data. Stake (2003) defines triangulation as a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning and verify the, “repeatability of an observation or interpretation” (In Denzin & Lincoln, 2003, p. 148). In this inquiry, three forms of triangulation were employed: methodological triangulation with a focus on consistency of findings using different data-collection methods; data source triangulation where consistency of findings related to data gained from different sources but with the use of the same data collection tool; and analyst triangulation where participants verified early interpretations of the findings chapters.

The interpretivist paradigm in which the research is situated, encourages joint construction of meaning, shared dialogue and on-going participant checks. This position, in itself, provides trustworthiness and authenticity.

Utilisation of grounded methods meant the data itself were less prone to accusations of unreliability. The rigorous method of coding facilitated tracking of information to original text, be these interview transcripts, observational entries and / or document analysis. Confirmation of findings was reassured by construction of data codes and explaining the code to the researcher’s supervisors. Lincoln and Guba (2003) claim this as initiating an audit trial.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has explained how the research was conducted. Methodology, presented from a theoretical perspective, covered explanations of an interpretivist paradigm, case study approach and grounded theory methods in data analysis. Grounded theory from a Straussian position with interpretivist leanings suited the study because of its practicality, application of detailed, rigorous analytical techniques and cognisance of participants’ views in context. Discussion of validity and reliability focused on dual criteria of trustworthiness and authenticity.

Methodology in action, that is, how the research was conducted in the field, provided coverage of issues such as the role of the researcher and practicalities of entry, exit and ethics. Information,

presented as an integrated mix of theory and action, allows the reader to get a more holistic feel for how this study was structured and undertaken.

Chapters Four and Five present the findings. Analysed data were used to construct the 'Capacity Building: Attributes and Practices' analytical frame (see Figure 1, p. 107). In Chapter Four, attributes of capacity building are presented. Chapter Five explains the practices. Chapters Four and Five works towards developing a substantive theory – theoretical model of capacity building for school improvement – unique to one, low decile, multicultural, state, primary school in Auckland, New Zealand.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS I - CAPACITY BUILDING ATTRIBUTES

4 Introduction

The analysed data from this research are presented in two ways. The data related to *attributes* of capacity building for school improvement are covered in Chapter Four. Attributes of capacity building include vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. *Practice*, described as what people do – their actions in context, is discussed in Chapter Five. Three key practices include knowledge production and utilisation, division of labour: roles and responsibilities and ‘switching on’ mentality.

Analysed data on attributes and practices form the ‘Capacity Building: Attributes and Practices’ analytical framework, as presented in Figure 1 (p. 107). At the core of this framework is vision (see Figure 2, p. 132). Vision is flanked by stakeholders as change agents (see Figure 3, p. 149) and school culture (see Figure 4, p. 168). Professional development (see Figure 5, p. 189), considered an all encompassing attribute that influences and is influenced by vision, stakeholders as change agents and school culture, is placed at the internal / external interface. Placement here denotes multiplicity of input and connection between external and internal contexts. Practice, which results from the combination of all attributes, is placed alongside vision (see Figure 6, p. 193). Past and future arrows indicate particular time zones. Data indicates that capacity building for school improvement has roots buried in the past, operates from a position of currency and contains a futuristic outlook. It is a situated, time specific construct.

Data presented on each attribute follows a pattern: a discussion on external and internal influences, followed by explanations of key features and contributions to capacity building. Narrative text is used to present the data on attributes, justified as capturing participants’ views and grounding the findings in a reality base. Data on practice are presented in the form of vignettes, analytical commentaries and flow diagrams. They provide a glimpse of action embedded in context. From a detailed examination of attributes and practices, four themes emerge. These are discussed in Chapter Six and form the basis of a *substantive theory* – theoretical model of capacity building for school improvement. The four themes of situated activity; connectedness; governance, leadership and management; and outcomes are shown in the ‘Capacity Building for School Improvement’ theoretical model (see Figure 8, p. 248).

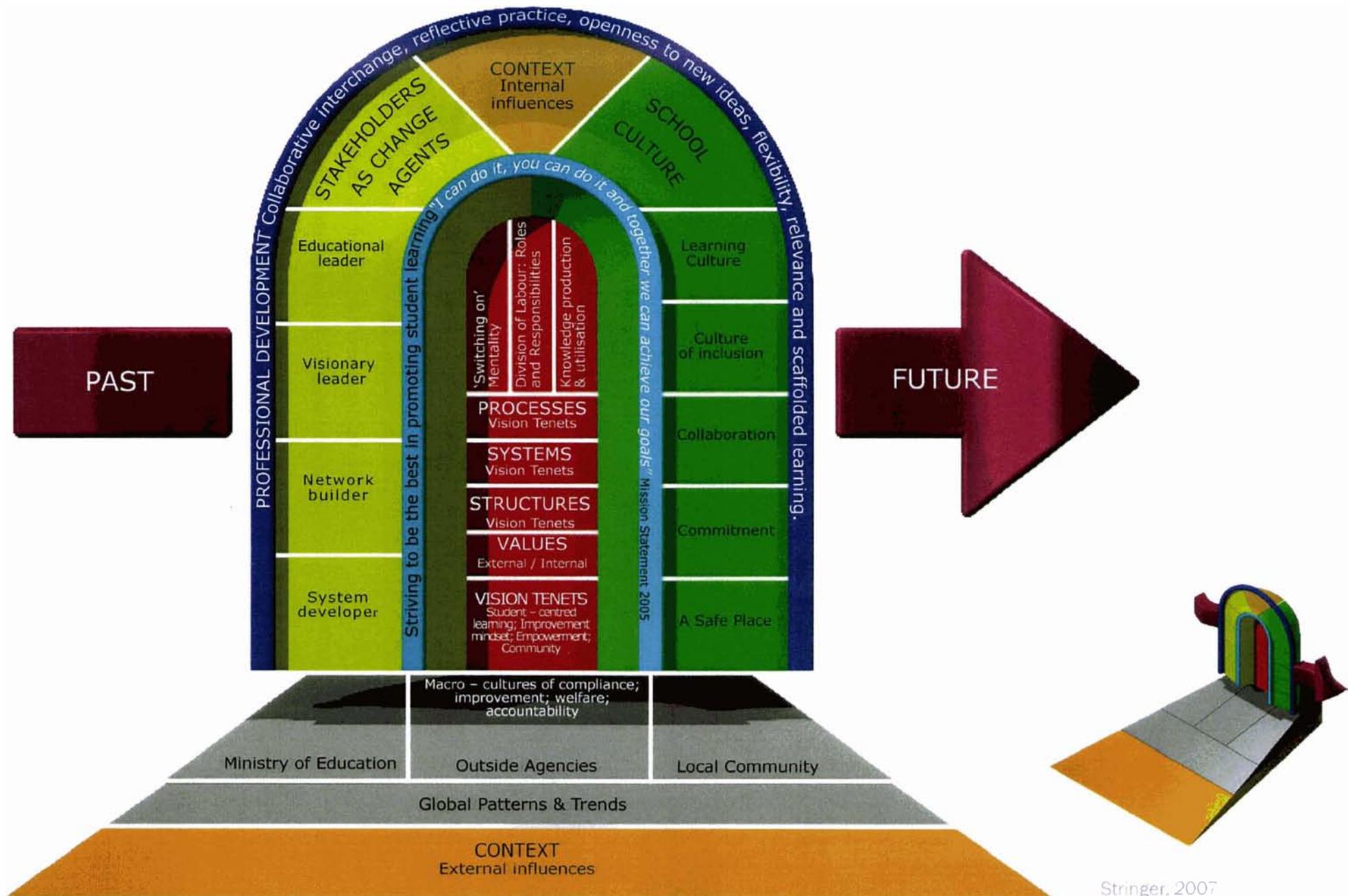


Figure 1 Capacity Building: Attributes & Practices.

4.1 Introduction-Vision

Data from this research indicates vision to be the core category underpinning capacity building for school improvement. It is explicitly (in documentation form) and implicitly (in actions and behaviours of stakeholders) characterised as ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’. In documentation form, the message espoused and enacted is recorded in the PATH chart⁴⁸ and successive strategic plans (DOC 6). Voices of participants capture the multifaceted dimensions of this ideal. The principal states, *“I suppose my personal vision... is that I want us to be the best school in New Zealand (and) that’s why the school is trying to teach the children that they are the best”*. The deputy principal asserts, *“It is to be the best... in all areas... support the children to be the best and get the message out to the community that what is happening in it is good”*. The assistant principal comments, *“I think we all know that we are aiming to be the best school...our children are getting the best education...What we are doing is best practice”*.

Staff comment: *“We all want this school to have a very positive, high profile in the community. To have children come in and...be switched on to learning, get on well with others and learn to the best of their ability”* (ISF2)⁴⁹; *“To give our children the skills they need to get on in life – social skills, educational skills and values (ISF11); “onwards and upwards, that’s it. That’s the easiest way that I can put it”* (ISFS1); and, *“always doing the best for the children”* (ISF1).

Parental views echo those of staff: *“I think what everyone wants is for it to be the best school in New Zealand...I want it to be the best school in New Zealand as well ”*(IP1); and *“I think the (principal) has talked about it being the best school throughout New Zealand. And I thought “oh yeah, fair enough, go for it”* (IP4).

The vision espoused, enacted and recorded represents a calling, articulated as:

being united, positive, encouraging and also encompassing the ‘You Can Do It’. It’s the valuing of culture and diversity and celebration of success. It’s all interwoven and so it develops into this positive approach to developing learners for the future. I think it comes down to the children. They can’t learn unless they have self-esteem (ISF6).

⁴⁸ PATH: Planning Alternate Tomorrows with Hope. The PATH chart represents the first recording made of the new vision. It was initiated by the principal who, together with a GSE representative and staff input, constructed the plan (see Appendix P).

⁴⁹ Refer to Appendix B for pseudonyms used. ISF1 represents, for example, interview (I) conducted with staff (SF) and 1 refers to the teacher concerned.

Data indicates the school's vision, as recorded in the PATH chart and strategic plans, provides an overall sense of direction. The direction is, 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning', supported by four tenets: student-centred learning, an improvement mindset, empowerment and community (see Figure 2, p. 132). School stakeholders dreams, aspirations and needs culminate in the formation of the school's vision, which, extrapolated in the PATH chart and strategic plans provide a blueprint or plan for action. Underscoring capacity building for school improvement is the blueprint, four support tenets, catch cry – '*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*' – and processes of vision construction. Working towards vision – reducing the vision / reality gap – is this school's purpose. Data presented unpacks and explains:

- External influences;
- Internal Influences;
- Central tenets of vision;
- Vision construction – conceptualisation, transmission and evolution;
- The vision / reality gap; and
- Capacity building links.

4.1.2 External Influences

Analysis of data from interviews, observations and documents suggest that external influences on vision stem from the Ministry of Education, outside agencies and the local community. In the following section, influences of each, on vision, are considered.

4.1.2.1 Ministry of Education

The school's vision is influenced by the Ministry of Education and *The National Education Guidelines* set within current law⁵⁰. The PATH chart / strategic plans and processes involved in their construction, for example, indicates compliance with current legislation in terms of the Acts of Parliament⁵¹. This school's vision is a combination of meeting compliance and legislative mandates (ERO, 2005) and accommodating community aims and aspirations. The direction of 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning' is articulated and enforced by staff and parents / caregivers alike. The following comment typifies what participants say about the vision, "*I would describe it as a really positive one, one that definitely reflects the clientele of the school*

⁵⁰ School documents in support, for example: Strategic plans 2004; 2005; policies, reviews and the ERO report (2005). Observations: professional development meetings, staff and curriculum planning meetings.

⁵¹ The Education Act (1989), Treaty of Waitangi (1840), Crimes Act (1961), Public Finance Act (1989), Crown Entities Act (2005) to name but a few.

and the people who work and are associated with the school” (ISF1). The school’s charter⁵² contains the mission statement: “*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*” (DOC, 2005). It suggests goal achievement through individual and collective participation.

The school’s vision is underpinned by a set of values which include commonly held values espoused by the Ministry of Education in *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993)⁵³ and staff and parents’ / caregivers’ values. An integrated value set makes this school’s vision unique, reflective of its macro and micro contexts. Significant values to school stakeholders include:

- Collaboration in ways of working together to achieve goals;
- Commitment in making this school the best;
- Learning inclusive of all school stakeholders; and
- Organisation, planning and structure that make this school a ‘safe place’.

Successive Ministry of Education policies influence the school’s vision. Data indicate the school enacts educational policies and priorities in ways that ensure organisational ‘fit’. For example, the parent mentoring initiative⁵⁴ that aims to strengthen partnerships between parents / caregivers and schools in supporting educational achievement of students, is fully endorsed by school stakeholders. In the case of parent / caregiver involvement, the approach taken involves care and support for community⁵⁵ and building parents’ / caregivers’ knowledge capacity through provision of educational and personal information. Parents’ / caregivers’ views are actively sought in building a current knowledge base from which to frame, make and take strategic decisions. Data suggests that parents / caregivers involvement in school life⁵⁶ is a covariate property⁵⁷ of capacity building: “*Parents are starting to take more of a hands-on role in the*

⁵² From 2003, every Board must prepare and maintain a school charter. The purpose of a school's charter is to establish the mission aims, objectives, directions and targets of the Board that will give effect to the Government’s national education guidelines and the Board’s priorities (Education Standards Act 2001).

⁵³ Honesty, reliability, respect for others, respect for the law, tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion, non-sexism and non-racism (New Zealand Curriculum Framework, 1993).

⁵⁴ The Parent Mentoring Initiative funded by the Ministry of Education (2002-2005) aims to strengthen relationships through a bi-directional partnership between parents/caregivers and teachers; parents and children, and families/communities and schools to support the educational achievement of learners (Ministry of Education, 2005). In the initiative, mutual responsibility and accountability are highlighted.

⁵⁵ Staff comments in support (IA2; IA3; ISF4; ISF5; ISF9 & ISF10); parents’ comments in support (IP1, IP2, IP3 & IP4) and Board comments (IB1 & IB2).

⁵⁶ Evidence in support: Board meetings (OB1; OB2; OB3 & OB4); Friends of the School meeting (OFS1); School events (OASO5 & OASO6); Samoan group meetings (OSG1); and incidental observations.

⁵⁷ Covariate property is a property that is related to other properties but is not causal.

school. Not in terms of making things or putting books away but in the running of the school, where the school wants to go, where they feel the school is going” (ISF1); “*part of the vision is getting the community strongly involved and that’s great because then parents are more involved with their children*” (IB1); and, “*it establishes the school as the centre of the community...and that means you feel more part of it. You know it’s not like you’re excluded from something*” (IP4).

The Ministry of Education makes it clear that certain matters of legislation and policy require implementation in practice. The school recognises their statutory and administrative obligations covering curriculum delivery, property, personnel, financial and health and safety requirements stipulated in *The National Educational Guidelines*. Responding to such requirements (for example, witnessed in the strategic planning process) can create tensions in practice as the vision, meant to be inspirational, has an added attachment of meeting regulatory mandates. The school manages such tensions by adhering strictly to the principle of doing what’s best for all stakeholders. Compliance measures are addressed but so too are matters of educational importance and teacher professionalism. In conjunction with external / internal needs, the vision:

- Focuses attention on practices that promote student centred learning;
- Initiates an improvement mindset;
- Encourages a sense of empowerment – self-governance / self-management; and
- Strengthens community involvement, a partnership among the various parties⁵⁸ that benefits the school.

4.1.2.2 Outside Agency Influences

The extent and nature of outside agency influences on vision relate to programmes that have particular appeal⁵⁹, community-based enterprises, courses or conferences attended⁶⁰ and issues of national and / or international concern⁶¹. Although these stand unrelated (directly) to *The National Education Guidelines* and the Acts of Parliament, influences from such sources permeate school boundaries to effect direction. The school’s buy-in to the ‘You Can Do It’⁶² programme, for

⁵⁸ Partnership includes three major stakeholders (parents / caregivers, the Ministry of Education and the school), outside agencies and links with the business community.

⁵⁹ For example: Music programme; Duffy Book Scheme; and ‘You Can Do It’.

⁶⁰ For example: One day courses; professional associations; and overseas conferences.

⁶¹ For example: Health Promoting Schools initiatives; Environmental Schools; and the drive for life long learning.

⁶² You Can Do It Education was founded in Australia in 1991. The founder is Dr Michael Bernard. It relates to assisting children to realise their potential and to achieve to the best of their ability in school work and other areas of endeavour. It is based on four foundations: confidence, persistence, getting along and organisation. It extends to student development, parent education and school professional development.

example, has had a huge influence on the vision. Staff and parents claim that it underpins everything that happens in this school, “*everything even without taking a specific lesson*” (ISF4).

The ‘You Can Do It’ programme was introduced by the Special Needs Coordinator (SENCO) when the school was reportedly in crisis. The programme proved instrumental in bringing about school change⁶³. Promoted by staff and parents / caregivers, the ‘You Can Do It’ programme has become the school’s mantra, recorded in strategic plans as, “*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*”. ‘You Can Do It’ principles underpin school practice⁶⁴, “*as soon as you walk towards the office there is a sign straight underneath it saying we are a ‘You Can Do It’ school so it is part of the philosophy*” (ISF4). See Photographs 1 and 2.

Tapping into community based programmes in ways that meet students’ needs influences the school’s vision. For example, links with a local Licensing Trust means this school receives financial support to continue its involvement in the ‘Duffy Books scheme’. Close relationships with ‘Health Promoting Schools’ and the ‘One Day School for Gifted and Talented’ provide access to resources and opportunities to participate in extra curricula activities⁶⁵. School buy-in to such programmes is based on what benefits the students and assists in school improvement. Influences on vision include a desire to remain abreast of new trends and developments⁶⁶; and working in ways that benefit students, community, staff and the school⁶⁷.

4.1.2.3 Local Community Influences

Community influences on vision are related to students’ and parents’ / caregivers’ needs and aspirations⁶⁸. Parents interviewed awarded the following importance:

- Current knowledge on curriculum and pedagogy⁶⁹: “*They (staff) have to up date their curriculum as well*” (IB2);

⁶³ Endorsed by service providers interviewed (IOA1 & IOA4); senior managers (IA 1, IA2 & IA3); Staff (ISF4, ISF5, ISF9, ISF10 & ISF12); and parents (IP1, IP3, IP4 & IB2).

⁶⁴ Evidence in school programmes, classroom documents such as timetables, school overview documents and strategic planning documents. Refer also to Photographs 1 and 2.

⁶⁵ For example the obesity trial study, a ‘Health Promoting Schools’ programme targeting student health and established practices, for example, the type of food sold at the tuck shop (OWS2).

⁶⁶ Observation data in support came from the following staff professional development sessions attended: (OWS1; OWS2 & OWS7).

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Parent comments in support (IP1, IP2, IP3, IP4, IB1 & IB2).

⁶⁹ All parent participants acknowledged this as important.

- A personal touch, an approachable school⁷⁰: *“a school that is small enough to be friendly so that the teachers know all the children”* (IB1); and *“it means knowing your kids are happy there”* (IP4);
- A changed school perception⁷¹: *“We need to be a little more into the community to show them that our school is here. We have several schools around us but their rolls are way higher. You know just a little bit more out there”* (IB2);
- Parent education⁷²: *“to be able to go to a school and the school to say this is what we’re doing with your kids and this is what you can do”* (IP4);
- Building community⁷³: *“providing a social aspect... (parent chats) provide a social aspect because everybody has a cup of tea or coffee and biscuits”* (IP4);
- Quality education, a balanced curriculum⁷⁴: *“they teach kind of the boring bits of learning like how to write, spell and do arithmetic. And also to learn things I can’t teach, like music, because I’m not really musical. And they learn more sports”* (IP4); and
- Celebration of difference⁷⁵: *“They get exposed to a much wider variety of events and people and values and all sorts of things that they can’t get from home or if you send them to a school that is sort of really only of your social little group”* (IP4).

Interviews conducted with staff reinforced the following community factors as influencing vision:

- Meeting the needs of a diverse multi-cultural student population⁷⁶. Staff felt the school had to demonstrate sensitivity to issues of cultural diversity by ensuring programmes⁷⁷ and practices⁷⁸ were culturally appropriate: *“It is a very multi-cultural school. It reflects bi-culturalism as well as multi-culturalism”* (ISF10); *“we respect many different nationalities and different home backgrounds and different values”* (IA2); *“you’ve got to be positive and you’ve got to be fair”* (ISF2); *“We have cultural programmes happening”* (ISF5); and *“We cater for a lot of children. Whether they are Ethiopian or Afghani they will get bi-lingual tutors. The children’s culture ends up the school’s culture”* (ISF7).

⁷⁰ Two out of six parent responses acknowledged this as being important.

⁷¹ All parents noted this as important.

⁷² All parents noted this as important.

⁷³ All parents noted this as important.

⁷⁴ Two out of six parent responses acknowledged this as being important.

⁷⁵ All parents noted this as important

⁷⁶ NZ European/Pākehā 16%, Samoan 14%, Māori 10%, Tongan 11%, Indian 11%, Ethiopian 6%,
Somalian 5%, Niuean 4%, Cook Island 4%, Other 19% (ERO, 2005)

⁷⁷ For example: classroom programmes; bi-lingual / ESOL support programmes.

⁷⁸ For example: policy changes (swimming and EOTC); bi-lingual support workers input; ESOL support programmes; Ethiopian after school homework classes; adult education classes; and the parents’ room.

- Meeting the needs of a diverse multi-cultural parent / caregiver population in ways that value diversity and increase parent capacity and involvement in school life: *“if the parents have problems they get help from the teachers or support staff”* (ISF5); and *“I see them (staff) upholding the culture of ethnic groups in the community / school”* (ISF10).
- Meeting students and community needs associated with low socio-economic factors (housing, health and language, for example): *“a lot of the children are very needy; they come from very deprived and needy backgrounds”* (ISF7); and *“Sometimes we fight a losing battle and that is where some of our behaviour management problems come from. Part of the battle is knowing that home environments are not all that positive”* (ISF11).
- Low socio-economic factors linked to school image. Participants interviewed claim that some members of the community bypass this school to enrol their children in neighbouring schools because this school’s low decile ranking was perceived as jeopardising children’s chances of educational success⁷⁹. Changing perceptions and raising the school’s profile was considered a desirable future goal to be achieved.

4.1.3 Internal Influences on Vision

Internal influences on vision are related to meeting stakeholders and school needs identified through systemic reviews⁸⁰ and daily school practices⁸¹. Reviews represent opportunities to reflect and make future plans. They tend to be forecasting tools as this comment indicates, *“looked at...discussed (in terms of) the positives, the negatives (and) where we needed to pick up and where our focus needs to be for the future”* (ISF11). Practices exert influence in much the same way as reviews. Practices involve all stakeholders, *“leading by example, engagement in a shared vision, not just a personal vision”* (ISF3). Addressing stakeholders and systemic needs generates, *“real commitment to this school by staff to make a difference”* (IA2). Here, senior managers are awarded praise for scene setting: *“See in my view everything stems from the top...the vision is literally going forward on all fronts”* (ISF4); *“I think their vision is an extremely positive one...it has given children something to aspire to”* (ISF10); and, *“they are*

⁷⁹ Comments mainly from parents (IP2, IP3, IP4, IB1)

⁸⁰ Observed: Self reviews on curriculum (OWS13; and OWS14); strategic planning meetings (OSM3; and OSM4); facilitator reviews (OSM2; and OWS3). Documents in support: DOC: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 & 6.

⁸¹ Ibid.

passionate about making this school the best it can be and...they take the whole team with them. You get on board because you see their passion, drive and where they want to go” (ISF3).

Staff and parents / caregivers note that the principal exerts a strong influence on the school’s vision by, “*walking the talk*” (ISF12). The principal was responsible for facilitating initial construction of the vision; that is, the PATH chart. She is a strong supporter of the current vision and aids in its on-going transmission and renewal⁸². In many respects, the principal adopts the role of vision guardian, “*by a hands on approach...getting into classrooms and not just being seen as ...in the office*” (ISF1). The principal notes:

I suppose...I want us to be the best school in New Zealand and that’s why I go around telling parents and children and staff and that I want this school to be at the cutting edge of development. I want us to be seen as leaders in the community, as a school that is a successful school and I want to have people coming in and looking at what we are doing.

Staff implementation of vision ideals in practice result in its renewal and adjustment according to altered conditions. Fine tuning of vision to meet practice is the result of staff addressing and managing issues of time restrictions and location challenges. Staff input⁸³ ensures:

- Vision has a strong foothold in reality. It captures the pulse of what matters to students, staff and parents / caregivers; and
- Construction is a collaborative activity, promoting collective ownership of decisions.

4.1.4 Vision Central Tenets

Analysis of data from interviews, observations and documents indicate that external and internal influences on vision generate the tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. Participants endorse all four as essential, “*if you know what the vision is and agree with it, and I don’t think there’s anything that people could not agree with, then that is your purpose...everyone will work together to achieve the same goal*” (ISF2).

4.1.4.1 Student Centred Learning

Student centred learning is an umbrella term for what drives stakeholders⁸⁴. Participants’ voices define student centred learning as multifaceted⁸⁵. The principal comments, “*It’s the whole reason*

⁸² Evident at professional development, curriculum, senior management, board and home-school meetings.

⁸³ Through involvement in reviews and feedback at staff, professional development and team meetings.

⁸⁴ Staff and parent comments and recorded in official school documents (DOC: 1-11).

for our being here". The deputy principal claims, *"If you think about any of us that is why we are here...doing the best thing for the children...in the classroom, in curriculum areas, in the environment of the school"*. Teaching staff comments endorse senior management claims, for example, *"Raising expectations is about giving children something to aspire to...it's about how much we care about the children so let's give them the best"* (ISF10). Parents maintain: *"This school teaches a child specifically to their level... seeing that that child is being challenged"* (IB1); *"You know it's about getting the children to achieve just not on an academic level but grow within themselves and become good people at the end of the day"* (IB1); *"educated the right way"* (IB2); and *"with other races because it is a very multi-cultural school"* (IP3).

A focus on student centred learning means: improvement in class environments, *"I like to show what the children have done"* (ISF7); holistic attendance to student need (academic, physical, artistic, behaviour, social and emotional)⁸⁶; and meeting ethnic diversity through processes, systems and structural support, *"you know we have got such a diverse multi-cultural population here that I would hope that valuing and supporting each other and the cultures, would be part of it too"* (IA1). Practical support in meeting cultural needs means cultural programmes happening in the school, practice adjustment in ways that are culturally appropriate (for example, support programmes and school policy adjustments)⁸⁷ and auxiliary staff employed to support refugee students and their families⁸⁸.

Student centred learning means inclusion of families in the learning process. Parents' / caregivers' knowledge capacities are enhanced by engagement in home-school partnership programmes⁸⁹ and parent chat sessions⁹⁰. The school advocates an open door policy⁹¹. Parents are welcomed and encouraged to participate in all school activities. Building parental knowledge

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Evidence from observations of practice and documents (DOC: 1-11).

⁸⁷ Altered swimming schedules and camp arrangements are examples of this.

⁸⁸ Bi-lingual tutor input; ESOL programmes run by the ESOL coordinator.

⁸⁹ The home / school partnerships programme, originally a Ministry of Education contract, increases parent involvement in the educational side of school life. The programme involves parent representatives and teachers delivering aspects of the curriculum to community members. As one staff member commented *"The co-leading parent would run the sessions. Parents would feel motivated with the sessions. They would get an idea about the things that were done in the school"* (ISF5). Another claimed, *"This is the philosophy behind the home/school partnership that is parents delivering the messages not the teachers. It makes it less threatening"* (ISF1).

⁹⁰ Topics covered in the year of data collection included: health topics (diabetes, healthy foods), positive parenting and curriculum delivery in maths.

⁹¹ Staff and parent comments in support: (ISF5; ISF7; ISF8; IP1; IP2; IP3; IP4; B1 & B2). Incidental observations confirm this as well.

capacity creates an inclusive learning environment which works in the best interest of students and advances the ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’ vision ideal.

4.1.4.2 Improvement Mindset

School participants claim an improvement mindset is always present and means, “*working with what you have got but continually trying to make things better*” (IA2). It concerns:

trying to obviously improve children’s learning. Trying to make it a positive place where everyone is growing, staff, the children...that teachers are professional...I wouldn’t call it a stagnant school...making every effort to improve in different ways: the children’s learning, the room environments, the school environment, the school image in the community and in the wider sort of community (ISF7).

Data from all sources indicate that an improvement mindset has many dimensions. In terms of structural change⁹², participants comment: “*the furniture has been painted, the handrail has been done. I think it impacts on the kids because they are in a bright attractive environment*” (IA2); and, “*The children’s cloak bay now is lovely. To me it says you’re worth doing this for*” (ISF10).

Improving the image of the school involves all stakeholders getting involved and working together⁹³: “*showing care*” (ISF6); “*generating understanding...working together for a common goal which is betterment of the school*” (IA2) and promoting, “*in the long run, ownership*” (ibid.). Care, understanding, working together and ownership achieve vision goals related to structural improvement⁹⁴. Played out in the building of the new hall it, “*brings people together*” and, “*cohesion is really important*” (ISF12).

An improvement mindset pertains to raising academic and behaviour expectations by, “*making sure that it’s quality programmes that we’re operating – not just anything*” (IA3). Raising staff expectations relates to taking on board new ideas and strategies and ensuring, “*flow into the classrooms with children knowing what’s expected*” (ISF1).

⁹² New hall; new junior adventure playground; setting up learning spaces: technology /visual arts room; painting the library mural; and setting up the parents’ room as a community drop in centre.

⁹³ Staff comments in support: (IA2; IA3; ISF1; ISF3; ISF4; ISF5; ISF6; ISF10; ISF11 & ISF12).

⁹⁴ Building of a new hall, renovating the junior school playground and setting up an environmental friendly school, for example.

Continuous improvement is said to be, “*pretty inspiring*” (ISF1). However, time restrictions and fitting in everything⁹⁵ were areas of concern. Staff attempt to address such concerns by sharing work related responsibilities and making vision goals, “*obtainable. There are not too many things that are in the too hard basket and that’s important*” (ISF1). An improvement mindset enforces collective ways of working that benefits the school and its stakeholders.

Comments from staff indicate that an improvement mindset, “*needs to be felt by the people*” (IA2). Feeling the need for change means, “*people (knowing) that things needed to get better*” (IA2). In this respect, participants’ comments confirm reflection on practice as witnessed at professional development⁹⁶, team⁹⁷ and curriculum meetings⁹⁸ and systemic reviews (DOC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 9) promote the need for change. Reflection generates professional dialogue and purpose-driven action, crucial components of capacity building for improvement.

For staff, an improvement mindset means increased professionalism, “*I think at the start we know that we represent this school...We are encouraged to be professional*” (ISFS1). Professionalism linked to improvement involves:

- Individualised learning: “*Teachers set their own goals and those that trickle down to the children. Goal setting is a big thing*” (ISF6) and “*It’s really up to us*” (ISF3);
- Collective learning: “*There’s a lot more ownership now of where we are going to meet the needs...a team thing and we can see the purpose to it*” (ISF3); and “*because everyone is there at that same meeting...we are all getting the same message. It means we all know what we are meant to be doing ...we know what we are expected to do*” (IA3);
- Monitored practice⁹⁹: “*upskilling the staff and then the monitoring that happens within the classrooms as well*” (IA2); and “*actually following things through...looking at work so that we’re monitoring the children and we know what’s happening*” (IA3);
- Focused attention on quality: “*actually making sure that we are doing justice to each thing that is happening...Making sure we are not just giving lip-service*” (IA3);
- Working towards a common goal: “*It all becomes part of your daily plan*” (IA3); and

⁹⁵ Staff comments in support: (ISF2; ISF5 & ISF10).

⁹⁶ Observations conducted at staff meetings: (OWS1; OWS3; OWS4; OWS5; OWS10; OWS13 & OWS14).

⁹⁷ Observations conducted at team meetings: (OTM1; OTM2; OTM3; OTJ4 & OTJ5).

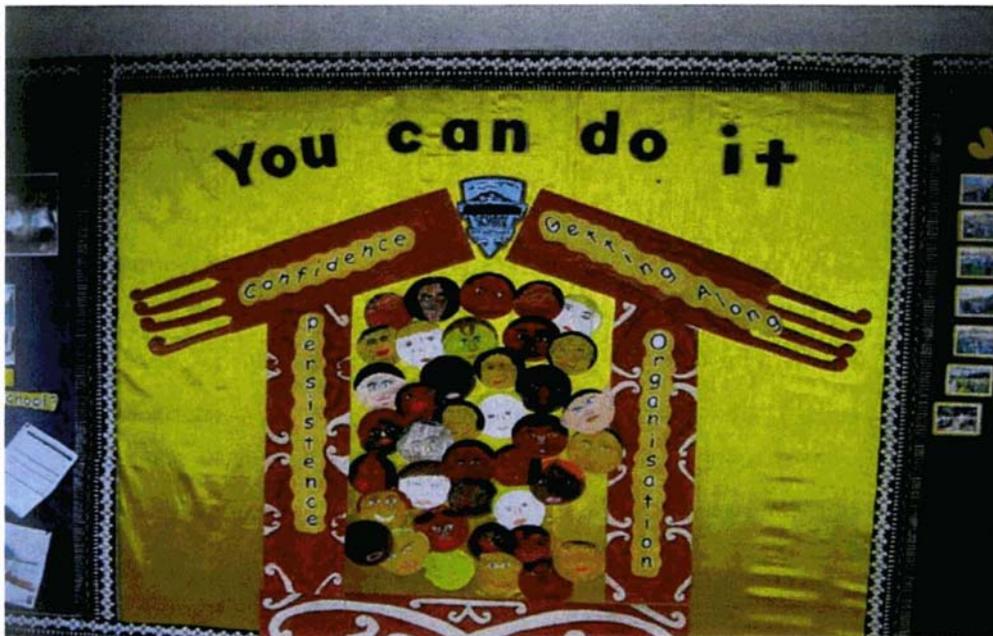
⁹⁸ Observations conducted at literacy committee meetings: (OLC1 & OLC2).

⁹⁹ Refer to the section on professional development, a layered approach– 4.4.3.3. Documents in support (DOC: 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8 & 9).

- Future planning as evidenced by the ‘PATH Chart’ and consecutive strategic plans (DOC 6): *“We had all these lovely ideas of building a school hall, making changes and doing different things in the school...we slowly began to do things. And now if you look at all those things on the chart we are achieving them”* (ISF5).

4.1.4.3 Empowerment

Empowerment is linked to principles that underpin the ‘You Can Do It’ programme. Staff note this equates to: *“kids out there are succeeding and are leaders... our school is at the cutting edge offering a range of top quality programmes* (ISF3); and *“I think the foundations are everything that a school should strive to achieve”* (ISF12). A mural promoting the ‘You Can Do It’ ideals is the first thing that greets visitors when they enter the school (see Photograph 1). It openly endorses messages of building confidence, getting along, persistence and organisation.



1 Photograph. ‘You Can Do It’ Mural in Foyer

‘You Can Do It’ has increased the positive ethos already in the school¹⁰⁰. For students this means behavioural and attitudinal changes related to learning¹⁰¹, *“You hear different kids encouraging*

¹⁰⁰ Teaching staff comments in support: (ISF4; ISF5; ISF6; ISF9 & ISF12). All parent participants supported this claim.

each other like in athletics or different things. You hear different comments from teachers that different kids have made encouraging comments in different ways” (ISF4). For parents it means having a go, taking risks as in the example provided by the deputy principal where an Ethiopian grandmother, despite initial concern and reluctance, accompanied her grandchild to camp¹⁰². The ‘You Can Do It’ programme has had an empowering effect on staff. The following, very personal quote by a staff member, highlights this:

I'm meant to be telling the children about being confident and all the rest...but sometimes I don't feel confident and so how can I be out there telling them and trying to develop their confidence thinking my own is lacking. I have had to change my attitude. Not only do I have to start thinking more confidently but ...acting a bit more confidently (IA3).

Empowerment is played out in shared leadership¹⁰³. To illustrate, sustainability of the ‘You Can Do It’ programme is officially the SENCO’s responsibility, “*You can say at the moment that I am the leader of it*”. However, because the programme underscores practice and is accepted philosophy, the responsibility is also that belonging to everyone, confirmed as, “*I'm only on a three year contract...but I can't see 'You Can Do It' falling over*” (ISF4). Empowerment extends to staff sharing leadership responsibilities in educational matters. As observed in staff and team meetings, teachers accept lead roles for knowledge acquisition, distribution, implementation¹⁰⁴ and change of practice¹⁰⁵.

Empowerment involves parents as partners in various school activities. A reciprocal relationship exists where staff and parents support each other in governance, school events and in the education of students / community. Observations at ‘Friends of the School’ and board meetings confirm parental involvement in governance, decision-making, fund raising and networking¹⁰⁶. The school supports parent involvement through such means as employing bi-lingual support workers¹⁰⁷ to help bridge the home-school divide for refugee families in ways that optimise

¹⁰¹ Staff and parents / caregivers note students are switched on to learning, display task oriented behaviours and are better able to manage their own behaviour (IA2; ISF3; ISF4; ISF5; ISF10; ISF12; IP1; IP3; IP4; B1 & B2).

¹⁰² Refer Appendix O: Excerpt 4 - EOTC – Accommodating the views of other cultures / ‘You Can Do It’

¹⁰³ Observed in all staff, team and curriculum meetings where teachers take lead roles in knowledge production and utilisation and initiating change in practice.

¹⁰⁴ Knowledge acquisition, distribution and implementation were observed as common practice in junior, middle and senior syndicates.

¹⁰⁵ Some examples: implementation of new health and safety measures; use of three level guides in reading programmes; and student portfolio changes.

¹⁰⁶ Observation from: (OFS1; OB2; OB3 & OB4).

¹⁰⁷ Data in support from focus group discussion (FG1) conducted.

student learning¹⁰⁸. At home-school partnership evenings, teachers and parents provide community members with information about curriculum developments. Staff-led parent chat sessions provide opportunities to build personal knowledge on education, health and positive parenting. Input by staff and parents is designed to build community knowledge capacity. Empowerment of parents / caregivers is seen to increase their involvement in home-school partnerships. Parent / caregiver volunteers provide in-class assistance. They help in managing school wide resources, participate in cultural group activities and provide support in other activities like sports and school trips.

Empowerment is captured by the shared language of school stakeholders. Stakeholders use 'we' and phrases such as 'harnessed together' to denote 'community' and 'togetherness'. Togetherness, participants note, builds trust¹⁰⁹. Community collaboration in painting the old hall¹¹⁰ is an example of, "*harnessing together*" (IA2) to achieve agreed goals. Such action strengthens collective empowerment.

In an atmosphere of trust, asking questions, seeking clarification and collective action flourish. There is an expectation that everyone contributes in decision-making and shares in corresponding task accomplishment, "*I think with our team it is expected that everybody takes a part in meetings. Before I was doing a lot with the planning - but now the whole team is taking on board more the sharing of responsibility*" (ISF1). The ability to raise doubt, voice opinion and seek clarification increases collective contribution in initiating change. Such actions affirm collective empowerment in achieving purpose.

4.1.4.4 Community

A central tenet of this school's vision is building community¹¹¹. Community has numerous defining elements. According to the deputy principal, community is an all inclusive term, "*not just for the kids but...for the home and the school...we work together as a community...we have fun*". For parents, community is, "*trying to get the parents involved. You know it's not just up to the teachers and the principal and deputy*" (IB1). The concept of community has roots embedded in the past. As the principal notes,

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Refer to sections on school culture and professional development.

¹¹⁰ Refer Appendix O: Excerpt 1 – Goal accomplishment and stakeholder commitment to vision – Painting the old hall

¹¹¹ Staff and parents' interview comments in support.

In this community there has always been a big heart. I noticed when I came to this school how friendly the children were and also the staff and parents. That was a culture that had been in the school but there wasn't a working culture. They were friendly but they didn't seem to be working.

Community now means pulling in the same direction and working collaboratively¹¹²: “*Now it feels much more what we need and a team thing and we can see what we are doing things for and the purpose to it*” (ISF3); and “*we are helping each other and appreciating each other*” (IA1). A collaborative work culture is enhanced by school structures, processes and systems. The principal’s actions are seen as crucial in initiating structures, processes and systems that sustain community. In the initial phase of school improvement, she created a central resource storage area, “*So what I did was pulled everything into one room and everyone had access. There wasn't any of this is mine and yours*”. Comments from staff endorse such action as enhancing professionalism and building community.

Community means showing respect for students’ and parents’ / caregivers’ cultures by valuing diversity¹¹³. As acknowledged by the principal, “*you know we have got such a diverse multi-cultural population here that I would hope that all value and support each other*” and, “*appreciating other cultures would be part of it too...It is a multi-cultural school and it shows respect for everyone*” (ISF5).

School stakeholders associate community with feeling safe¹¹⁴. Feeling safe represents:

- Ability to express voice¹¹⁵;
- Participation in shared decision making¹¹⁶;
- Engagement in shared dialogue desirous of learning¹¹⁷; and
- Acceptance of others’ viewpoints¹¹⁸.

Community means inclusion of parents in the decision making process. As highlighted in construction of the initial ‘PATH Chart’¹¹⁹ and consecutive strategic plans (DOC 6), parents’

¹¹² Refer to the section on school culture.

¹¹³ Refer Appendix – Bi-lingual Support Workers – Focus Group Discussion

¹¹⁴ Refer to the section on school culture.

¹¹⁵ Observed at all staff, team, curriculum and board meetings. Recorded in documents (DOC 1-11).

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

¹¹⁷ Ibid..

¹¹⁸ Observed in all school activities.

aspirations are given serious consideration. Goal setting works towards meeting staff, students' and parents' /caregivers' requirements. There is an expectation that this school, given its low socio-economic location and ethnic diversity, assists in building collective knowledge capacity¹²⁰. This viewpoint, as signalled previously, is justified on the basis that informed stakeholders contribute as partners in students' education and in the building of school capacity.

4.1.4.5 The Vision Package

By way of a summary, the school's vision provides a unified sense of direction captured as, 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'. It has a short snappy catch cry, "*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*" (DOC 6). Its four support tenets are: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. Participants endorse the value of all four tenets, verbally, in documentation form (PATH chart and strategic plans) and through their actions. The 'PATH Chart'¹²¹ and consecutive strategic plans (DOC 6) deconstruct the vision ideals and support tenets into goals and strategies for their achievement. The vision provides purpose, "*a strong focus and sense of direction, people know where they are going, where the school is heading in the short term and in the long term*" (ISF1).

4.1.5 Vision Construction – Conceptualisation, Transmission and Evolution

Vision construction involves processes of conceptualisation, transmission and evolution. Vision construction is on-going, a necessary part of daily life. The original PATH chart and successive strategic plans record goals and steps taken towards goal achievement based on systemic reviews and parents / caregivers / staff collective perspectives on future school direction¹²².

4.1.5.1 Vision Conceptualisation

Initial vision conceptualisation, as recalled by participants in construction of the PATH chart, was a collaborative undertaking:

This happened when (principal) started. I think she said OK what do you want in this school? What do we need in this school? We all broke into teams and we wrote down what we thought we needed...So if you have a look on the wall there you will see it...So that's what's in the back of our mind, what we want for our school (ISFS2).

¹¹⁹ Appendix P: PATH Chart for vision achievement.

¹²⁰ Linked to the You Can Do It programme. Also comments on home / school partnerships and parent chat sessions.

¹²¹ Refer Appendix P: PATH Chart for vision achievement.

¹²² As witnessed, for example, in the strategic planning meeting (OSM 3).

Initial conceptualisation involved an outside facilitator working with staff at the principal's request, *"I harnessed all sorts of people who came in and helped. I got in (facilitator) from GSE. We did that PATH process, everybody giving ideas and working towards a vision, where are we now and where are we going"*. The vision marked a new era, *"the school being seen as a leader in this community. As a school that is successful"* (IA1).

Participants' claim the vision is grounded in what stakeholders consider is important. The process symbolises recognition and acting on stakeholder voice, *"We have talked about it. It's up on the wall in the staff room"* (ISF2). It has an evidential base, initiated, in the beginning, by the principal, *"I ran surveys and interviews just to find out...I listened and acted on what people said"*. Staff feel listened to and their opinions valued, *"The things they were talking about were the issues... (we) have a say in things and that's why the school is open to ideas"* (ISF5).

As observed, the current strategic plan involves all school stakeholders in the conceptualisation process. This ensures vision achieves 'fit' with school stakeholders' views and needs. Staff and parents / caregivers are vision creators, implementers and guardians. Their collective input ensures the vision builds on past experiences, is future orientated and grounded in current practice.

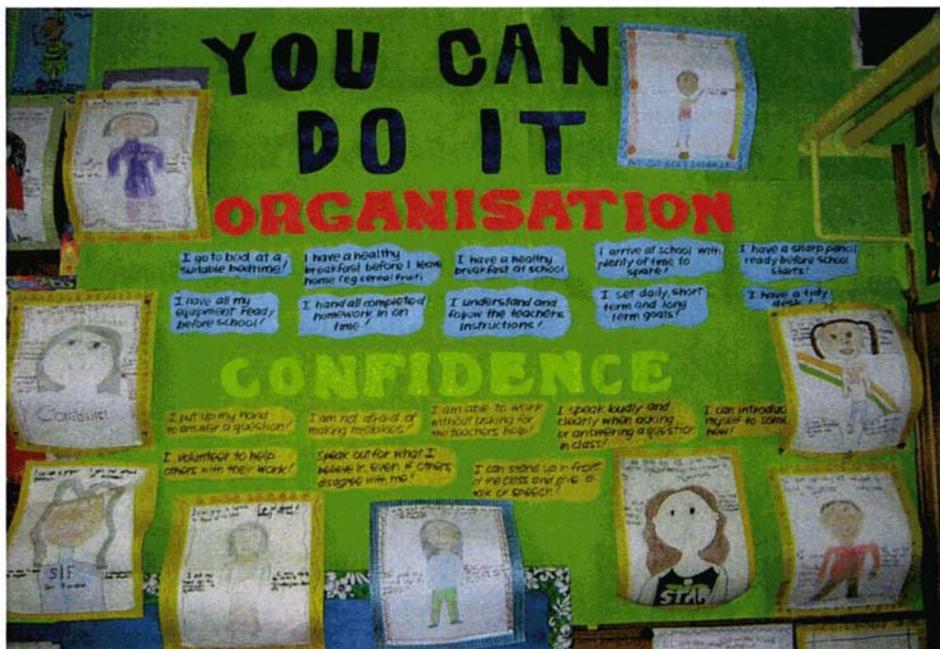
Vision conceptualisation and steps taken towards achievement of goals necessitates continuous reviews, *"Well the original map was already done. It was re-added"* (ISF4). As noted at the time of initial conceptualisation, ideas were recorded on a large chart, the 'PATH Chart'. This chart continues to occupy wall space in the staff room. In recent years, strategic plans have replaced the PATH chart. Analysis of the PATH chart and strategic plans reveal:

- Teamness, a sharing of views with others to promote agreed goals for future action;
- Accountability of goal achievement – progress made is 'ticked off' and next steps added;
- Room for individual, collective and systemic growth;
- Transparency of past and current achievements combined with future goals¹²³; and
- Compliance to Ministry of Education demands that renders this school a 'safe place'.

¹²³ Comment in support of transparency linked to the 'PATH Chart': *"Well it reminds me every day that that's our goal...our hall being up, our children being taken care of in the right way, lots and lots of oracy with the children, with each other. Keeping clear communication and if we do have a little kerfuffle we come out and we say what we need and we beat it all out and we write it out and say OK this is our plan. That way we can go and do what needs to be done"* (ISFS2).

4.1.5.2 Vision Transmission

The vision is transmitted in a variety of ways. Articulation by staff is one source of transmission. Transmission of vision occurs in practice. Examples include scheduled times for the teaching of ‘You Can Do It’, altered teaching strategies in response to the needs of students, collective engagement in activities such as painting the old school hall despite a new one soon to be built¹²⁴ and community involvement in home-school partnerships. Newsletters promote the vision out in the community (DOC 10). Establishment of the parents’ room enforces the message that parents are welcome in the school; this is a community school with an open door policy. Cultural artefacts on display espouse vision messages. For example, ‘You Can Do It’ signs and posters are visually displayed around the school¹²⁵ as is the ‘PATH Chart’. Photograph 2 is an example of a classroom mural supporting the ‘You Can Do It’ message. A section of wall space in all classes is devoted to promoting ‘You Can Do It’ ideals. Certificates and end of the year cups and trophies (see Photograph 3) achieve similar purposes.



2 Photograph. ‘You Can Do It’ Classroom Display

¹²⁴ Refer Appendix O: Excerpt 1 – Goal Accomplishment and Stakeholder Commitment to Vision – Painting the old hall.

¹²⁵ Staff comments in support: (ISF4; ISF10 & ISF12); photograph 1 and 2.



3 Photograph. Trophies

Students articulate vision messages. On the topic of ‘You Can Do It’, comments received by staff, from students, denote assimilation and enactment of programme ideals. In response to a newly appointed teacher’s request for knowledge on the ‘You Can Do It’ programme, students responded, *“Oh Ms ... it’s about respecting one another. It’s about this and about that and it’s all coming through the ‘You can do it’ programme. But they are taking it in as well”* (ISF10).

Parent involvement in school life¹²⁶ and active participation in home-school partnership and parent chat programmes, help transmit the vision. The claim is: *“If other parents see that these parents can do it then they think that we can do it too”* (IA3); and *“The involvement of parents in the school will help the public relations of the school too. Like people will see the school as a safe place – not a place of criticising people – a safe place of learning”* (ISF8).

School processes, systems and structures enhance vertical and horizontal transmission of vision. For example, at whole staff, team and parents / caregivers meetings¹²⁷, vision ideals are explicitly and implicitly endorsed. The ‘PATH Chart’, strategic plans and reviews engineer reflection and renewal of vision that maintains its currency. Such documents serve as monitoring devices, *“if you look at all those things on the chart we are achieving them”* (ISF5).

¹²⁶ Board of Trustees, Friends of the School, Samoan and whanau groups and voluntary help.

¹²⁷ Staff and parents comments in support: (IA1; IA2; IA3; ISF1; ISF2; ISF3; ISF5; ISF9; ISF12; P1; P3; P4; B1 & B2).

4.1.5.3 Vision Evolution

Document analysis of the 'PATH chart', consecutive strategic plans and other school documents in combination with interviews and observations of practice, indicate that vision evolution is a result of continuous, reflective practice¹²⁸. Reflection on practice, reduces diversion away from goal achievement. Reflective practice focuses on promoting student learning by attending to planning, teaching, learning and evaluation¹²⁹. The message continually enforced is, 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'. Capacity building is enhanced because, "*The vision focuses you and you have it in your head and sometimes you go on little tangents or lots of little tangents so you need to refocus and re-look at where you are heading*" (ISF1).

Reflection on practice means concerted attention to all four tenets. It means constantly being aware of what the vision is and whether the pathway to its achievement is undertaken authentically. Examples of reflection on practice abound in this setting. It is what practitioners do that makes 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning' a reality. The 'Education Outside The Classroom' (EOTC) camp report¹³⁰ and levelling or moderation of student writing samples¹³¹ provide two examples of collective reflective practice described as:

I think it is about talking and discussing and trying things out. Seeing what works. Sometimes you think it is going to work but actually trying it out and then going back and doing some reviews and finding out where we are at and what are we going to do to improve...And assisting everybody to get to where we want to get to and then looking back further and thinking we got there or even if we didn't get there thinking back, reflecting individually and with the whole school (ISF1).

Monitored practice¹³² offers an approach to vision renewal. The 'PATH Chart', strategic plans and self and system reviews provide transparent ways to report on progress and achievement to staff, parents / caregivers, board of trustees, Ministry of Education officials and ERO. Reporting on progress reinforces connection to vision as this comment suggests, "*As soon as we started I did feel "Wow there is a lot to do" and I felt tired. But as we all pulled together we have got*

¹²⁸ Refer to the professional development section for description of reflective practice – 4.4.2.2. Seen also in review documents (DOC 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 & 9).

¹²⁹ Refer strategic planning and curriculum review documents (DOC 1-6); Observations at all staff; team; senior management; curriculum and Board meetings

¹³⁰ Refer Appendix O: Excerpts 4 and 5

¹³¹ Refer to the professional development section – 4.4.2.2

¹³² Refer to the professional development section – 4.4.3.3

things changed as a team. When I look at that chart now I think, "Wow we have achieved such a lot". I feel proud of that" (ISF12).

4.1.6 The Vision / Reality Gap

'Striving to be the best in promoting student learning' is an inspirational ideal, articulated, enacted and recorded by stakeholders. Vision tenets provide support, guidance and focus; a 'working towards vision' framework. However, situational factors connected with funding shortages, lack of time, low socio-economic location factors and, to an extent, parent reluctance to get involved, limit achievement of vision goals. They create a vision / reality gap.

Participants stated that vision implementation and school improvement were impeded by funding shortages. All agreed that similar issues were experienced by other schools. Examples provided related to ICT, in particular lack of equipment to capitalise on newly acquired teaching skills. Although budget restrictions and economic imperatives are an accepted reality, this school's culture of commitment and entrepreneurialism appears to absorb negative reactions associated with fiscal restrictions. Cultural norms of self-governance and self-management in minimising limitations and maximising opportunities counteract the effects of funding shortfalls. The atmosphere that prevails is one of utilising what is available in 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'.

School participants mentioned time limitations, fitting things in and consolidation of new learning as limiting factors. Timetabling the teaching of 'You Can Do It' and business of classroom life¹³³ were cited as examples of lack of time to achieve vision goals. Senior managers display awareness of time limitations. Measures taken by way of counteraction include: designing flexible professional development agendas (individualised learning), encouraging staff ownership in decision-making, collective participation in task accomplishment and scaffolded assistance (teacher release, professional development and / or mentoring / coaching assistance) in goal achievement. In this setting, continuous professional development¹³⁴ offers communal opportunities for learning with promise of collective as well as individual goal attainment.

Factors associated with the school's socio-economic context limits vision realisation. Staff comment that energy spent on managing student behaviour, poor student health, lack of pre-

¹³³ Staff comments: ISF1; ISF5; ISF9 & ISF12 and observations of practice in support.

¹³⁴ Refer to section on professional development – 4.4.3

school education, deprived housing conditions and needs of parents makes this school challenging: “*children here are from very different families that won’t all fit into this one idea of maybe a white middle class Christian one - one dad, one mum, another brother/sister family*” (ISF12); and “*‘You can do it’ programme is good for them it but becomes a little lost as soon as they walk out the gate. They have to turn it off as it is often the opposite at home... Sometimes we fight a losing battle*” (ISF11).

As explained earlier, the school attempts to address community needs through provision of programmes that benefit and build parent / caregiver capacity. School practices ensure staff get support in undertaking their teaching duties¹³⁵. Support staff are employed to specifically bridge the home-school gap¹³⁶. All endeavours are attempts to address challenges of location from a community, systemic perspective.

Limited parental involvement, a perceived barrier to vision realisation, was mentioned mainly by parent representatives. The school’s attempt to increase parent involvement is acknowledged as:

Like most schools our parent involvement may not be as strong as other schools but it is being developed with ideas like morning jump jams and inviting parents along to parent chat meetings. The school is open to parents but with some parents it is about breaking the barriers they themselves may have about their own school life (ISF11).

4.1.7 Vision: Capacity Building Links

This inquiry is concerned with capacity building for school improvement. Data reveals that vision is a core category enhancing capacity building. The school’s vision is shared, aligned with legislative requirements and staff, students’ and parents’ / caregivers’ needs and aspirations. With collective purpose comes passion for goal achievement. School participants describe the vision as contagious, “*people catch on*” (IA2). The vision creates a groundswell of support that ignites commitment to the ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’ vision ideal.

Purpose, accompanied by shared language, promotes common messages and shared meanings. People talk about the vision, use the same language in conversations and believe in the same

¹³⁵ Structural support: bi-lingual tutors; ESOL programmes; policy and procedural support; educational delivery support – professional development; open door policy.

¹³⁶ Bi-lingual tutors, for example, strengthen home-school links by supporting involvement of refugee families in school life. This occurs through bi-lingual tutors translating and communicating school information in respective languages; assisting teachers understand cultural practices of different ethnic groups; and facilitating the delivery of the curriculum in appropriate, culturally sensitive ways.

ideals, *“It’s not about having messages but ensuring that everyone is getting that same message. Everyone is working towards those goals”* (IA3). From a position of common messages and shared meaning, coherence ensues. Coherence, witnessed as ways of working together, agreed expectations and practice consistency, facilitates a unified approach to building capacity for school improvement.

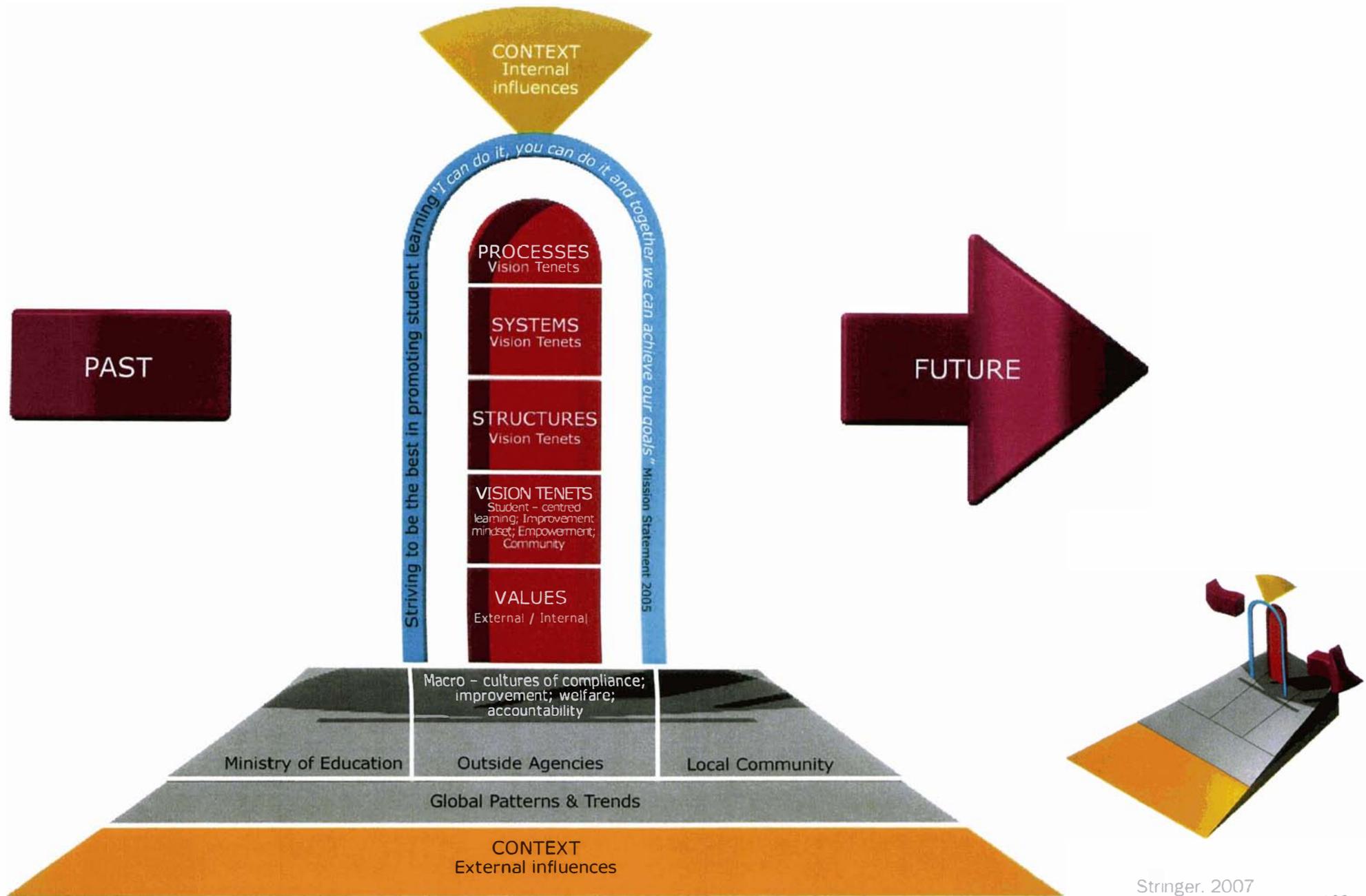
Working towards vision involves translating the vision ideal into a workable blueprint recorded in the ‘PATH chart’ and subsequent strategic plans. Such documents draw on collective stakeholder input towards setting goals and action steps towards their achievement. A strong focus on expectations and detailing what this means in practice makes improvement easier to manage. It promotes efficiency and effectiveness in working towards vision – important attributes of capacity building.

Practices that support vision implementation also promote its buy-in. For example, the ‘PATH Chart’ and strategic plans not only record future directions but are accountability tools that attest to progress made. They generate professional dialogue around key tenets: student centred learning, an improvement mindset, empowerment and community. Such engagement affirms and increases stakeholder commitment to overall vision direction.

Stakeholders’ role in vision conceptualisation, transmission and evolution engenders collective activity around doing the best for this school and its stakeholders. External and internal sources of influence impact on vision conceptualisation. In vision transmission and evolution, school stakeholders, *“regularly re-look at it”* (ISF1); re-looking at vision leads to its modification in line with changing internal and external conditions. For example: *“Well whenever we plan we think about how appropriate it is for other cultures. Camp is a prime example really. In some cultures, camp is not appropriate and so it is about recognising that that’s OK”* (IA2); and *“Well last year we did a literacy review. We discussed the results at a staff meeting... We looked at those results. We discussed the positives and the negatives. Where we needed to pick up and where our focus needed to be for the future”* (ISF11). Processes of evolution keeps the vision alive and current. A ‘readiness’ or ‘preparedness’ for change ensures school processes, systems and structures are primed to meet new demands. Such qualities are crucial in building capacity for improvement.

4.1.8 Summary

The school's vision is inspirational in the key message it espouses: 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'. The vision, recorded in the 'PATH chart' and successive strategic plans, offers a blueprint for practice. Figure 2 (p. 132) depicts influences on vision, the vision ideal with its empowering '*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*' catch cry, underpinning tenets and connections to processes, systems and structures. The four tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community underpin and support overall school direction. The vision unifies and grounds stakeholders to what is important – promoting student learning. The combined package serves to guide the building of capacity for school improvement that is situated; that is, embedded and reflective of macro and micro influences.



Stringer. 2007

Figure 2 School Vision. Underpinning tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community.

4.2 Introduction- Stakeholders as Change Agents

Data indicates that all stakeholders (Ministry of Education, outside agencies, businesses, staff parents / caregivers and students) associated with the school have an input in building school capacity for improvement. Data presented on vision (and in the sections that follow), school culture and professional development confirms this. The focus of this section, however, is on challenges of site that require change and management of change by school stakeholders. Data presented details site-based challenges and school stakeholders' responses to challenges. The principal, senior teachers, teaching and support staff and parents / caregivers are the focus of attention. Roles and responsibilities are explained accordingly (see Figure 3, p. 149). This section presents a synopsis of key challenges facing school stakeholders and attributes and behaviours in response. Change agency roles are discussed according to:

- Vision-led activity – visionary leadership;
- Systemic development – systems, processes and structures;
- Educational activity – educational leadership; and
- Network building.

4.2.1 Challenges of Site Affecting School Stakeholders' Roles and Responsibilities

Data indicate school stakeholders' roles and responsibilities alter in response to internal and external conditions that appear to be constantly in a state of flux. Alterations of site conditions with integrated challenges of change demand continuous attention to sustaining organisational equilibrium and improvement. Challenges facing school personnel are those of location, macro cultural influences, meeting new legislative demands and addressing wider patterns and trends. Such challenges have widespread consequences as forthcoming data reveals.

Challenges associated with this school's low socio-economic location are complex and multi-faceted. Interviews with parents suggest that integrated effects of location, school perceptions, interschool competition and roll growth affect this school: *"I live 500 metres from the school and a lot of people take their kids off to other schools...it is very much perceived as a low decile school and there's a perception out there that you don't (if you're middle class) take them off and send them to a decile two school"* (IP2); and *"once that reputation starts everyone knows about it*

and its just hard to (stop it). I think schools should have a fair and reasonable zone. Those who are in the zone¹³⁷ should go to that school” (IP3).

Such comments typify problems of perception difficult to address easily. Perceptions of this school as multicultural generates a sense of hesitancy in becoming involved, *“I think everybody realises that we live in a multicultural way but when it comes to the crunch some people seem reluctant to take that step” (IP1).* The influence of ‘market’ policies, such as inter-school competition for students and funding, promote talk related to roll growth, *“We want to increase the roll!” (IB2).* Increasing the roll is linked with generating funds to facilitate improvement. The alternative means a reduced roll and reduction of funds with budgeting and management repercussions, *“Given that it is the start of everything else I can’t believe the way the schools are kept so under funded. I guess they (the school) have to be more independent...They can’t go out and say well we need that and have it” (IP4).* The talk that results affirms a drive towards self-governance and self-management that proactively addresses challenges of location and funding.

Data reveal that school stakeholders continue to respond to challenges of perception by actively promoting this school as ‘school of choice’. This occurs through word of mouth activities and advantageous use of the local media, *“lots of flyers about achievements of this school. We got a real-estate person to put in their ‘ad’ the other day that (this) school zone is popular, that’s a huge move. It’s just making people more aware that we have a good school here” (IB1).* However, effort to bring about change is time consuming and parent representatives note, *“I think it’s always going to be slow...we have done a lot of marketing” (IB1).*

Low decile location challenges have implications for school personnel in terms of meeting students’ and the community’s diverse needs. Concerns raised were: *“I think we have got a lot of parents that don’t have English as a first language”* and this means, *“doing additional work outside the classroom” (IP2)* and, *“creating a community feel” (ISFS3).* Creating a community feel was noted as difficult because, *“There are so many different cultures so I think maybe they need to be more informed about what’s happening in the school. Just to help out with their own understanding” (IB2).* Different groups not understanding each other were said to raise communication difficulties, *“It is hard for the Pacific Islanders to understand the Somalians. Some of the parents get on well but it is the language. The language is a barrier” (IB2).*

¹³⁷ A school zone is a catchment area designated by the board of trustees and agreed to by the Ministry of Education from which the school can draw its pupils.

Challenges of location demand action, *“Because face it in a school like...(this) you are going to have some difficult moments”* (IP4). Taking action necessitates, *“including the community and making parents aware of what’s happening and what’s required really and what they need to do to help kids. That’s really important for this school because of its make up, you have got lots of immigrant families who don’t really understand the system”* (IP3). Taking action is also related to teaching and learning where attention is directed to meeting a wide variety of needs, *“Ok there’s probably a lack of children from homes where parents have high educational qualification ...I think that could make a difference to the way your kid...how much competition it’s got...I think a little bit of competition can be good”* (IP4).

Complexities of context demand action that not only encompass catering for diverse students’ and parents’ / caregivers’ capabilities and needs but also staying abreast of changes to curriculum and policy. In this school, meeting external change necessitates, *“getting the balance right. Finding the balance between lots of new learning and work load”* (ISF3). Addressing challenges of accommodating new legislative was witnessed at whole school, team and board meetings. The flow-on effect on school stakeholders is time spent debating how such changes are to be implemented, preparing for implementation, implementation and follow up checks to ensure implementation does happen in practice. This process takes time and energy and is particularly demanding on senior managers and office staff. In addition, staff consultation and communication to parents / caregivers is required. On two separate occasions the researcher witnessed senior staff ‘walking’ other staff and board members through new legislative requirements. Seeking stakeholder views and encouraging participatory decision-making meant structural change was managed collectively. On both occasions, the principal initiated staff feedback and undertook responsibility for attending to follow-up alterations. Such follow up included modifying current systems, processes and procedures and ensuring change was implemented in practice. Vital to successful implementation of change are systems of communication, witnessed in this site as successfully transmitting information to staff, parents /caregivers and board of trustees.

Addressing need requires systemic (system, process and structure) change. Systemic change appears ‘a constant’ in building capacity for improvement. Change, if not managed, creates role confusion, added responsibilities and unclear expectations. Participants’ comments suggest that demands for change are multi-faceted, an integrated mix of external and internal factors. Change was said to alter perceptions and existing ‘ways of doing things’. Change disestablishes

equilibrium and increases uncertainty. Parents commented that it breaks down consistency of expectations and routines. For example, parents who are members of 'Friends of the school' commented that their roles are not similar to that of the old parent teacher association (PTA), "*ten years ago PTA's did a lot of fund raising but now the board of trustees has taken that away in certain ways. Where we used to apply for lots of funding from various lotteries...we've got to be careful now because the board might be applying for the same one as us*" (IP3). Mandated change, such as a new board elected every three years, is an example of an imposed change necessitating adjustment in practice, "*We have a new board and its understanding what the old board has done...It's just learning everything that has happened really. Understanding how the school was run and then how we are going to do it*" (IB2). Change has an inevitable flow-on effect to the community, "*it is harder for parents to accept the new. They are used to everything before that*" (IB2). Change requires explanation, "*We have to go to the parents and explain to them why it has changed. In this respect it is a little bit hard to keep everything in balance*" (IB2). Maintaining balance in an environment steeped in change is challenging for school stakeholders committed to building capacity for improvement.

Ensuring systemic change, in response to need, depends on the situation. For example, at the end of the year and having completed curriculum and systemic reviews, change seems expected and its management scaffolded¹³⁸. However, observation of daily school life suggests that unexpected calls for change (sudden staff departure, for example) also occur and necessitate immediate action. Here, the school's ability to deal with rapidity of change is challenged. Systems, processes and structures are placed under duress to cope with sudden demands. The process also requires flexibility and adjustment from school stakeholders. Parents claim that change in school activities flows on to the community. For example, staff departure was described as, "*the teacher leaving puts a downer on things. It's just that I don't want my children to be stuck in somewhere and involved in a school that can't get out of things...when teachers leave I feel my children shouldn't feel that it is a big deal*" (IB2). All change, planned and unplanned, has repercussions and necessitates new ways of doing things. The responsibility for this falls on school stakeholders. It makes their role as 'change agents' significant. Building capacity is about managing change.

4.2.2 Personal Attributes

School stakeholders' personal attributes matter in meeting demands for change. For example, staff claim that being positive is important when dealing with issues. It does not mean failing to

¹³⁸ Refer to the professional development section and Chapter Five: Knowledge production and utilisation.

consider the negatives but, rather, having a mindset focused on improving practice. School stakeholders display a positive mindset. By way of example, at the strategic planning meeting and in response to questions on values, the principal stated, *“Let’s look at the positives and not let the negative thought take hold”* (OSM3). A positive outlook makes for a, *“happier place to be”* (ISF1).

Staff display a deep concern for social issues affecting their practice. They demonstrate a concern for equity and the stance adopted is one of advocating for staff, students’ and parents’ / caregivers’ rights. Parents define this as, *“having personality. I mean to a certain extent a good teacher seems to me to have a good personality...somebody who likes to listen and you know...they like interacting with the kids”* (IP4). Parents describe staff as, *“dedicated teachers, progressive, always ready to take teaching to another level of progress, motivated and friendly”* (IB1). Personality also incorporates a display of passion for the job. Parents claim, *“you can see their influence all over the school”* (IP2).

Preparedness to push the boundaries of existing practice to improve and manage challenges of change is evident in this setting. Senior managers set the lead as these comments suggest: *“they have confidence in themselves to move into the unknown at all levels to allow change to happen, to allow growth to happen. Otherwise just activity happens and not necessarily change of culture or school improvement”* (IOA3). Both the principal and deputy principal are seen as growth promoters, *“they like change to come from the bottom rather than the top”* (ISF1). The principal is awarded praise for her ability to manage change successfully because she has an outgoing personality and, *“brings this outgoing, strong personality, to benefit the school”* (IP2). Furthermore, *“The person the principal is, is based on her early life experiences, all the professional experiences she has had and her own being as a person”* (IOA3).

Challenges of setting necessitate building positive, meaningful work relationships. Working together creates synergy. The principal and deputy principal working together, *“completely on the same wavelength”* (ISF2) means, *“things are humming at the school”* (IB2). The principal and deputy principal are observed as, *“having high goodwill, emotional maturity, intelligence and embedded in their professional environment...They respect diversity. They seem to come from a place where they appreciate you. They exemplify reflective practice”* (IOA3). Part of energy production is enthusiasm associated with learning and acquiring new knowledge to deal with problems. The principal and deputy principal motivate others to engage in new learning.

Communal sharing of knowledge increases enthusiasm, *“I think it is the enthusiasm of teachers and it (change) just happens”* (IP3). Working with others in connected ways creates a culture of collaboration that enhances capacity building for improvement.

Participants note the principal is proactive in dealing with daily challenges. She is described as, *“Hard working, strong, pretty motivated, very accessible and willing to listen”* (IB1); *“very thorough”* (IA3). The principal is said to be, *“vibrant. I think she made staff think outside the square and put out a bit more effort in for a start”* (IP2). The principal is always, *“looking for new ideas”* (IP2), motivated and committed to the vision ideals. The stance she takes makes others desirous of change. They, *“Get enthused and that newness and enthusiasm rubs off”* (ISF2). Capacity building through openness to new ideas is linked to the principal, *“walking the talk. It’s not just saying things but actually doing it”* (IA3).

4.2.3 Vision-led Activity – Visionary Leadership

The vision exerts a powerful force in maintaining a sense of direction; that is, grounding people to what matters in managing change demands. Participants claim that supporting the vision and its inspirational message of ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’ creates focus when solving problems. Through stakeholder participation in vision-led activity, this school has and continues to maintain its improvement trajectory.

School stakeholders as change agents promote systemic reform aligned to vision. Their engagement in such activities as strategic planning makes them purveyors of hope, openly advocating and transmitting messages of student centred learning – ‘children are worth it’, improvement mindset, empowerment – ‘You Can Do It’ and community. Open articulation of vision ideals / tenets engenders community optimism and portrayal of a collective force for change.

Vision-led activity demands of practitioners reflective practice. Reflective practice makes the vision renewal process a collective enterprise. The principal is a reflective practitioner as this comment suggests, *“you come to her with ideas, whatever and she doesn’t feel threatened. She doesn’t want to take the idea as if it’s her own. She listens. She’s adaptable. She’s not going to change the focus completely but there are ideas she’ll absorb”* (ISF2). Attention is always on ways to improve practice, promote student learning, develop a school culture that values learning and build a professional learning community inclusive of all stakeholders. The principal ensures

this school has robust systems, processes and structures that can, for example, monitor hazards and manage mandatory task requirements such as staff appraisals, policy updates, complaints and employment related issues.

Vision-led activity is undertaken by all staff and board members. At school and board meetings, staff and parent representatives were seen deliberating future decisions concerning the school. Staff reflections were observed, by parents, to be self-generated, *“Not always thinking that they are doing their best but thinking how can they improve the things that didn’t work so well”* (IB1). Data indicates that such reflective practice, linked to vision, on behalf of school stakeholders supports the development of meaningful, collaborative relationships focused on ways to improve practice. Action here is seen to promote:

- Rigorous analysis of data to establish authentic points for learning and change;
- Prioritising need and formulating action plans in response to vision goals;
- Promoting, *“working towards the common goal rather than fumbling along not sure where they are going”* (IB1);
- Empowering others in goal setting, management and evaluation; and
- Celebrating achievement, *“If teachers feel they are achieving, they celebrate”* (IB1).

Parents are vision guardians in much the same way as staff. Staff claim parents who come and work in the school as volunteers, *“help the PR (public relations) of the school”* (ISF8); *“they go out and spread the news about the school like how the school is being run”* (ISF8) and, *“it is only by them going out and telling other people about what is happening within the school that you turn around perceptions”* (ISF3). The board of trustees are said to be, *“supportive of what’s going on. They are passionate about seeing the school get up there as well”* (ISF3).

4.2.4 Systemic Development – Systems, Processes and Structures

The school is a network of complex systems, processes and structures evolved from *The National Education Guidelines*. Systems, processes and structures are governed by policies for curriculum, personnel, finance and property. The board of trustees holds a governance role in the school. The board, in conjunction with the principal, staff and sometimes community, writes, ratifies and reviews policies¹³⁹. The principal manages the implementation of policies on a day to day basis. She delegates some policy implementation to staff. Underpinning all policies sits the school’s

¹³⁹ Observed at staff meetings and board of trustees meetings. Documents in support (DOC: 1-7 & 9)

charter, a contract between the board of trustees and the Minister of Education to ensure that the school complies with current legislation and reports annually to the Ministry of Education on stated aims and objectives.

Each person contributes to system development according to their level of expertise and responsibility, *“Everyone has their level or area of expertise. It is everyone. It’s not just one person. It’s everyone that has to add their bit and it all comes together”* (IA3). The expectation is that everybody is important and, therefore, is expected to contribute, *“Each person or each team is meant to be profiling their area of responsibility big time and I guess at the end of the day students benefit from this”* (IA3). A chain of connectedness ensures ease of systemic operation¹⁴⁰. All participants, for example, have knowledge about school systems, processes and structures intended to achieve good management. As observed by an outside agency representative, *“The school now has systems that operationalise the goodwill”* (IOA3). For example, *“There’s a system that’s been put through so that they (staff) know where they can find the resources they need”* (ISFS3). Systems, processes and structures expand connections, strengthen relationships, facilitate collaborative interchange and stimulate reflection. They generate opportunities to connect internally and externally in obtaining support and guidance on dealing with challenges, problems and change demands.

The principal, immersed in complexities of daily events, has a long range vision of systemic development. She exercises guardianship over all systems, processes and structures. Guardianship involves protecting, nurturing and maintaining systemic networks. As a systems developer, she serves as the cornerstone between students, parents and staff on the one hand and Ministry of Education and outside agencies on the other. She ensures management of change takes into consideration divergent viewpoints, is reflective of context and empowers stakeholders connected with the school.

The deputy principal’s expertise and skills are seen to enhance all forms of systemic development as this comment implies, *“she does the organising and the actual type of stuff”* (IP4). Over and above her instructional leadership role, the deputy principal is in charge of duties that are management orientated. These include, for example, change of rosters, timetables, playground

¹⁴⁰ An example of this is the central resource area, *“they are not all over the school they are in one place. And now they are all shared you know it’s not like this stuff is just for the seniors and this stuff is just for the middles school or the junior school. Its now in one place so help yourself”* (ISFS3)

duties and setting the tone for behaviour and discipline. In this school, she holds the literacy portfolio which involves her in programme construction, resource management, monitoring of work, professional development, assessment and evaluation. Alongside the principal, the deputy principal initiates and supports curriculum and systemic reviews. She initiates and manages the collation and analysis of data. She reports on analysed data to staff, parents and the board of trustees. She supports the principal in appraising staff. The deputy principal oversees special needs and abilities programmes and ensures links with outside agencies meet the needs of individual students, parents / caregivers and staff.

The main focus of teachers is setting up effective systems, processes and structures related to classroom activities and delivery of the curriculum. In this respect, parents note, *“they have plans. They have ways of getting discipline. They seem to be very good at implementing these plans...You notice that the work is done regularly. There are regular entries in exercise books”* (IP4).

In order to achieve high levels of systemic functioning, various strategies are employed:

- Time is set aside for systems, processes and structural development. Teachers and other staff members are released to get jobs / tasks accomplished, *“you know it’s not having to do it over and above everything else”* (IA3);
- Systemic coherence and practice consistency is achieved by collective production and utilisation of knowledge, *“She (team leader) has taught the new teachers... some of those things...I feel they are carrying it on”* (ISFS3);
- Systemic coherence is achieved through buy-in of all school stakeholders to vision tenets¹⁴¹;
- Financial support and provision of resources in systemic development is budgeted;
- Professional development aligns with systemic need (DOC 6);
- Accountability checks and balances ensure systems, processes and structures are viable and robust to cope with challenges of change (DOC: 1,2,3,4,5 & 6); and
- Communication, transparent and *“open”* (ISFS3), ensures ‘common’ knowledge of systems, processes and structures. Effective communication supports systemic coherence and consistency of practice.

¹⁴¹ Student centred learning, an improvement mindset, empowerment and community

4.2.5 Educational Activity – Educational Leadership

All school stakeholders enact and “*have been empowered*” (ISF3) to adopt educational leadership roles. They are seen as teachers in the learning process, “*there’s a lot of strength within the staff and people do give leadership*” (ISF3). The principal, as lead learner and teacher, is considered, “*very strong on professional development. She is always learning and she loves to learn*” (IP2). Board representatives claim she is, “*confident and informative, she informs us really well*” (IB2). As observed and articulated by participants, a culture of learning reflects the values and beliefs of the principal, “*the principal’s culture is to be open to the academic community*” (IOA3).

Prior to taking up the position in this school, the principal was a teaching deputy principal. Her knowledge base of classroom practice makes her a credible educator. Staff claim that her pedagogical and theoretical knowledge motivates them to try out new strategies. This was witnessed in staff meetings where the principal was observed role modelling teaching strategies as part of delivering information pertaining to new legislation¹⁴². She is able to facilitate conducive, learning environments where group interaction and dialogue are encouraged. Similar comments were attributed to the deputy principal, “*She sort of helped teachers and showed them how to help the children improve*” (ISF8). The principal and deputy principal are awarded praise as teachers because, “*They come down as teachers to you because they have been teachers...(they) know the difficulties and problems that are happening in the classroom*” (ISF8).

The principal and deputy principal have considerable knowledge of systems, processes and structures that improve practice. Their depth of understanding in assessment and evaluation ensures robust systems are in place for managing reviews and ensuring collected, collated and analysed data serves school and stakeholder needs. Their depth of knowledge on curriculum matters positions them well as ‘experts’ to lead and scaffold the learning of others. In all staff professional development meetings, the principal and deputy principal were seen facilitating collaborative interchange, reflection on practice, implementation of change and monitoring of change in practice. These attributes and skills make them purpose-driven, action-oriented leaders.

Staff are transmitters of knowledge. The principal ensures educational matters are communicated to all groups associated with the school: board, the Ministry of Education, staff, parents /

⁴² At a staff meeting attended, the principal used a strategy called ‘picture dictation’ to get staff to reflect on health and safety policy changes. Picture dictation is a tool used to promote thinking. It facilitates group discussion.

caregivers, students and wider community groups. At board meetings, the principal was observed communicating current legislative knowledge and school information to board members. The deputy principal fulfils similar communication functions. Communication of knowledge by both the principal and deputy principal produces systemic cohesion that brings everyone together. In terms of change management, such knowledge promotes change that is *“realistic...bite sized pieces ...integrated and successfully integrated rather than just overwhelming and disorientating”* (IOA3).

Teaching staff communication of knowledge extends to groups they work with: colleagues, students, parents / caregivers and outside agency representatives. This was evidenced at whole school, team, curriculum and home-school events. Parents involved with home-school partnership programmes communicate and facilitate their own educational networks. Communication of knowledge makes all school stakeholders educational leaders. Their ability to be effective teachers is enhanced because of a strong learning culture that prevails in this school. This school is a community of learners and leaders where high priority is given to learning.

School stakeholders' expertise in educational areas is utilised to promote collective growth and development. For example, the deputy principal's passion for literacy has meant, *“There has been a big push for reading which has probably come from her because that's her love and her passion”* (IP3). Witnessed at numerous staff and team meetings, teachers take on lead roles in mentoring, assisting and supporting the learning of others in areas where they feel they have strength. Their enthusiasm for the work they do is contagious. The ability of all staff to take on educational leadership roles and responsibilities builds parents' / caregivers' trust that this school is able to deliver high quality education. Parents claim, *“I feel more confident that the new teachers will be good too and that is if they need support in any area they will get it rather than be left to flounder”* (IP4); and, *“the principal and deputy principal are very approachable and they are a great support for their teachers, the beginning teachers have someone that can tutor them”* (IB1).

In this school, parents take on the mantle of educational leadership. Opportunities and encouragement to get more involved in school affairs makes them advocates of learning¹⁴³. The home-school partnership programme offers parents leadership opportunities in transmitting curriculum knowledge to other community members, *“we have our own group and I'm the one*

¹⁴³ See section on practice: Division of Labour: Roles and responsibilities

who is going to stand up and talk to them about the Maths" (IP1). Parent leadership is also exercised in assisting teachers with cultural group activities.

4.2.6 Network Building

Data indicates that internal and external networks of support are established for various purposes. For example, networks provide opportunities for people to meet and engage in professional dialogue. Networks are vital in building community spirit. Community is an inclusive term incorporating the Ministry, outside agencies and parents / caregivers. Networking promotes entrepreneurialism. Success, in this regard, relies on establishing and maintaining positive relationships with the Ministry, outside agencies, community groups and businesses. Senior managers are awarded praise for generating internal and external networks, "*She (principal) made us all a team, a whole team. The deputy principal helped in that too*" (ISFS3). According to staff, the principal and deputy principal's strengths in establishing networks are attributed to their depth of knowledge and expertise¹⁴⁴ and people skills.

The school's structure fosters working in teams; organisational equivalent to networking. The school is organised into junior, middle and senior team syndicates. Teams meet once a week to attend to administration duties and engage in professional development. Observation at all team meetings indicate high levels of collaborative activity aimed at task achievement. Knowledge production and utilisation that occur, results from working collaboratively to process new and / or tacit knowledge to achieve collective knowledge. Team members were seen to facilitate collective knowledge production and utilisation.

In this school, staff belong to curriculum, cultural and social teams. Staff coordinate team activities. They are responsible for setting budgets, maintaining resources, providing assistance when requested and reporting on team / subject progress. Team membership is fluid with staff opting to be members of other teams. Movement of staff in and among teams fosters connectedness and a sense of belonging. Knowledge development increases through being a team member and participating in team and across team activities. Work undertaken in teams facilitates change management as team members are more equipped to advise senior managers of changes required. Part of team mentality is having trust in each other to act professionally and work from

¹⁴⁴ Knowledge in classroom practice, experience in a variety of schools, literacy and social studies expertise and site based knowledge.

positions of valuing the contributions of others towards individual, collective and systemic benefit.

Networking establishes professional bonds among a variety of stakeholders. These include: parents / caregivers and staff; parents / caregivers, staff and students; and parents / caregivers, staff, Ministry of Education, outside agencies and others. Behaviours and characteristics that make networking successful in managing change include:

- Awareness of personal needs of colleagues, students and parents / caregivers so that plans of action are formulated specific to need;
- Awareness of what is on offer in the community so quick responses are able to be made in ways that benefit the school;
- Maintaining on-going relationships with Ministry and outside agencies so that assistance, if required, can be procured; and
- Networking that continues to position the school at the cutting edge of new knowledge development.

4.2.6.1 Network Building – Looking For New Ideas

The principal displays strong networking skills and abilities in searching out new ideas to improve school practice. Staff comment, *“She has all these friends. She has so many friends that just have everything you need. In that sense she has really strong networks”* (IA3). Parents comment, *“She’s really keen to take overseas trips and to look for ideas in other schools. She’s been involved in some sub-committees that take her to Wellington...so she is at the forefront of many areas of curriculum”* and, *“She went to Scandinavia. She has been in Australia and all other places and I think she just soaks it up”* (IP2). Looking for new ideas also means, *“she has managed to get around her some very good people. The (deputy principal) was an excellent choice”* (IP2); and, *“I think she is proactive. If she sees an opportunity she goes for it”* (IP4).

Capacity building for school improvement requires all stakeholders looking for new ideas. Through course attendance and membership of various associations, staff contribute to systemic capacity by building a resource base of effective learning and teaching strategies. The school offers parents opportunities to advance their own networks. Such opportunities occur through home-school partnerships, parent chat sessions, cultural groups and informal gatherings. Networking for new ideas places responsibility on senior managers to ensure this happens by:

- Listening to what others say about need and then acting on requests;

- Budgeting for courses or engagement in other forms of professional learning; and
- Systems, processes and structural support in knowledge production and utilisation.

4.2.6.2 Home-School Networks that build Community

Senior managers and staff actively pursue parent involvement in school life. This is undertaken from a position of building community as these comments suggest: *“We have had a lot more community come in and take part since (principal) and (deputy principal) have been in the top seats. I think they open the doors a lot wider to the community”* (ISFS3); and *“Her (principal) general approach to the home-school partnership and to being involved in the community of the school I think is good”* (IP2). Teaching staff are acknowledged as *“friendly people. They are supporting us too... like (with) our fundraising we give them a ticket and they pay. Even if we want to go somewhere and we don't have transport (teacher) always comes and picks me up and takes me”* (IP1).

Parental involvement in school life is encouraged by all staff: *“Well they'll have something like jump jam and straight after that they'll have a meeting. So you have got your bulk of parents there. They advertise...and they do it at different times. Sometimes it will be during the day other times in the evening”* (IP3); *“there is this desire to include the community and make parents aware of what's happening and what's required really and what they need to do to help kids along the way. That's really important”* (IP3); and *“I think generally the family seems to be well looked after here”* (IP4).

Part of building home-school networks is providing feedback to parents on children's progress. This occurs through regular parent information sessions, school newsletters, class newsletters, parent / teacher interviews, portfolios, reports and informal conversations teachers have with parents.

Parents are community builders in their own right as these comments imply: *“After parent chat sessions lots of them start going. And we just go and grab them and talk to them to come and have morning tea and have a talk. That's why they're happy to come”* (IP1); *“I know the friends of the school are trying to invite new parents along to morning teas every couple of months”* (IP3) *“I think it's really just supporting the school really”* (IP3); and *“the Board's point of view is we are always trying to think of different ways we can try and achieve more for the children”* (IB1).

4.2.6.3 Networking: Entrepreneurial Activity

Parents recognise and praise the principal's entrepreneurial skills in raising additional funds to accomplish school improvement goals, "*When the (principal) came she is the one person I appreciate for the work she's done for the hall. She writes down all the letters if she needs some sponsor or money for the hall*" (IP1); and "*She's not slow to make a buck either*" (IP2). Networking, in terms of raising funds, is also undertaken by parents, "*We prepared a video to send to the (Trust) asking for 100 thousand dollars (for the hall)...we got it*" (IP2); "*We (Friends of the School) do fund raising. Usually in the last week there's been a major fund raiser like a fun day at the end of the year and a certain amount of money that we fund raise we will give back to the school if they ask for it*" (IP3); "*the Samoan group fund raise for cultural group uniforms*" (ISF8); and "*it is a really good feeling to be able to say if they need five thousand dollars for this thing...so it's all our money and so take it*" (IP4).

4.2.7 Summary

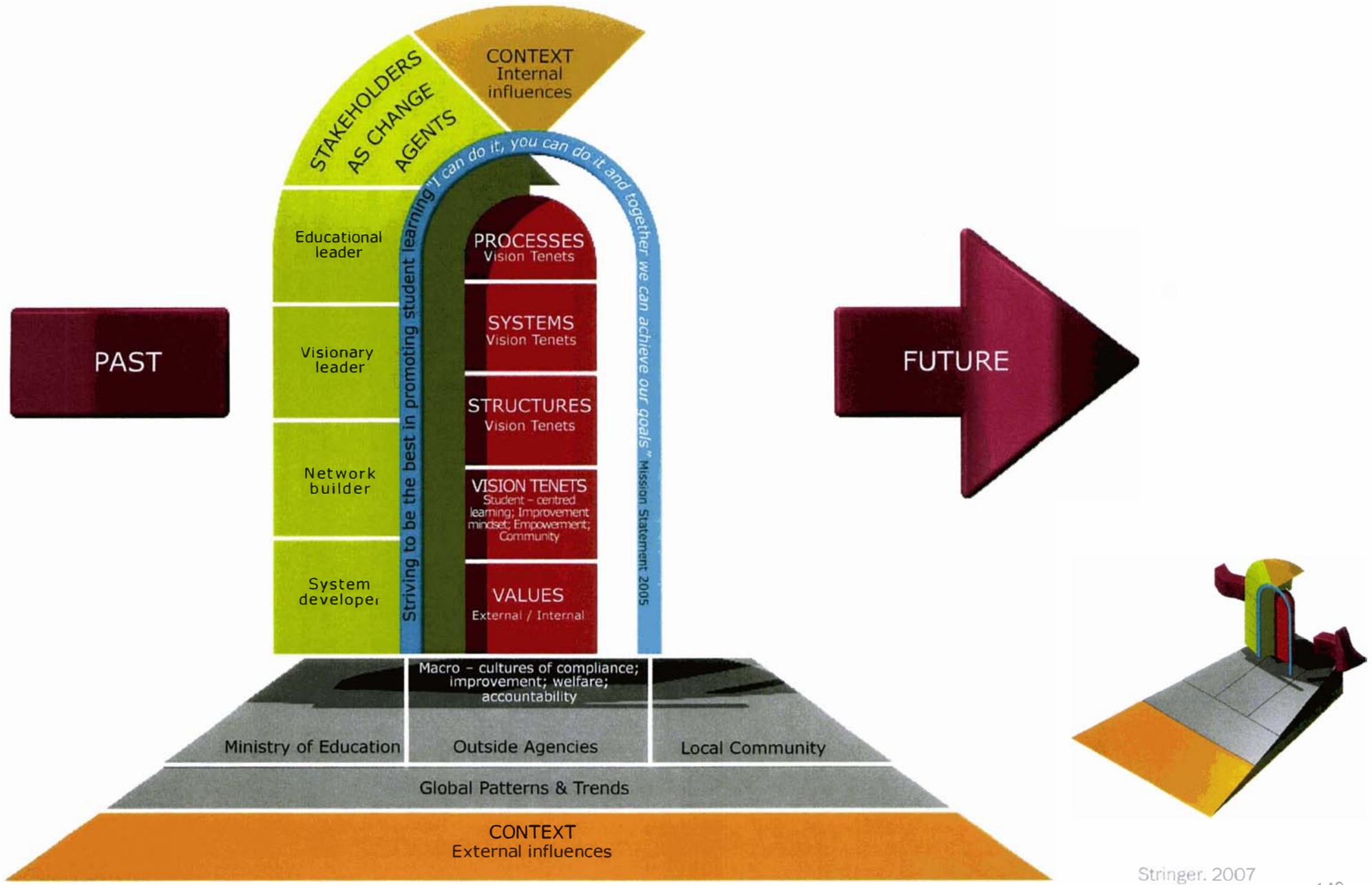
Capacity building for school improvement is concerned with change and management of change. All change disestablishes equilibrium and increases uncertainty as new ways of doing things are required. Here the concept of school stakeholders as change agents becomes important. Data from this study suggest that this school's ability to manage change necessitates all its stakeholders working as change agents. The stance promoted by school stakeholders as change agents is best explained as appreciating what someone else has to offer and working in ways that consider individual, collective and systemic needs. In addition, frequent displays of sensitivity facilitate change as captured by this senior teacher's comment, "*I like to think that because I am in the classroom I know what the teachers are going through. I know what has to be done and I have to do it as well*" (ISF1). As change agents, stakeholders work in teams to build individual, collective and systemic capacity:

I think organisational learning is working together as a team...everybody from the hierarchy down to the Scale A teachers. It is also helping each other to make sure we organise our planning and our resources for each lesson. If we need help we ask other people around us like teachers and parents. If we need somebody from the community to help our school we ask (ISF8).

Stakeholders are not prepared to adopt a reactive stance to external / internal challenges of change. Their actions and mindset suggest they scan the environment for signs of change and consider ways to make systemic adjustment and modifications in line with vision. Responses are

not knee-jerk reactions but strategically implemented through plans, allowing time for communication which brings stakeholders on board. In all forms of systemic development, challenges at the internal / external interface receive considerable attention. Change is ever present but seen as managed to build capacity for school improvement.

Figure 3 (p. 149) adds the attribute of stakeholders as change agents to the previous figure (see Figure 2, p. 132) where vision was positioned as core component of capacity building for school improvement. Stakeholders as change agents engage in visionary and educational leadership, system development and network building roles and responsibilities to build capacity for improvement.



Stringer. 2007

Figure 3 Stakeholders as Change Agents. Underpinning tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community.

4.3 Introduction-School Culture

Data suggest that school culture is a causal property¹⁴⁵ of capacity building. Culture is a social construct; a blended combination of this school's history, macro and micro cultural values, beliefs and norms, current practice and aspirations of stakeholders. In this inquiry, culture is taken to mean 'the way things are done around here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; 1983); that is, shared values that give rise to behavioural norms. The school's vision is embedded in the culture. Cultural hallmarks that emanate from vision include: a learning culture, a culture of inclusion, collaboration, commitment and a 'safe place' (see Figure 4, p. 168). Data indicate that cultural hallmarks, underpinned by values / beliefs, underscore work. The following discussion considers:

- External and internal influences on collective values, beliefs and norms;
- Cultural hallmarks; and
- School culture's contributions to building capacity for school improvement.

4.3.1 External and Internal Influences on Collective Values, Beliefs and Norms

External and internal environments emit particular values and beliefs. Emanating from different perspectives, values and beliefs combine to influence the work of stakeholders. A confluence of macro and micro values and beliefs create norms or behaviour patterns that represent legitimate practice in this school context.

4.3.1.1 External Influences on Values and Norms

Acts of Parliament, Ministry of Education legislation, outside agency input and local community needs and aspirations influence school culture¹⁴⁶. Such influences account for tensions played out in establishing communal values, beliefs and norms. For example, Ministry of Education policies that purport a strong central regulatory framework¹⁴⁷, devolved decision making¹⁴⁸, measurable outputs¹⁴⁹ and quasi market influences¹⁵⁰ are confirmed as emitting efficiency, measurement and prescribed compliance, accountability and improvement frames. Participants note this has an

¹⁴⁵ Causal properties trigger processes that account for capacity building. Research findings indicate that stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development are causal properties that create conditions that enhance capacity building for school improvement.

¹⁴⁶ Also refer to the sections on vision, stakeholders as change agents and professional development for confirmation of the power of external factors to influence what happens in this site.

¹⁴⁷ Witnessed in this school site as adherence to Ministry of Education policy, for example, meeting requirements as stipulated in *The National Education Guidelines* promotes a systemic approach.

¹⁴⁸ Staff and parents involved in partnerships. For example, board of trustees and Friends of the School.

¹⁴⁹ Internal reviews witnessed include self reviews (for example, Literacy (DOC, 1). External reviews include the ERO audit review undertaken in 2005.

¹⁵⁰ Reporting on progress and achievement; community image of this school and parent choice – to enrol or not enrol child/children in this low-decile school.

effect on daily activity or 'how things are done around here'. Observations of staff, team, curriculum and board meetings affirm that the school meets Ministry demands by adopting an approach to management that is characteristically rational¹⁵¹, a systemic approach. Participants' responses and actions indicate a valuing of efficiency, 'being strategic', and meeting regulatory demands within what is deemed reasonable. Macro cultural norms of compliance, accountability and improvement engineer a micro culture of self-governance and self-management articulated as, "*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*" (DOC 6).

The Ministry of Education's improving schools rhetoric creates opportunities and tensions. According to the Education Standards Act (2001), schools are expected to set targets for student achievement and monitor and report on progress in reaching them. Macro cultural norms of compliance and accountability continually imposed are juxtaposed against belief in 'improvement from within' (Barth, 1990). Target setting, achievement and monitoring of progress is taken seriously in this setting. Apart from adhering to Ministry demands, stakeholders are driven towards promoting student learning, attracting the community back to the school, encouraging roll growth and dispelling past negative school images. School participants note that macro cultural norms of target setting, rewards and sanctions do not sufficiently capture what happens in this setting. Their comments and observations of practice suggest target setting and monitoring of progress occurs from a learning community, stakeholder commitment perspective¹⁵². Data confirm that in this site compliance, accountability and improvement encompass a wider focus of building parent capacity and celebrating diversity. The stance adopted is vision-led; that is, high levels of professionalism and work related practice is enacted in pursuit of 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'.

The influence of outside agencies on professional development also reflects dual attendance to mandated compliance and accountability requirements and, equally, development of a professional learning culture. Professional development that adheres strictly to Ministry of Education guidelines (for example, in addressing professional standards requirements) is considered compliance driven¹⁵³. Professional development of the kind that raises the quality of teaching and learning, stakeholder motivation and collective knowledge generation is referred to as commitment to learning and a community of learners and leaders approach to school life. A

¹⁵¹ Self-reviews / planning; systems / procedures that serve monitoring and accountability purpose.

¹⁵² Observed at school professional development, team, curriculum, senior management and board of trustees meetings.

¹⁵³ Discussed at staff meetings.

community perspective is concerned with 'doing one's best in promoting student learning'; that is, solidarity invoking the vision ideals. School stakeholders' use of a shared language demonstrates an outward manifestation of this. Here, emphasis is placed on learning, inclusion, collaboration, commitment and a safe place.

The school's low socio-economic location affects community perceptions of the school. On occasion, location and school links perpetuate misconceptions. Comments such as, *"they see multi-cultural faces and they think well they are obviously bullies"* (ISF2) develops in stakeholders feelings of protectiveness, *"But I would say we don't tolerate bullying...we don't tolerate disrespect of people or property and the children are taught to treat others as they want to be treated"* (ISF2). Challenges of setting prove binding elements that draw school stakeholders together as this comment suggests, *"there is a very strong bond between staff. I think possibly because it is quite a tough environment to teach in they have to support each other quite a lot"* (IP2). The kinship created promotes stakeholder resilience in combating unjustified, negative labels. Values of fairness, non-racism, tolerance, respect, and togetherness or community are openly advocated. Related to school culture, the following descriptions are made, *"it's very warm and obviously very multicultural"* (ISF2); *"We have richness here and we are proud of this. We cater for a very wide variety of needs"* (IA1); and *"you've got to be positive and fair. And out of the two the fairness is so important"* (ISF2).

4.3.1.2 Internal Influences

The school's vision influences culture. For example, the statement that, *"Most teachers' goals are to improve children's achievement, you know, emotional and social well being as well...we are here for the children"* (ISF7) places an emphasis on the holistic nature of schooling and student-centred learning. Sole examination of vision (as that conducted in the previous section) cannot in itself explain school culture. Explications of culture require inquiry into the social side of practice; that is, reciprocity of influence of people on one another and on practice.

Data indicate that people influence the culture of the school. School personnel are themselves representatives of different ethnic backgrounds¹⁵⁴. They represent a mixture of ages and experience (novice through to expert teachers). This diversity adds to the richness that is the school, *"I mean we are all very different religious wise, culture wise...even the teacher aides are all different. You focus on why we are at school...you build friendships and you're just not*

¹⁵⁴ Ethnic groups include: New Zealand, Indian, Samoan, Tongan and Maori.

colleagues but you're friends as well" (ISF7). Levels of experience and a community spirit account for high levels of professional support expressed as, *"some older staff who have got the experience share with maybe the younger ones who may have the new ideas"* (ISF7). Working together builds teamness and togetherness.

Data confirm certain personal attributes¹⁵⁵ as binding elements of culture. The following comments capture attributes considered crucial in this setting: *"being friendly, getting on. Everybody shares what they have got. If somebody has an idea it doesn't seem to matter whether you're in the junior, senior or middle syndicate lets adapt it and do it"* (ISF10); and *"There are people on the staff who haven't got negative attitudes. The positives outweigh any negatives at the moment. Everybody has a moan...but as a place goes, there's too much positivity...I do not want to work somewhere negative"* (ISF12). Much admired personal attributes are those of sharing, being friendly, positive and getting along.

In as much as there are desirable personal attributes, there are also those considered unacceptable, *"narrow minded people and those lacking in tolerance...I'd like to think the person I am sitting next to isn't judgemental or has a certain way of thinking about how you should live your life...valuing cultural diversity is important"* (ISF12).

Working in this school is a matter of choice. In other words, people who work here are here because they have made a conscious decision to stay: *"Initially I didn't want to teach in a low decile state school...But since I've been here I really enjoy it. It's really good. It's sort of a collegial thing with the children – learning and helping them"* (ISF7); *"There is something special about this school. People want to stay"* (ISF12); and, *"The person who works here, lives here. Without sounding too sentimental it is in your heart"* (ISF12). Commitment to staying fosters a willingness to do one's best in promoting vision ideals.

All three senior managers (as women leaders) are said to influence the school's culture in terms of their management style. Comments by staff members suggest a more collaborative, less hierarchical management style is attributed to the personal qualities of the women leaders:

This is the first time that we have had a woman as a principal. This is good for us as female teachers looking at her as role models of women so we can achieve...coming from my culture and the hierarchy you can't question the men about things. Now if we have

¹⁵⁵ Refer also to the section on stakeholders as change agents.

something we do not understand we ask... the culture of this school has changed since the women took over...there's no hierarchy. We know we respect them (ISF8); and, "she (principal) treats you like an adult, a professional, like somebody that she trusts. She doesn't belittle you. She gets straight to the point. She respects you" (ISF10).

Changes in community demographics have and continue to influence school culture, "*When I first started there were Pacific Island children but the majority of the school was Pakeha. As the years went by the Pakeha moved out and the Asians, the Somalians and the Ethiopians moved into the community*" (ISF8). Changing community demographics¹⁵⁶ means, "*the children's culture ends up being the school's culture*" (ISF7). Such a claim is made on the basis of what is emphasised in practice: "*We had the race relations day where we had a variety of food from different cultures so children could taste other cultures' food. We had different performances...this is one way we celebrate and support the children's culture*" (ISF5; Photograph 4); and "*We will do things like 'what country do I come from?', take photos of the children...do Pacific Island art...if the children know their culture is supported then they're secure and it helps with their learning...these sorts of things end up being the culture*" (ISF7).



4 Photograph. Shared Lunch – Celebration of Different Cultures

Students influence the culture of the school. For example, past inappropriate student behaviour created a dysfunctional culture. Such thoughts remain fresh in people's mind today even though

¹⁵⁶ NZ European/Pakeha 16%, Samoan 14%, Maori 10%, Tongan 11%, Indian 11%, Ethiopian 6%,
Somalian 5%, Niuean 4%, Cook Island 4%, Other 19% (ERO, 2005).

the school's situation has improved¹⁵⁷. Past memories create a drive to ensure safety and promote this school as a 'safe place'. In response, norms of preparedness, organisation, vigilance, care and support have become embedded as norms that engender and sustain a safe place ethos. In practice this is enacted as, "*You get instant support for your children*"¹⁵⁸ (ISF7); and "*other teachers will say look if so and so is misbehaving just send the child out to them*" (ibid.). A systemic approach, expectations of acceptable behaviour and peer support¹⁵⁹ promote trust¹⁶⁰, collegiality¹⁶¹, inclusion¹⁶², commitment¹⁶³ and learning¹⁶⁴. A blended approach of aforementioned features ensures this school continues to provide conditions that are conducive for capacity building.

This school's recent turbulent history has a more subtle influence on school culture. Statements such as, "*two years back each one was not very free to share things or ideas*" (ISF5) are recalled by staff with past school connections. Newly appointed staff state, "*I've heard about this. The field used to be called a battle field, there were fights everyday, there was no discipline. I think it was all negative*" (ISF7). Recalling negative stories serve to benchmark current improvements in culture. Apart from establishing an understanding of why this school experienced a decline, past recollections offer guidance of how to avoid such events reoccurring. Acknowledging and appreciating the past strengthens in stakeholders the resolve to ensure future school success. It creates a culture that is improvement orientated, "*I wouldn't call it a stagnant school*" (ISF7).

By way of summary, external and internal conditions of context influence the culture of the school. They establish values, beliefs and norms that legitimise action within constraints and freedom of this setting. The culture of this school is described as: "*Rich, caring, supportive, professional and exciting*" (IA1); "*positive and encouraging*" (ISF5); "*vibrant and forward thinking*" (ISF6); "*comfortable and collaborative*" (ISF9); "*togetherness. I don't really see foul*

¹⁵⁷ Comments for RTLB and GSE representative: "*There are no where near the number of referrals now which means that the capacity of the teachers to resolve learning issues within the classroom has been enhanced by knowing that there are other members of the team who will support them and build their individual capacities*" (IOA1); and "*but I know the behavioural referrals have dropped off a lot*" (IOA3).

¹⁵⁸ The lightning bolt systems was explained as: "*The lightning bolt means that a problem's happening in your classroom and you need wither the child removed as much as the child can...or the whole class...or [principal or deputy principal] to come down and talk to them and it happens like instantly...Sunshine is when there is a potential problem. Something has happened but it's not particularly urgent and principal and deputy principal will come down when they're free like within minutes or half an hour*" (ISF7).

¹⁵⁹ Refer section on collaboration – 4.3.2.1.

¹⁶⁰ Refer section on collaboration – 4.3.2.1 and a safe place – 4.3.2.5

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Refer section on a culture of inclusion – 4.3.2.3.

¹⁶³ Refer section on commitment – 4.3.4.4

¹⁶⁴ Refer section on a learning culture – 4.3.2.2

people here” (ISF10); and “Lots of sharing, humour, I think there is a lot of laughing here” (ISF12).

4.3.2 Cultural Hallmarks

This school’s culture has five hallmarks that contribute towards capacity building for school improvement. These include:

- Collaboration;
- A learning culture;
- A culture of inclusion;
- Commitment; and
- A safe place.

4.3.2.1 Collaboration

Organisational structure, described by participants as ‘flat-management’, promotes collaboration. Observed in daily activity and articulated by participants, flat management generates collaboration defined as: “Working together as a team, from the hierarchy people down to the scale A teachers” (ISF8); “Every time we have some problem or issues we try to share it. We do share ideas in our team. We try to understand each other” (ISF5); “We are all in tune, all equal unlike a dictatorship and that kind of top down thing” (ISF6); “Working alongside; parallel leadership; It’s not hierarchical” (ISF6); “If we need help from the community we ask” (ISF8); and “everyone else feels everyone is important. No one feels superior or inferior” (ISF9).

Collaboration, a social construct, has various meanings that differ according to groups. Parents associate it with loyalty and emotional ties of attachment to the school. Collaboration for parents mean working together, building capacity for school improvement¹⁶⁵. Parents’ loyalty and determination to ensure school success were easily observed in sites across the school. Although students were not interviewed¹⁶⁶, parents claimed their children’s involvement in decision-making¹⁶⁷ and cultural activities enhanced, in them, a sense of loyalty and school pride. For

¹⁶⁵ Parents contribution in building capacity for school improvement was observed in the following ways: fund raising through Friends of the School, Samoan group and Whanau group activities; governance duties undertaken by board of trustees representative; and voluntary assistance (managing and maintenance of school resources; helping out in culture group activities; working and supporting teachers in class rooms).

¹⁶⁶ Explanation provided in the methodology chapter.

¹⁶⁷ Some examples include redesigning the tuck shop menu by way of promoting healthy food and input in making decisions regarding this school’s future direction as an environmental friendly school.

parents, loyalty linked to collaboration means valuing hard work, building community and working to bring about school improvement.

Collaboration associated with school improvement is often referred to by staff as resuscitation of the 'school's heart'. As one teacher stated, "*It's a challenging school but it's got a heart. Even though the heart was kind of hidden for a while it's been revamped, you know resuscitated*" (ISF6). Resuscitation of 'heart' engenders a sense of duty. Translated to practice, this means working for the common good from a position that enforces community. Parent volunteers, in this regard, are highly praised for what they do, "*Look at those ladies who are always willing to do what ever you want them to do. No pay, they just come along. You know the ones who cook sausages*" (ISF6).

For staff, collaboration necessitates team building, having fun and appreciating togetherness, "*I think its making the time for the social that actually helps you all to work together cause then you build friendships and you're just not colleagues but you're friends as well*" (ISF7). Opportunities for team building are woven into the fabric of school life, "*We get along on Friday afternoons. There's that sense of humour...It is a family thing. That's the core of it all it's a family. Like it doesn't matter if you have your inadequacies, you're accepted in the family*" (ISF6). A family metaphor, openly articulated, necessitates the giving of self for others, working for the betterment of all, pursuit of vision ideals and sharing in the development of a school community.

Collaboration is seen to build trust. Trust is defined as: "*if you say something it won't be held against you, your opinion is valued, what you do is recognised and as a person you're respected*" (ISF7); and "*People can make mistakes...No one actually feels superior or inferior*" (ISF9). Trust endorses inclusion: "*we are all very different. You just put that aside and focus on why we are at school*" (ISF7); and "*that's how we keep going*" (ibid.). Trust related to sharing knowledge and task accomplishment means, "*You are just standing there chit chatting and then someone will say it has been really hard and then someone will pop up and say have you tried this or...I'll give you a hand*" (ISF11). Collaboration and trust promote goodwill and operationalisation of goodwill works to sustain passion and commitment in working towards vision.

4.3.2.2 A Learning Culture

In this school, learning is, "*valued. Teachers are encouraged to take on board a new project or a new idea. They are given a chance to have a go*" (ISF9). Norms of learning are deeply embedded

in school culture and inform the way things are around here. Learning, regarded as “*useful*” (ISF5), “*relevant*” (ISF7) and tied to goal achievement, encourages a work ethic that means: “*Things are happening in my class now, I can see progress*” (ISF5); and “*I didn’t realise anything about room environments...I had to actually learn to put up wall displays*” (ISF7).

Internal (colleagues) and external (outside agencies) support from ‘positions of constancy’ enhances learning. Positions of constancy mean assistance, if requested, is provided: “*If we need help we ask other people around us like teachers and parents*” (ISF9); “*for me becoming a long term reliever there was support from the other members of the team. They would say don’t worry, we’ll show you how to do that and what’s going on*” (ISF6); and “*TEAM solutions were always there for us*” (ISF5). Unlimited support, collaboration and trust in people, processes, systems and structures to deliver, account for comments such as, “*I think if you don’t trust the people that you’re working with or you have issues with them it’s very hard to learn*” (ISF7). A culture of learning is considered inspirational and contagious¹⁶⁸, “*When someone inspires you, you go back and inspire them. Even if I go into a senior class there might be something I can modify to fit mine. Ideas matter. They can spark you off*” (ISF12).

In this setting, learning expands to meet parents’ / caregivers’ requirements¹⁶⁹, “*A lot of parents just give the kids money to go and buy junk food. But now they are learning to make a sandwich and give healthier fruit to their kids*” (IP1). Home-school partnerships and parent chat sessions encourage parental involvement in education and school life. Parental involvement spreads positive messages, “*this is a safe place of learning and to come to at any time*” (ISF8).

4.3.2.3 A Culture of Inclusion

Participants claim supporting other cultures is not new but something of a tradition:

The school has always been very inclusive with the Maori through the whanau¹⁷⁰ and through Samoan support group. They have always had an inclusive view to all ethnic groups...As the times have changed now we have more the African and others, Somali and Ethiopians that traditionally the school hasn’t had to address but now because of that increase in their role they have had to (IP2).

¹⁶⁸ A teacher sharing an ICT strategy at a staff meeting motivated others to try it. Appendix Q – ICT CD.

¹⁶⁹ Addressing parent need is undertaken through home / school partnership programmes, parent chat sessions, one to one offers of help (ISF8), specific training such as the home / school partnership contracts and Board of Trustees training and just by getting involved in school activities.

¹⁷⁰ Whanau – family.

Furthermore, this school “reflects bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism. I think it is important to be bi-cultural and then multi-cultural. *Tangata whenua*¹⁷¹ has status and it is not just because the Treaty says but we live and breathe it” (ISF11). The statement, “*Tangata whenua has status*” (ISF11) depicts a deep sense of respect for Maori people and their tikanga¹⁷². For example, “before *Nga Ringa Awhina*¹⁷³ was moved, the *tapu*¹⁷⁴ had to be lifted. The ground that *Nga Ringa Awhina* was moved to had to be blessed and the first breaking of the soil was done at the same time” (ISF11). Photograph 5 portrays *Nga Ringa Awhina* and *Nga Ringa Awhina*’s new location¹⁷⁵.

Staff serve as guardians of Maoritanga (culture). They ensure that use of tikanga is authentically applied, expressed as, “We have to be careful that we don’t treat Maori protocol as tokenism. If we tokenise it the Maori children will see it and it will reflect back on them. If it reflects back to them then that shows them how much people respect their culture” (ISF11).



5 Photograph. Nga Ringa Awhina moved to its new position

Support for bi-culturalism and multi-culturalism goes beyond celebration of culture through song and dance. Support taps into systems, structures, processes and management to advance cultural

¹⁷¹ Tangata whenua is people of the land.

¹⁷² Tikanga – customs; rules; principles; obligations; conditions (legal); and provisions (legal).

¹⁷³ Nga Ringa –Maori translation - helping hands. Nga Ringa Awhina is a building that used to house teaching resources for Maori. Since its change of location, Maori resources are now stored in a central resource area. The building is planned to be used in different ways. Purpose is yet to be decided.

¹⁷⁴ Tapu – sacred.

¹⁷⁵ Nga Ringa Awhina was attached to the old school hall. When this building was demolished to build a new hall, Nga Ringa Awhina had to be moved to a new location.

values of respect, tolerance, non-racism, care and compassion and community. To illustrate, bi-lingual tutor assistance in providing support for refugee parents with limited English, “*gives parents opportunities to talk...Those parents really need to know what the children are learning and should feel that they are part of the school too*” (ISF5). Respect for people of other ethnicities is actively promoted and supported by staff in the creation of an inclusive school environment where, “*There is an after school programme for the Ethiopian children at this school...The school is used for adult education programmes*” (ISF5). Staff support for home-school partnership programmes and parent chat sessions¹⁷⁶ are other forms of parental support. Home-school partnerships, for example, involve school staff assisting parents to lead their own community members in matters of education. A culture of inclusion and support is traceable to the school’s vision necessitating: “*valuing of culture and diversity and celebration of success. It’s all interwoven and so it develops into this positive approach to developing learners for the future*” (ISF6); “*Like whether they are Ethiopian or Afghani they will get bi-lingual tutors for them. They’ll give children the extra support*” (ISF7).

4.3.2.4 Commitment

Staff, students and parents / caregivers are prepared to go the extra mile if it means ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’, “*We are not showing off to anybody. We know we don’t want to be out there saying how fantastic we are. We want them to see it but we are not (saying it). We are too busy doing it. We are busy doing it, not building empires*” (ISF6).

For staff with past school association, commitment is linked to loyalty: “*This has been my only school. I’ve done my training. I’ve done some relieving...I was volunteering in this school*” (ISF5); “*I came into a senior teaching position at the end of the 80s...I was here for all of the putting “Tomorrow’s Schools” charter writing into practice...I came back as a part-timer...I have been long term reliever in this class*” (ISF6); and “*I have been here since 89/90 about thirteen years*” (ISF8).

Parents / caregivers commitment is associated with this being their local school, “*I mean it is your local school you have to...you can’t say there’s too many unsavoury children there and I don’t like the colour of their skin too...if you live in the place then you send your kids to the local*

¹⁷⁶ Refer to section on professional development.

school” (IP4). Loyalty linked to commitment means giving of self in ways that benefit the school and those associated with it.

Commitment is also connected with depth of knowledge on school matters demonstrated by staff with long standing past association. The stories they tell of low times¹⁷⁷ and past glories serve to motivate and build commitment in others to sustain and advance school improvement. It means, *“The older teachers have been around and have seen more changes. Some of the new teachers would probably have no idea where we have come from. I think they are learning from the senior teachers that have been around”* (ISFS3).

Commitment is associated with hard work. Comments such as, *“staff are very dedicated and they work long hours”* (ISF7) abound. In achieving school turnaround, staff recall, *“I know the staff as a whole have come together and they work really hard”* (ISF6). Messages of, *“the more you practice the better you get”* (ISF5) are repeated frequently by individuals and groups. Working hard is a shared group norm, *“It’s the attitude that if it’s good enough for them (senior management) then it’s good enough for us”* (ISF6).

Commitment is connected to empowerment; more particularly to expression of voice and knowing it will be heard and enacted. Voice is connected with ‘ownership’ (individual and collective). Examples of ownership abound here. For example, with respect to vision construction, this comment made was, *“Things are taken on board by the leaders. Staff feel they have a say in things”* (ISF5). By way of another example, setting up an environmental school was said to originate from a team decision but spread to encompass the whole school, *“It was just in our team we were talking about this when (teacher) mentioned it to the principal. Now we are already thinking about the garden and changing the school environment...the thing was we were talking about it for our team but now the whole school can get involved”* (ISF5). Decisions made on future topics for teaching provide an example of commitment to shared decision-making, *“They (senior managers) say: what would you like to teach? They discuss it, say let’s look at the validity of what you want to teach”* (ISF10). Decisions, reached through collaboration and negotiation, foster team spirit.

Commitment is a by-product of trust, seen here as an expectation that others can and will help if asked. Here, the notion of reciprocity is strong: *“The principal and deputy principal support their*

¹⁷⁷ Comments in support by staff and outside service providers.

staff and because they do that the staff will support them” (ISF10) “Teachers know that if they have problems or need help, the supports are there for them” (ISF6); “The (principal) was always there to listen and help” (ISF5); and, “In a traditional school, teacher aides are not held in much esteem but here, teacher aides play a vital role in school turnaround” (ISF9).

4.3.2.5 Feeling Safe

The value placed on ‘feeling safe’ has links to the past where limited support and feelings of teacher isolation created a dysfunctional culture. Staff feelings of safety are now captured as: *“They are always there for us” and “I like things structured” (ISF5); “If I was to go and say to (deputy principal) look I’m struggling here, things would be put in place to give me a hand” (ISF6); and “we don’t get double messages” (ISF10). Parents feelings of safety result from having knowledge, “parents know the teachers and know what’s going on...that’s the whole point of home-school partnership” (IP4).*

Learning and feeling safe are linked. For example, participation in Ministry numeracy and ICT contracts means, *“teams working together” and “teachers coming together and working on things they are not confident in” (ISF5). Working in teams is observed as providing individualised learning support. However, there is also an expectation that movement beyond team boundaries is necessary in reducing dependency, “you have to do it for yourself. As long as you don’t do it you do not know what you are capable of doing” (ISF5). Participants acknowledge that feeling safe within team boundaries builds confidence to traverse outside it, take risks and increase self-efficacy. For example, in staff and team meetings, individual members accept lead roles in knowledge acquisition, distribution and implementation¹⁷⁸.*

School processes, systems and structures of accountability (external¹⁷⁹ and internal¹⁸⁰) promote the school as a ‘safe place’. They endorse purpose and growth that benefits students, parents / caregivers and staff learning. Staff collaboration in planning and delivery of the curriculum contributes towards a ‘safe place’: *“We make sure we organise our planning and our resources for each lesson” (ISF8); and, as observed by a parent, “Every morning I just walk inside and*

¹⁷⁸ Sites in which this activity was observed include: Team meetings – (OTM1, OTM2, OTM3, OTJ4, OTJ5, OTJ6 & OTS9); all professional development meetings and curriculum meetings (OLC1 & OLC2).

¹⁷⁹ External systems of accountability in the year of data collection include: ERO (2005); Music evaluation (OWS3); and Numeracy evaluation facilitated by Ministry of Education facilitator (OSM2).

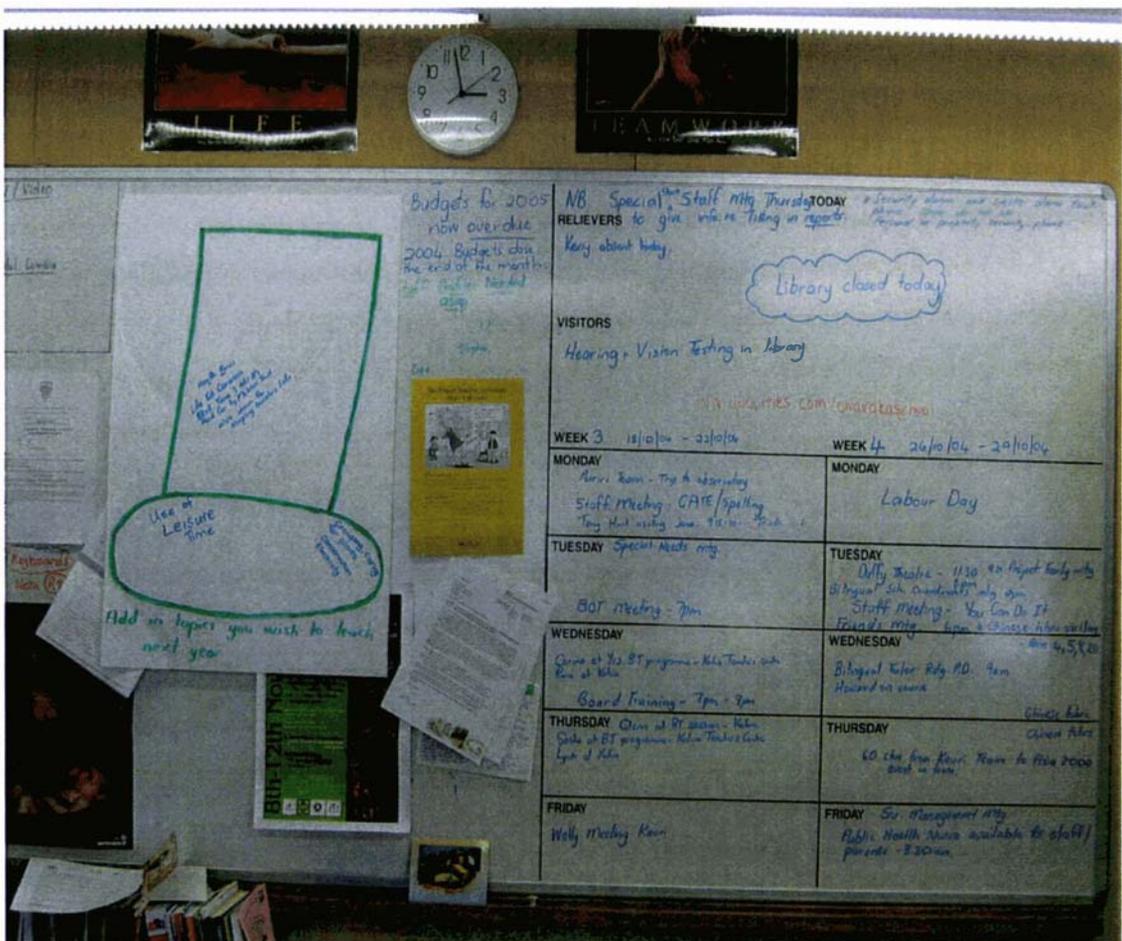
¹⁸⁰ Internal systems of accountability in the year of data collection include: 8 Year Literacy Profile Report (DOC 1); Reading Review (DOC 2); Mathematics Review (DOC 3); Written Language Review (DOC 4); Review of Gifted and Talented (DOC 5); and Strategic planning (DOC 6).

everything is already organised. As soon as its 9.00 a.m. teachers sit there and call the roll and everything is ready for the kids” (IP1). Attention to details of planning¹⁸¹ equates to an organised, structured school environment. The climate endorsed is one of organised work: “I like it structured in a proper way” (ISF5); and “procedures are in place and people know exactly where they stand and what’s expected. I think clarity, expectation, follow through and support for teachers are important” (ISF6).

Systems of communication¹⁸² facilitate a managed, structured approach to school life. They bring people on board, build cohesion and create a sense of security claimed as, “*When things are happening they do tell us and so all of us know the same thing*” (ISF6). Communication systems facilitate information flow. To illustrate, the school’s whiteboard in the staff room acts as a tool for transmitting messages of daily and weekly importance. Everyone shares in the recording of messages. The whiteboard is a cultural symbol capturing community life. Staff input (as captured in Photograph 6) is illustrated by this example where a drawing of a hat attached to the board invited contributions, in written form, of topics to teach the following year. The final decision was made through processes of collective deliberation and negotiation.

¹⁸¹ Whole staff professional development meetings, team meetings, curriculum meetings, board of trustees meetings and Friends of the school meetings.

¹⁸² Communication systems of the written kind include: staff and team meeting notebooks; daily recording of messages on the white board in the staff room; circulated minutes of meetings. Communication systems of the oral kind include: break time announcements; administration announcements prior to commencement of whole staff professional development meetings; and informal talks with individual staff members.



6 Photograph. Notice Board in Staffroom

Feeling safe, connected to learning, is the result of supportive school practices and displays of sensitivity by senior staff towards meeting individual needs, “*They are not expecting someone with basic skills to work at high levels. There is an allowance for you to develop at your own pace, to hook into programmes with your children according to your ability and level of development*” (ISF6). Furthermore, voluntary help, specialist support, peer and teacher aide assistance provides additional support for teachers wanting to initiate change of practice¹⁸³. In-built support alleviates teacher isolation or long hours spent alone in the classroom. Help from

¹⁸³ Community assistance was described as: “*I have a WINZ volunteer ...she comes Monday to Wednesday...She does so much for me and it's made such a difference. She works with children who struggle like with reading and writing, helps with resources, photocopying and wall displays*” (ISF7). Such support is widespread as observed: “*Some classes have different things. (Teacher) has parent helpers. (Teacher) has a teacher aide trainee. (Teacher) has a new helper*” (ISF7).

parents, teacher aides, bi-lingual workers and / or specialist staff, provide safety-nets of support for teachers on a daily basis.

4.3.3 School Culture's Contributions to Building Capacity for School Improvement

In this school, equal attention is given to social cohesion and work place requirements. Both enhance collaboration and professionalism. Demands for professionalism are not perceived to be unreasonable as this comment implies, "*this is a place where children and teachers want to be and want to learn. There are no teachers here that don't want to be here*" (ISF6). High levels of social cohesion and work related behaviours create an environment conducive to building capacity for improvement.

Cultural hallmarks create a 'safe place' from which to operate. A safe place provides bridging and buffering zones that guard against forces that may disrupt individual, collective and systemic equilibrium. Equally important are forces that encourage stepping outside zones of comfort to push the boundaries of learning. Group norms of learning, systemic approaches to managing learning, professional development and team work endorses capacity building.

The way that tasks are accomplished promotes a professional work ethic. According to the principal, this is a relatively new phenomenon defined as, "*The talk has changed. They were always moaning because there were behaviour problems and now in the staff room you do not hear moans and groans. The attitudes of the staff have changed... to more of a professional air*". A professional work ethic means engagement in collaborative interchange, reflection on practice, learning and change of practice that promotes school improvement and building of capacity.

In this site, parents' / caregivers' contributions support a communal work ethic. Long hours spent preparing resources, helping out in classrooms and cultural activities, making cultural group uniforms, transporting children to sporting events promotes this school as a desirable place. Motivation to engage in such activity is related to being involved in students' education and giving back to a school which has given much to them. Community input builds goodwill and, as participants claim, 'school heart'.

The culture of this school is friendly, supportive, collaborative, learning orientated and professional. Observed in sites across the school, this means, "*you feel like you are all doing the job together, helping each other out. It's not like you're isolated just working away in your*

classroom” (ISF7). Sub-cultures endorse school values, beliefs and norms, “we really are trying to work together...We do share ideas in our team...We try to understand each other...We are working very well” (ISF5); “We are brilliant at sharing ideas. Lots and lots of sharing” (ISF12); and “You could just go next door and say ‘oh (teacher) what are you doing?’ and he would say ‘I’m doing this and do you want to do it’. We are all very helpful” (ISF7). Allegiance to school values and norms indicates a cohesive school culture where subcultures pull in the same direction.

School structures promote movement in the one direction, “We have a lot of staff meetings...a lot of sharing of ideas, we talk to each other any spare minute of the day, there is information flying around”. Sharing practice involves parents¹⁸⁴, “The newsletters have got the children’s work like their stories. We talk about different concepts and topics... we have the teacher’s blurb to remind them what they have to remember” (ISF7). Such practices maintain cohesion and, “motivation and support. There’s a good learning environment because of that” (IP4).

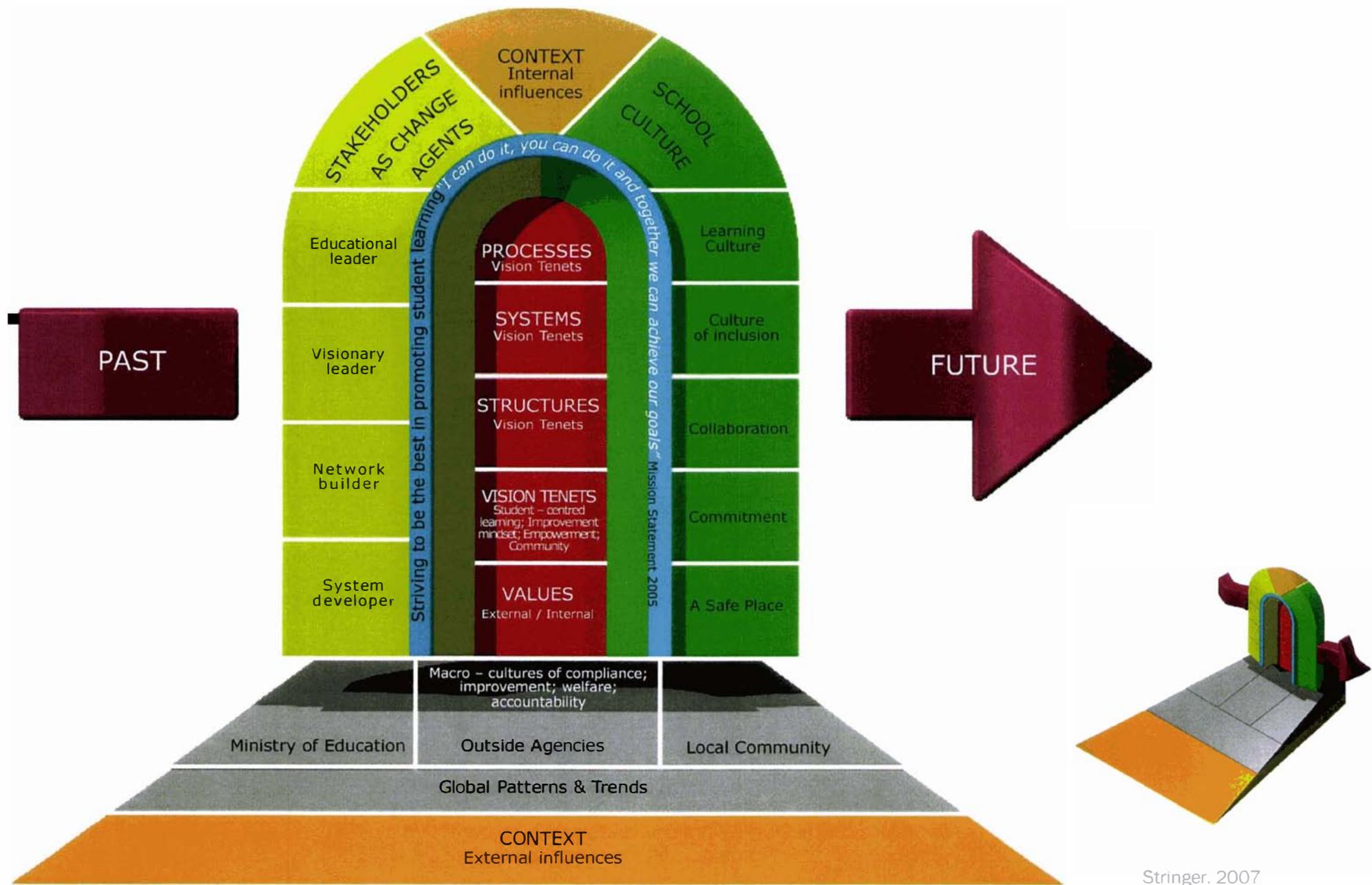
It must be noted that all dimensions of school culture presented in this section are, in some way, observable. In other words, data extracted and reported reveals tangible aspects of culture. However, culture also has an intangible quality. It is a feeling one experiences when entering a place. The culture felt in this school is one of wellness, a positive environment created by the people who work here. A positive environment is unwritten and hard to define. It promotes energy and altruism, essential qualities that facilitate capacity building for improvement.

4.3.4 Summary

Culture has a major impact on people and school related activities. In this school, there is acknowledgement of diversity and a willingness to incorporate all stakeholders in creating an inclusive, professional learning community. Here, being part of a ‘family’ means the school is considered supportive, inclusive and empowering of all stakeholders. Cultural hallmarks reduce anxiety often associated with change. The potential for conflict and misunderstanding is minimised because of the stance taken in collectively maximising curriculum delivery, building relationships and encouraging home-school partnerships. Working towards greater parent / caregiver involvement in school life is an attempt to counteract some of the barriers ethnic minority groups face. This school’s culture is influenced by macro and micro cultural norms, school practices, history and people associated with the school. A blending of all creates a fertile ground within which to construct and enact processes that build capacity for school improvement.

¹⁸⁴ Also through home / school partnership programmes

Figure 4 (p. 168) captures essential hallmarks of this school's culture. School culture, as an attribute of capacity building, is added on to the central component of vision denoting a strong correspondence to it. Linkage to stakeholders as change agents is also enforced in positioning school culture on the other side of vision. Figure 4 (p. 168) identifies key cultural hallmarks and the embedded nature of stakeholders as change agents and school culture in connection with vision.



Stringer. 2007

Figure 4 School Culture. Underpinning tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community.

4.4 Introduction-Professional Development

Professional development initiated in this setting is profuse, complex and intricately interwoven into the fabric of school life. Commencement and completion of any particular intervention is enmeshed; professional development proceeds in a developmental, incremental, integrated and continuous manner – a layered approach. External factors of influence stem from the Ministry of Education, outside agencies¹⁸⁵, tertiary institutions, business sector interests, networking with schools, overseas connections, professional associations and access to educational websites such as Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI)¹⁸⁶. Internal factors of influence relate to collaborative interchange, reflective practice and ‘openness to new ideas’. Management of professional development in terms of flexibility, relevance and scaffolded learning also exert influence. Combined, such influences generate collaborative professional development that leads to purpose driven learning¹⁸⁷. Professional development is a causal property of capacity building for school improvement. Data presented covers:

- External factors of influence;
- Internal factors of influence;
- The evolving, continuous nature of knowledge development - a layered approach; and
- Professional development: key elements related to capacity building.

4.4.1 External Factors of Influence

In this section, the data presented explains source (explanations for choice) and outcomes rather than detailed examination of any one particular intervention. Delimiting the analysis in such a manner, establishes focus in keeping with this study and assists with data manageability. Both nature and type of professional development during the 2003 – 2005 period, are presented in tabular form titled, ‘The Professional Development Timetable’¹⁸⁸ (see Appendix R). The developmental, incremental, integrated and continuous nature of professional development – a layered approach – is highlighted.

¹⁸⁵ ‘Outside agencies’ is a generic label used to cover representatives from various groups who provide professional input. Data collected identified the following as having had or in the year of data collection were observed as influencing this school’s professional development. These include: RTL; GSE; Team Solutions; Project Early Staff; Ministry of Education contract facilitators (ICT and Numeracy project); and the facilitator for Music.

¹⁸⁶ Te Kete Ipurangi (TKI) is a website giving teachers and principals access to teaching, education information, and communication with colleagues.

¹⁸⁷ Purposeful learning or purpose driven learning is defined as meeting the needs of stakeholders in line with vision tenets.

¹⁸⁸ Refer Appendix R on professional development timetable.

4.4.1.1 Ministry of Education

Data indicates that meeting legislative requirements has an influence on professional development. Updating staff knowledge on Ministry of Education compliance measures, as observed in staff meetings on Health and Safety regulations and Education Outside the Classroom (EOTC), for example, increases legislative knowledge and ensures system, structure and curriculum delivery fit in line with *The National Education Guidelines*. This aspect of professional development is seen to traverse across school levels. Observed at board, staff, team and curriculum development meetings, Ministry of Education professional requirements are discussed and enacted to ensure school systems, processes and structures meet current legislative demands.

Legislative links to professional development are traceable to an earlier period in the school's history when the school was reportedly in crisis. During this period, outside agencies (RTLb, GSE and TEAM Solutions) initiated and implemented Ministry directives to manage risk:

I presented the NAGs and the NEG's which (the principal) was very familiar with. I also presented this document, the revised NAGs and NEG's and identified the responsibility of the school to identify groups of students who were being stood down and report to the board on what the school was doing about it (IOA1); and

It was more about focused teaching than anything. Running all the way through from what they did in paper work to data collection. You can't focus teach unless you assess the children correctly. I gave them various skills' checklists for the sorts of things they should be looking for (IOA3).

Safeguards introduced at the time, ensured compliance and safer working conditions. They improved conditions where, "people were just not fulfilling their obligations as teachers in terms of planning and organisation and problem solving between staff members and vision" (IOA3). Multi-faceted professional input established base-line data, contributed professional input in response to need and provided systemic support in, for example, the monitoring of progress;

We got the Board of Trustees to take some interest in the school. You can see the painting of the seats that is now happening...(students) needs have been met subsequently by upskilling teachers and teacher aides...the capacity of the teachers to resolve learning issues within the classroom has been enhanced (IOA1); and

The school now has systems...I think they (school staff) work towards getting them established and maintained...the culture is now where all are expected to behave in certain ways with the view to delivering the best service to the children...I think there is a culture being introduced of learning...I think everyone is participating in the school's (professional development) programme (IOA3).

Meeting regulatory demands forms an obligatory part of professional learning. Here, the principal disseminates knowledge she has acquired by, *"being aware of what's going on, by reading and attending local cluster principal's meetings and keeping informed of Ministry developments"* (IA1). The benefits of this for the individual, collective and system include:

- Increased compliance and legislative knowledge;
- Holistic attendance to student needs;
- Systemic change that achieves alignment to government mandates and
- Creation of a school environment considered a 'safe place'¹⁸⁹.

Ministry contracts witnessed in the year of data collection included:

- Numeracy Professional Development Projects – Early Numeracy Project (ENP) mainly undertaken in 2003 and Advanced Numeracy Project (ANP)¹⁹⁰ in 2004;
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT)¹⁹¹;
- Parent Mentoring Initiative – Home / School Partnership programme¹⁹²; and
- English Literacy Assistant Course¹⁹³ (ELA) for teacher aides.

¹⁸⁹ Refer to the section on culture: 4.3.2.5. Staff and parents' comments in support: (IA3, ISF6, ISF8, ISF9, IP3, IP4, IB1 & IB2).

¹⁹⁰ The aims of the Numeracy Professional Development Projects are to improve student achievement in mathematics by improving classroom teaching at all levels. The projects improve teacher confidence through addressing content knowledge and understanding of effective teaching and learning in Mathematics. Projects undertaken by this school include the Early Numeracy Project (ENP) for years 0-3 and Advanced Numeracy Project (ANP) for years 4-6.

¹⁹¹ The first ICT Strategy for Schools was released in 1998. The goals of this strategy were to build infrastructure and school capability. Digital Horizons was released in June 2002. This strategy focuses on integrating ICT more fully into curriculum practice.

¹⁹² The Parent Mentoring Initiative was funded by the Ministry of Education between 2002 – 2005. The aims were to strengthen relationship through a bi-directional partnership between parents/caregivers and teachers; parents and children and families/communities and schools in order to support the educational achievement of learners. The initiative sought also to establish mutual responsibility and accountability around these partnerships.

¹⁹³ Introductory Professional Development Programme for Teacher Aides/Kaiawhina in literacy development.

4.4.1.2 Outside Agencies

The influence of outside agencies on professional development is complex and linked to numerous facets and levels of school life. Input results in:

- Systemic, individual and collective learning;
- Change in practice at different levels of the organisation: “*I’ve been able to get them (TEAM Solutions) for our syndicate. Often you want more specifics for the age that you teach*” (ISF2); and “*(TEAM Solutions) helped me organise my writing groups...I’ve taken things on board. Things are happening in my class now and I can see progress*” (ISF5).
- Networking: “*She (TEAM Solutions) arranged a tour to new entrant classes in the North Shore. It was useful. I got a lot of ideas. It helped me with guided reading*” (ISF5); and
- Availability and preparedness to engage in professional dialogue on practice: “*Every time we would ask them (GSE and RTLB representatives) queries they would help us*” (ISF5).

As facilitative agents, outside agencies work in spaces that build relationships: between the Ministry and the school; senior management and staff; staff and students; staff and parents / caregivers; and staff, parents / caregivers and students. Their knowledge, expertise and people skills award them credibility to enact change as illustrated by these comments: “*I knew I had to be careful with what I did but I knew there had to be change so for our Teacher Only Day I got somebody in from TEAM Solutions*” (IA1); and the “*(facilitator) in maths is brilliant cause she’s completely non-threatening. She knows exactly what I’m talking about. You don’t mind her coming...if you stuff up or whatever she’s just there to help and encourage you to do it*” (ISF2).

The positive influence of outside agencies on professional development is legitimised for several reasons¹⁹⁴. Participants acknowledge their depth of specialist knowledge, expertise and ability to provide objective assessment of need, construct action plans in response and enact plans to improve practice. As noted by the principal, “*she (TEAM Solutions) could see from talking to teachers what was happening here and as a facilitator at the Teacher Only Day, teachers saw it really wasn’t happening. She gave (suggestions) as to where to go and what they could do*”.

Comments from staff also indicate that assistance by outside agencies may be the only course of support available in situations where site knowledge and expertise are limited. As witnessed in

¹⁹⁴ Evidential support: staff meeting facilitated by Project Early Staff (OWS7), parent chat sessions facilitated by Project Early Staff (OPC3), RTLB intervention in behaviour management and staff comments in support.

this setting, when the school was reportedly in crisis, RTLB, GSE and TEAM Solutions' input initiated improvement. The appointment of a new deputy principal with leadership and curriculum expertise and a 'moving' school ethos, meant less reliance on agency input and guidance. As explained by the principal, "*Next year the deputy principal came on board and she had all that expertise as well and so she continued to focus on the reading in an even more intense way and that continued to improve results*".

Professional development by outside agencies continues to influence the building of individual and collective knowledge in curriculum and pedagogy. Related to this, pre-entry assessments, professional input based on need and exit points adjusted to organisational 'fit'¹⁹⁵, have the potential to build individual, collective and school knowledge capacities. For individuals, this translates to increased personal knowledge and skills around specific need. For the collective, input enhances communal knowledge. To illustrate systemic benefit, Project Early staff input on behaviour management, witnessed at a school professional development meeting, ensured:

- An increase in staff knowledge on practical techniques for managing student behaviour;
- A theory base for strategy usage;
- An awareness of the complexity of issues surrounding behaviour management; and
- Coherence of approach linked to behaviour management (OWS7).

4.4.1.3 Tertiary Influence

Tertiary influences are not just limited to 'formal' study at university. They extend to one day courses, "*if it is in line with what people's needs and interests are*" (IA1). They also encompass negotiated staff release to engage in full-time study. Such, "*room to manoeuvre*" (IA1) is rationalised as, "*bringing things back into the school*" (ibid.) and positively affecting individual, collective and systemic learning aimed at improvement.

A staff member released to undertake a year long professional development programme on numeracy in Maori (*Whakapiki Pangarau*)¹⁹⁶ claimed she gained, "*quite a bit of development in Maths and Te Reo Maori*" (ISF11). Translated to classroom practice this meant, "*Some things we have been learning in Te Reo Maori can actually have spin offs for NESB (New English Speaking Background) children because our whaea (teacher) has been teaching us as we would teach the*

¹⁹⁵ School, staff, student and / or parent / caregiver (individual and / or collective) need.

¹⁹⁶ Whakapiki Pangarau – "*Is about upskilling your knowledge of the Maths curriculum in Maori as well as English. Poutama Tau is the Maori side of the numeracy project*" (IS11)

children" (ISF11). In terms of collective benefit, "The (principal) has said that she sees me as bringing back a strength and wants me to go on the Maths curriculum team"; and, "I can now off load my knowledge. I have been doing that all through this year...It has been in conversation and I have been showing them (ISF11).

Tertiary influences on staff learning occur indirectly through, for example, partnership with universities in teacher training programmes. The benefits of such relationships mean,

...it's good to see the new teachers coming out of college with new strategies and for us to look at them and to observe their new ways instead of focusing on the old ways...this is a big bonus for us...I go and ask them for help and they come and help me (ISF8).

4.4.1.4 Business Sector Influence

Business sector links to professional development were evidenced in trialing a music professional development programme implementing keyboards in classrooms. Motivation for this came from the principal who is described as, "always looking for new ideas" (IP2). The value staff award to this new learning relates to increased pedagogical and content knowledge in music, transference of newly acquired knowledge to promote student learning and communal sharing of ideas that builds collective confidence in curriculum delivery, in this case, music (OWS3). Benefits for students include: knowledge and skills in playing music, enjoyment in the subject and motivation to pursue further development of skills. School-wide benefits equate to:

- Availability and access to equipment (keyboards and teacher resources);
- Setting up a spare classroom as an arts space;
- Regular input from a facilitator with expertise in music, "the support that I got (means) I can do certain things with my kids now. I can play middle C. I can find D. I am learning with them too (ISF5).
- Teacher learning described as, "one step ahead of the kids" (ISF5);
- Establishment of internal and external networks of support; and
- Engagement in social processing of new knowledge and development of collective strength to implement a new innovation in practice.

4.4.1.5 Networking with Other Schools

Networking with other schools is not undertaken randomly but remains specific to purpose. As a form of professional development, networking promotes a, "filtering through of information" (ISF11) to benefit stakeholders. Individual benefit is reportedly job specific. The principal, for

example, states she remains 'current' by, "*attending local cluster principals' meetings and the larger Auckland principals' meetings*". Similarly, teachers acknowledge an increase of curriculum and pedagogical knowledge through networking with other schools.

Participation in Ministry contracts creates opportunities for networking. Such networks build cluster and individual school capabilities. The ICT contract, for example, meant staff visiting schools, "*to look at class newsletters and to find some useful web sites*" (ISF5). Networking, in this case, is facilitator dependent, "*He took us to a school and showed us how they do newsletters*" (ISF7). Participants' trust in the facilitator to establish networks and work within vision¹⁹⁷ is acknowledged as enhancing learning.

Staff initiated networks are aligned to school-wide goals. This involves team work to achieve purpose. To illustrate, a collective desire to achieve an environmental school meant, "*team leaders visited another school to have a look at their gardens*" (ISF5). Reported value amounted to: "*sharing things, learning from each other*" (ISF5) and "*bringing the staff together*" (ISF12).

4.4.1.6 Overseas Connections

In the year of data collection, the principal and ICT coordinator attended an ICT conference in Brisbane, Australia. The deputy principal attended a principals' conference in Melbourne, Australia. Engagement in such larger-scale professional development meetings provides an international take on education. It promotes wider networks that support individual growth, as this comment from the principal suggests, "*The (Deputy Principal) is close to being a principal. She is off to a principals' conference in Melbourne which is a way she can extend her learning*".

New knowledge is also introduced by overseas educators visiting the school¹⁹⁸. Here, praise is awarded to the principal who "*reads the spots off the gazette looking for ideas or things like that where she can pick up these (international) students*" (IP2). The nature of these visits is information exchange. Teachers were observed sharing their knowledge on school improvement and building capacity with overseas educators. Knowledge exchange, such as observed, adds to a climate of 'openness to new ideas'.

¹⁹⁷ Seen at staff meetings run by facilitators – Music, ICT and Project Early. Also witnessed in the feedback session to staff on progress made in the Numeracy project and Music trial study.

¹⁹⁸ In the year of data collection overseas educators visiting the school were from Japan and Malaysia.

At a board of trustees meeting (OB3), the principal proposed an educational visit to Samoa as a form of whole school professional development¹⁹⁹. The proposition was linked to meeting the needs of the school's current Samoan population by increasing staff knowledge through a lived experience. The value of such professional development meant the board partially funded the visit with the rest of the money coming from staff. The trip to Samoa took place in 2005, the year following data collection.

4.4.1.7 Professional Associations

Senior managers and staff are affiliated members of various professional associations²⁰⁰. Staff claim professional associations provide networks of support. Involvement has distinct advantages in terms of building individual, collective and systemic capacity for improvement. For example:

- Internal and external networks are regarded crucial in maintaining currency of practice;
- Current information, brought back to the school, is of collective benefit; and
- Information gained ensures this school sustains its position at the cutting edge of knowledge development.

4.4.1.8 Educational Websites

Access to educational websites (observed in staff and team meetings) occur in relation to collaborative planning and consolidation of new learning²⁰¹. Tapping into internet sources reinforces an expansive attitude to knowledge production and utilisation. At joint planning sessions (team and whole school), communal sharing of internet information built a collective knowledge pool that brought people together. Outside facilitators add to this generic pool of knowledge. Ease of access to computers²⁰² and shared knowledge of suitable websites encourage staff to gain and distribute information freely. Utilisation of internet information for planning builds on existing layers of knowledge in the school and facilitates new knowledge development. It enhances 'openness to new ideas' and promotes knowledge flow.

¹⁹⁹ The intended trip was undertaken in 2005, the year following data collection. Built in were planned visits to several educational establishments.

²⁰⁰ Principal attends principal cluster/ social studies facilitator meetings; deputy principal (DP) and assistant principal (AP) belong to the APs/DPs association; beginning teachers (BT) attend regular BT meetings; teachers with various curriculum responsibility attend subject specific meetings with like-minded colleagues from other schools.

²⁰¹ To illustrate, at the ICT staff meeting, the facilitator and staff contributed internet website information in line with teaching topics to be covered in Term 2. Websites were listed on the board for staff to note.

²⁰² Computers are in all classrooms. The computer in the staff room enables parent and support staff ease of access to information

4.4.2 Internal Factors of Influence

In this school, vision tenets (student-centred learning, improvement mind set, empowerment and community) underpin the professional development agenda. Vision tenets advance buy-in to practices such as collaborative interchange, reflective practice and openness to new ideas which serve as forms of professional development. Analysed data also identifies aspects of management such as flexibility, relevance and scaffolded learning as influential determinants of professional development witnessed in this setting.

4.4.2.1 Collaborative Interchange

Collaborative interchange is defined as, “*sharing things, learning from each other...like if you have any problems you can go to (senior management) for support*” (ISF5). Collaborative interchange facilitates team work: planning together, sharing knowledge, collective learning and building a learning culture. Team work is common practice²⁰³ in this environment. The school’s organisation, or division of the school into syndicates²⁰⁴ promotes teamness described as, “*within our team meetings it’s a time we can talk about different things we can teach different ways of managing children*” (ISF7). Professional development undertaken in teams (albeit syndicate and / or whole school) establishes an eclectic knowledge base. An eclectic knowledge base includes knowledge of students, community and staff, an understanding of school processes, systems and structures, and curriculum, pedagogical and legislative knowledge. Eclectic knowledge enhances:

- Shared responsibility of pedagogical change aligned to school / stakeholder needs;
- Knowledge use that maximises curriculum delivery;
- Creation of a substantial knowledge base for framing, making and taking decisions;
- Connectedness among stakeholders attributed to a pool of collective knowledge;
- Renewal of systems, processes and structures to ensure systemic coherence; and
- Affirmation of norms of improvement, learning, empowerment and community focused on ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’.

In this setting, collaborative interchange promotes positive working relationships. It develops an environment of collegial trust. Trust encourages reflective practice and critique of practice as this

²⁰³ Team work was witnessed in: whole school staff and team meetings; literacy curriculum meetings; senior management meetings; parent/school meetings such as board and Friends of the School; and in school events such as assemblies and other celebratory type events.

²⁰⁴ Team work as part of school organisation means the school is divided into three syndicates: junior, middle and senior. In addition, staff meet and engage in other forms of team work – coordination of: curriculum, special needs/abilities and cultural groups; senior management and teacher aides meetings.

comment implies, *“The tutor teacher would give me lots of assistance. She would observe my lessons and give me feedback... I could always go and ask her for ideas and suggestions”* (ISF5).

A product of collaboration and trust is risk taking and / or pushing the boundaries of individual and collective learning. Participants claim learning is empowering: *“I have more confidence to teach the computer. It’s better to learn from your mistakes”* (ISF8); *“I’m really impressed with the power point presentation (teacher) and (teacher) presented...I’m going to learn how to do the power point presentation and slide show”* (ISF5)²⁰⁵; and *“Teachers are encouraged to take on board a new project or a new idea and it might be something that’s never been tried before. They are given a chance to have a go at it”* (ISF9).

Collaborative interchange, trust and risk taking builds self-efficacy. Staff acknowledge: *“We book ourselves in if we are interested in learning some ICT skills”* (ISF5); and, *“we set goals for the kids to improve but now we have our own goals. Each year we have to revise and review our goals ...I think it’s really, really good to monitor myself”* (ISF8). Benefits equate to:

- Individualised learning;
- Engagement in continuous professional development;
- Reflection on practice;
- Experimentation with new teaching strategies; and
- Self-monitoring and tracking of progress.

4.4.2.2 Reflective Practice

In this setting, reflection on practice engenders professional learning. It is defined by staff as: *“You evaluate what you’re doing and measure it against the new strategies and you adapt it... (It) makes you reflect on your own practices...you see the parts that are valuable and are still valued”* (ISF6); and, *“I think it is about talking and discussing and trying things out. Seeing what works...and then going back and doing some reviews and finding out where we are at and what*

²⁰⁵ Refer Appendix Q power point presentation

we are going to do to improve” (ISF1). Reflection on practice is a form of self²⁰⁶, team²⁰⁷ and systemic²⁰⁸ renewal, desirous of improvement.

Reflection on practice, as the example below suggests, attaches meaning to work activities. In assessing written language, for example, staff were observed moderating and levelling students’ work collectively. Use of Ministry of Education achievement objectives, school data and resulting professional talk engendered greater understanding of students and systemic need. Ensuing debate that followed provided opportunities to scrutinise and alter practice accordingly,

We discuss how we are going to take the piece of writing, what we are looking for and how we are going to standardise the writing and how we are going to moderate it...in doing so we need professional development on using the exemplars and what’s out there to help us in the job of moderating and working out where we are at (ISF9).

Reflection leads to,

debate which can look like an argument. People tend to be very insular in teaching...if you’re a year six teacher you tend to look at year six kids and if you’re a new entrant teacher you tend to look at your area...if you get two together then you can say this is what I think ...and then probably someone else will say this is what I think and sometimes they are poles apart. So that whole discussion then is valuable (ibid.).

In terms of value,

... none of us have all the answers. We are learning to respect someone else’s viewpoint, where they are coming from... Sometimes it strengthens the views you already hold and you feel you are right...We actually have pieces of work that were moderated against the exemplars” (ibid.).

Reflection on practice produces a readiness to be critical, “You have to be teachable as well... there is always another way of doing it. There is always something new that you can give the children” (ISF7). Reflection facilitates felt need for change (individual, collective and

²⁰⁶ Appraisals and peer reviews

²⁰⁷ Team reviews and curriculum reviews are presented to the senior management team at the end of each term. Reviews involve all staff reflecting on their practice.

²⁰⁸ Planning reviews include: Short and long term planning undertaken as a staff or within teams. Reviews also concern curriculum and pedagogical areas. Included is the strategic planning day where staff and Board representatives engaged in reviewing the 2004 strategic plan and formulating the 2005 one.

systemic)²⁰⁹, creates an ‘openness to new ideas’ and provides opportunities to alter practice in response to authenticated need. Reflective practice maintains on-going currency that increases systemic capabilities for improvement.

4.4.2.3 Openness to New Ideas

‘Openness to new ideas’ is not mandated practice. It is a state of mind that exists in connection with learning. ‘Openness to new ideas’ sits comfortably alongside collaborative interchange, reflection on practice and knowledge production and utilisation as a school community. In this setting, a ‘wanting to learn’ attitude prevails²¹⁰. Behaviours that denote this include: welcoming outside expert’ input²¹¹, volunteering to attend professional development courses and association meetings²¹², involvement in Ministry contracts²¹³ and networking with other schools²¹⁴. Peer support, modelling, coaching, self evaluation and collective critique of practice are internal processes that sustain professional dialogue and ‘openness to new ideas’²¹⁵.

4.4.2.4 Management of Professional Development – Flexibility

Collaborative interchange, reflective practice and openness to new ideas establish group norms of ‘how things are done around here’. Such characteristics require professional development that displays, “*room to manoeuvre*” (IA1); in other words, professional development management that displays flexibility of design is important. Flexibility, at the system level, is evident in alterations to the professional development agenda in response to need – school, staff, students and parents / caregivers. One such example observed was a professional development meeting on spelling. (OWS10). Input by the deputy principal was provided in direct response to staff request. Another example is flexibility shown at individual levels of professional development in terms of negotiation and control of learning as these comments imply: “*You are not expected to take on board new thinking all in one wallop. There is time to put things into place and take on board the parts that suit you and not fit completely into someone else’s mode*” (ISF6); and “*There are allowances for you to develop at your own pace...hook into the programmes with your children*

²⁰⁹ Examples abound in this school that support this statement. All staff, team and curriculum meetings observed created opportunities for deeper inquiry into practice. They were sites where asking the ‘hard questions’ were seen to be the norm. They facilitated change of practice in response to need.

²¹⁰ Observed at all professional development, team and curriculum meetings and reinforced by staff comments. This applies to board members as well.

²¹¹ Refer to section on External Influences on Professional Development – 4.4.1

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Refer to section on networking with other schools – 4.4.1.5

²¹⁵ Refer to section on Internal factors of Influence – 4.4.2

according to your ability and your level of development” (ISF6). Benefits from such flexibility mean:

- System and structure realignment in response to need (individual, collective and school);
- Learning that is highly meaningful and relevant for the learner; and
- Locus of control, with the learner, helps with managing change. In an environment where change is constant, systemic flexibility is seen to reduce individual stress.

4.4.2.5 Management of Professional Development – Relevancy

Participants claim this school is a busy place, “*We’re constantly striving for improvement*” (IA1). For professional development to be successful, staff claim it has to be, “*relevant. I find if it is not relevant you just sit there and get absolutely bored*” (ISF7). Relevancy is defined as, “*Something you can take and use in your classroom or use in your classroom practice. So it has to be at the right level and that sort of thing. I prefer it if it’s practical*” (ISF7). Relevant professional development is:

- Meaningful²¹⁶: “*Conducted in a meaningful way*” (IA2);
- Incremental or progressional²¹⁷: “*Like last year and this year there has been a focus on literacy*” (ISF5);
- Practical, for example in the Numeracy contract: “*We would have hands on activities...The booklets are really good guides. They are so self explanatory. There are lesson, unit plans, knowledge activities and teaching strategies*” (ISF5); and, “*giving you ideas to try and implement in the class*” (ISF7);
- Achievable²¹⁸: “*Things are happening in my class and I can see progress...It has helped us to work with our guided reading ...group and regroup the class...I think that the children are moving along very well*” (ISF5);
- Hands on or learning by doing: “*Yeah it is better for you to actually learn by doing it. Like when we had an art staff meeting we actually did art. And then once you do it you sort of remember it*” (ISF7); and, “*my learning is now learning on the job and that’s the only way I can learn. If I get faced with a problem I either work it out for myself or enlist help or pass it on to someone I know who can help*” (ISF9);

²¹⁶ Examples in support: staff meetings on three level guides, technology exemplars, behaviour management and ICT; team meeting – assessment tools related to portfolio management in the junior syndicate and for Science and Maths in the middle syndicate.

²¹⁷ Refer to the Appendix R: Professional Development Timetable.

²¹⁸ To illustrate: ICT, Music and Numeracy staff meetings

- Inclusive of parents²¹⁹: “*parents help us in the class which is fantastic...they help our learning because we can put faces on our learning more*” (ISF7); and
- Facilitative of professional dialogue²²⁰: “*Then [teacher] showed us how to do Koru pictures which showed rotation and symmetry and it does relate to the children*” (ISF7).

4.4.2.6 Management of Professional Development – Scaffolded Learning

Scaffolded learning is an on-going, continuous part of professional development. It is provided in response to stakeholder and systemic need and traceable to formal (reviews and appraisals) and informal (individual requests) systems of reflective practice. Scaffolded learning extends to parents / caregivers engagement in home-school partnership activities and regular weekly parent chat sessions. Ministry initiatives, such as professional development training for newly appointed board members, scaffolds board learning in the area of governance.

Scaffolded learning connects directly to practice and is inclusive of individual and collective exchange of ideas. It necessitates the asking of ‘hard questions’. In the initial stages of school improvement, the principal’s ‘hard questions’ related to pedagogy which meant she, “*talked and interviewed teachers about how they felt about the reading programme... (She) discussed what they were doing*”. Hard questions force staff to confront reality. They have the potential to raise doubt as to the credibility of practice as it exists. Scaffolded learning creates a culture of reflective practice, collaborative interchange and ‘openness to new ideas’.

The asking of ‘hard questions’ continues to be common practice in this school, occurring at junction points where stakeholders meet²²¹ to discuss learning and teaching needs and future school direction. The asking of ‘hard questions’ has the potential to move inquiry of practice past surface levels of understanding to deeper consideration of purpose and authenticity as revealed by the data. The courage shown by staff to engage in such rigorous analysis of data establishes accurate starting points for learning and change of practice. Scaffolded learning, thus conceived, is an evidence-driven activity²²² with a foothold in reality.

²¹⁹ Home / school partnership activities build parent knowledge of educational matters. Bi-lingual tutors facilitate and build parent knowledge on matters of educational importance.

²²⁰ Witnessed at all staff, team, curriculum and board meetings attended.

²²¹ Refer Appendix B. Whole school staff professional development, team, curriculum, senior management, support staff and ESOL meetings. Also included are board meetings and reviews that were conducted.

²²² Ibid.

Scaffolded learning promotes ongoing networks of support²²³, collaboration with peers and / or outside agencies. Peer and / or expert knowledge, expertise and skills are essential in the development of an incremental, integrated, layered approach to professional development. Systemic levels of support, provided by the school and from the Ministry²²⁴, enhance scaffolded learning in this school. School policies, systems of performance management, staff induction and reviews support and endorse scaffolded learning as a form of professional development.

4.4.3 Evolving, Continuous Professional Development – A Layered Approach

Professional development in this school is layered. This is the result of:

- Formal and planned meetings²²⁵;
- Informal, unplanned opportunities for knowledge exchange; and
- Monitored practice.

4.4.3.1 Layered Approach – Formal and Planned Meetings

Whole staff professional development meetings occur weekly. The staff room and individual classrooms serve as venues for such meetings. Meetings held in classrooms provide incidental opportunities for learning, *“that is why we move around people’s classrooms not to check up on them but for everybody to get new ideas and see things and this makes people feel important too and everyone is recognised by their colleagues”* (ISF1).

Staff meetings last an hour to an hour and a half. Although there is a set agenda²²⁶, there are times when alterations and or additions are made to suit need. In the year of data collection, professional development was linked to the overall school’s focus as detailed in the strategic plan (DOC 6). Staff note, *“So there are things that we’ll look at throughout the year, focuses we’ll have and so then they’re up and everyone gets the instruction on like guided reading, or reciprocal reading, three level guides that sort of thing”* (ISF2).

Knowledge introduced at staff meetings is a mixture of theory and practice²²⁷ modified to suit context. Information introduced at whole school staff meetings is reinforced at team meetings.

²²³ As seen in staff, team, curriculum development meetings and board of trustees meetings

²²⁴ Teacher release payment forms a part of Ministry of Education contract negotiation with schools.

²²⁵ Results in development of an eclectic knowledge base: curriculum, pedagogical, legislative, ethical, cultural and site-based (staff, student and community) knowledge.

²²⁶ As explained earlier, there exists *“room to maneuver”* (IA1) - flexibility.

²²⁷ Refer to the sections 4.4.1 and 4.4.2.

Here, ideas and concepts undergo further adjustment and modification to suit student age level requirements. Whole staff and team meetings²²⁸ create opportunities for individual and collective learning. School based knowledge expands to include the community²²⁹. Parents / caregivers are kept informed of educational developments via newsletters, home-school partnership evenings and parent chat sessions.

An additional aspect of a layered, planned approach is transmission of new knowledge from sources outside the school. Such transference is initiated when staff attend out of school courses, return with knowledge to share and modify and enact new learning in practice. External transfer of information means new knowledge enters the school and is subsequently dispersed through stakeholder involvement. The responsibility for knowledge acquisition, dissemination and implementation is the responsibility of all staff. Shared responsibility for learning leads to generation of a collective knowledge base and a community of leaders approach to knowledge production and utilisation. Social processing of knowledge enhances a culture of learning.

External input of a more specific kind enters the school in response to agency requests (for example, RTLB and GSE) relative to individual, collective and / or systemic need. Such input also has an expansive, layered quality which benefits both the individual who made the request, the collective and / or the system. For example, knowledge requested by an individual staff member in response to a particular student, quickly becomes communal property in an environment where knowledge sharing is encouraged. The same can be said of infrastructures of support in response to planned intervention. The holistic nature of information and support provided by outside agencies goes beyond focused attention on the curriculum. Information pertaining to social, emotional and behavioural aspects of whole child development is advanced.

Planned and layered professional development has the potential to motivate and sustain learning²³⁰. In terms of capacity building for school improvement, benefits include:

- Establishment of external and internal networks of support for learning;
- Modification of external knowledge to suit site conditions with potential to enhance change of practice;

²²⁸ Note individual and collective knowledge development occurs at other sites of collaborative interchange (curriculum meetings, senior management meetings, board meetings to name but a few).

²²⁹ Through an open door policy, system support provided by bi-lingual tutors and home/school partnership and parent chat sessions.

²³⁰ Observed at whole school professional development, team, curriculum and board meetings.

- Shared responsibility for knowledge production and utilisation;
- Norms of learning, empowerment and improvement embedded in school culture; and
- Creation and expansion of an eclectic knowledge base with potential to enhance practice and inform decision-making.

4.4.3.2 Layered Approach – Unplanned and Informal

In this setting, learning occurs through unplanned, informal conversations held spontaneously. According to the deputy principal, *“Professional dialogue happens and sometimes it’s quite informal. You know it might be an informal thing in the staff room. It’s a sharing of ideas. I constantly have people coming in and that’s part of professional development for staff”*.

Informal conversations serve to reinforce and clarify aspects of daily activity. They are, as one staff member notes, *“a lot of incidental stuff... and they’ll say hey look I’ve found out about this or do this; this is a really good unit”* (ISF2). Informal conversations or teacher talk are a product of collaboration. Their value lies in reinforcing patterns of workplace behaviours and shared values. In a sense, unplanned informal conversations are ‘sense making’ activities that reinforce group ways of working. They help establish group identity which, in this setting, offers opportunity to further develop a learning community.

4.4.3.3 Monitored Practice

Professional development is taken seriously in this school. By its very nature, it reflects the complexities inherent in building capacity for school improvement. Taking professional development seriously involves monitoring and evaluating new learning that occurs, *“Basically it’s upskilling staff and then monitoring what happens within the classrooms as well”* (IA2). Monitored practice is seen as accountability to self, colleagues, students, parents / caregivers and the Ministry of Education (reporting on requirements as stipulated in *The National Education Guidelines* directly or through ERO). Monitored practice helps reduce the vision / reality gap by promoting learning and change of practice from:

- Assessment systems that aim to produce quality evidence;
- Analysis of evidence by which to judge progress in line with vision;
- Use of base line data for strategic planning usage;
- Renewal of practice and systems in response to need; and
- Consistency of systems, processes and structures in practice.

Monitored practice is, in itself, a layered activity. On a mandatory, planned level, appraisals, self-reviews, reporting to the board and the Ministry of Education on progress and achievement ensures accountability but in the form of *compliance*. On an informal level, monitored practice that involves peer reviews, self-reviews, professional dialogue and informal feedback ensures accountability but in the form of *professional commitment* to self, colleagues, students and parents / caregivers. Both have the potential to build capacity in ways previously indicated.

4.4.3.4 Professional Development: Key Elements Related To Capacity Building

Participants interviewed emphasise that building capacity for school improvement involves change and change has to be managed. One means of managing and supporting change is through professional development.

In this school, professional development is regarded as change inducing, a result of:

- Keeping up to date with current trends: *“we are more up with new initiatives that are happening. In the past it’s been we can’t be doing this - now it’s a lot on the go. A lot more things to keep people motivated and enthused”* (ISF1);
- Doing the job better: *“Teachers’ own knowledge and their own professional development has lifted. This has impacted on the learning... You’re not plucking things so much out of the air and you can focus on the teaching and the learning”* (ISF1);
- Tracking benefits of learning to students: *“Like with myself, I wasn’t into it at all and at times I would avoid it and that was to the detriment of the children. Now that I have gone on the numeracy project you know what you are doing. It’s awesome to be involved and this flows on to the kids”* (ISF1); and
- Enhancing personal growth: *“upskilling constantly and knowing more about what they are doing...focused on the students and where they actually need to go and what they are working towards”* (IA2).

One of the concerns related to building capacity for school improvement is sustainment of professional learning; that is, sustaining the impetus for change following initiation and implementation of new innovations. This school’s responses to sustainment include:

- Professional development that maintains a ‘working towards vision’ attitude;
- Layering of professional development that addresses school and stakeholder needs;
- Balanced attention to developing individual, collective and / or systemic capacities;
- Buy-in to practices such as collaborative interchange and reflective practice;

- Management of professional development that involves flexibility, relevance and scaffolded learning;
- Inclusion of parents in the education milieu; and
- Building a community of learners focused on student centred learning, empowerment, improvement and community.

Data indicates that professional development has positive implications for all school stakeholders:

- For students, this translates to meeting individual needs, increased motivation to learn, improved levels of academic attainment, self-efficacy and enhanced teacher-student relationships.
- For staff, it means “*working with what you have got and trying to make it better*” (IA2); sustaining learning that is student centred, improvement orientated, empowering and builds community. Professional development creates an eclectic knowledge base useful in informed decision-making. Professional development engenders life-long learning, willingness to learn and ‘openness to new ideas’. Trust, risk taking, motivation to change and achieve are promoted and supported.
- For parents / caregivers, professional development means: increased educational and personal knowledge to assist in their children’s education, preparedness to become more involved in school life, heightened awareness and understanding of other cultures and, for some parents, a deeper awareness of the New Zealand way of life. Professional development builds parents’ / caregivers’ knowledge capacities.
- Systemic benefits include: altered practice in response to new information, systemic coherence, closure of the vision / reality gap and bridging and buffering safeguards that manage conflicting tensions. Professional development assists with change management. It helps avoid traps of change for change sake.

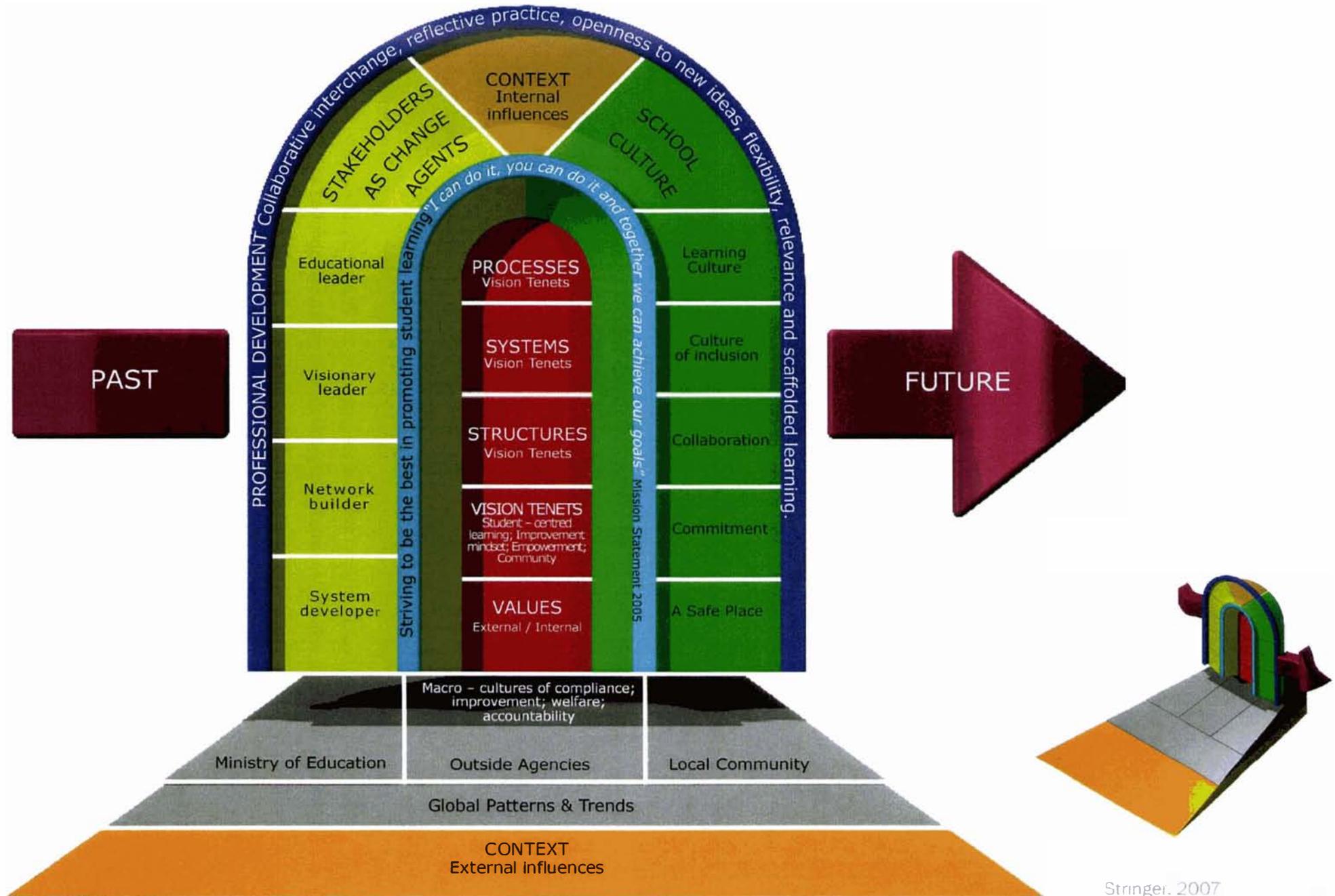
4.4.5 Summary

Professional development is situated at the external / internal interface of the capacity building analytical framework as shown in Figure 5 (p. 189). The position is justified on the basis that professional development is both internally and externally sourced. The result of internal / external connections translates to knowledge production and utilisation processes that enhance capacity building for school improvement. Professional development is the final attribute to be added to the vision, stakeholders as change agents and school culture mix. As a causal property of

capacity building, professional development is necessary in increasing school stakeholders' capacities to manage change.

Professional development is inclusive of all school stakeholders. The collaborative nature of professional development contributes towards development of a professional learning culture. All school stakeholders are agents of learning. Their input makes learning something to be desired.

Professional development is layered, continuous, complex, and intricately interwoven into school culture. As part of the very essence of what happens in this school, professional development is regarded a causal property of capacity building for improvement. A community of learners and leaders approach to professional learning builds individual, collective and systemic learning capacities.



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Figure 5 Professional Development. Underpinning tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment, community.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the attributes of capacity building for school improvement. The four attributes discussed in detail were vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. The 'Capacity Building: Attributes and Practices' analytical framework (see Figure 1, p. 107) was employed to present data on each attribute. Attributes of capacity building are influenced by contextual determinants. Their synergistic integration informs practices that build capacity for school improvement.

Data indicates vision to be the core category of capacity building for school improvement. The power of vision to provide an overall sense of direction – 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning' – is enacted in practice. The four support tenets and processes of construction make the vision a living document, deeply embedded in context (internal and external). Recorded in documents such as the 'PATH chart' and strategic plans, the vision influences the work of stakeholders, school culture and professional development.

Complex, multi-faceted challenges face school stakeholders on a daily basis. School stakeholders' ability to address challenges of setting necessitates adoption of change agency roles and responsibilities. School stakeholders' ways of managing change so as to minimise limitations and maximise opportunities enhance this school's capacity to sustain and advance improvement. 'Stakeholders as change agents' play crucial roles in capacity building for school improvement.

School culture provides a 'fertile ground' within which practices that generate capacity are enhanced. Macro and micro influences promote a culture symbolic of a professional learning community, living the vision.

Professional development is layered, continuous, complex and intricately interwoven into all aspects of school life. It is an all encompassing attribute that facilitates knowledge production and utilisation. The collaborative nature of professional development increases individual, collective and systemic capacities in managing change and building capacity for improvement.

Chapter Four has presented the attributes of capacity building. Although considered important, the synergy that results from their connectedness determines practice – what people do that builds capacity for school improvement. Practices are presented in Chapter Five.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS II - CAPACITY BUILDING PRACTICES

5 Introduction

This chapter explains practice. Practice refers to what people do, “to matters that are open to observation by the researcher and by others in a social group” (Miller & Goodnow, 1995, p. 6). Data from this research confirm the presence of three key practices that enhance capacity building for school improvement. These are: knowledge production and utilisation, division of labour: roles and responsibilities, and ‘switching on’ mentality. Attributes of vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development underpin all practices. Practices associated with knowledge production and utilisation relate to learning. The focus here is on building individual, collective and systemic learning capacities. Division of labour: roles and responsibilities refer to workplace – individual and collective – organised activity. ‘Switching on’ mentality focuses on relationships and face-to-face interactions. This is the interpersonal mode of practice that generates passion and motivation and builds school ‘heart’. All practices represent action central to capacity building. Although each practice is presented separately for purposes of logistics, it is assumed that one is not disconnected from the other nor hierarchically represented. All three form part of a whole which, when combined, build capacity.

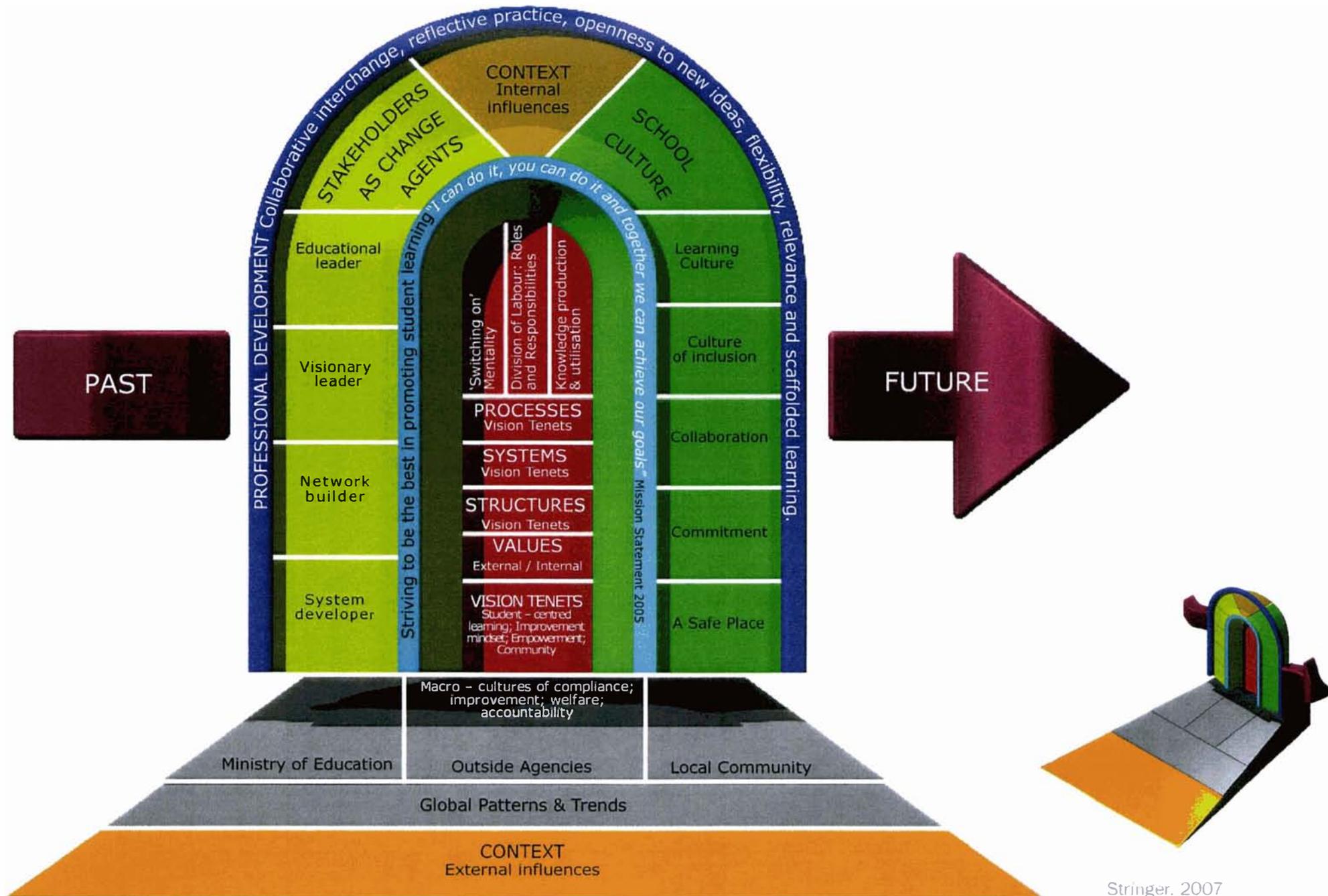
Practices are placed alongside vision at the core of the ‘Capacity Building: Attributes and Practices’ framework (see Figure 6, p. 193). Placement denotes the influence of attributes on practice. The following questions induced a deeper analysis of initial codes to reveal practices:

- What practices evolve from vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development that enhance capacity building for school improvement?
- What are the hallmarks of such practices?
- How do they enhance capacity building for school improvement?

Vignettes, accompanying commentaries and flow diagrams are used to present the data related to practice. The main data source is that of participant and non-participant observations²³¹. Length of

²³¹ Non-participant observations of senior management, staff, team, curriculum and bi-lingual tutor professional development meetings capture staff action. Non-participant observations at Board of Trustees, ‘Friends of the School’, cultural group, home-school partnership and ‘parent chat’ meetings proved useful in commenting on parents’ / caregivers’ contributions. Participant observations of events, such as the Fun Fiesta evening, shared lunches and the year six graduation ceremony, permitted observation and involvement in collective practice.

time spent collecting data and engaging in voluntary activities promoted deeper understandings of the 'lifeworld' of participants and contributed to a composite picture of practice. As it is impossible to present a discussion of all aspects of each practice, data presented are focused on common themes: the importance of vision, (vision-led activity), collaboration, reflective practice, networking and systemic development. Vignettes taken from staff, team and parents' / caregivers' levels of action are justified on the basis that this expands coverage and increases depth of understanding.



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Figure 6 Practices: Knowledge production and utilisation, Division of labour: roles and responsibilities, 'Switching on' mentality.

5.1 Knowledge Production and Utilisation

In this site, knowledge²³² is perpetually being created and utilised in the generation of new ways of doing things that meets stakeholder and school needs better. Knowledge production and utilisation serves a predictive purpose²³³. Knowledge production and utilisation systems, processes and structures are created on the basis of vision that secures a sense of direction and purpose; school culture which provides a suitable platform for enacting performance; professional development that facilitates learning; and stakeholder activity that promotes knowledge acquisition, distribution, adaptation and usage. Knowledge production and utilisation has individual, collective and systemic dimensions which enhance learning, goal achievement and capacity building.

5.1.2 Knowledge Production and Utilisation: The Importance of Vision

Knowledge production and utilisation processes are aligned with 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning' and tenets of student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. All school strategic plans (DOC 6), for example, are seen as prioritising student outcomes, sustaining school improvement, empowering stakeholders and encouraging community involvement in educational matters.

Improving teachers' pedagogical and content knowledge is enhanced by collaborative interchange, reflection, networking and systemic development. Such practices encourage and facilitate change. Observations at staff, team and curriculum meetings confirm aforementioned elements of practice as embedded in the school's culture and part of daily activity. For example, at an ICT professional development staff meeting, teachers assisted in the transference of newly acquired knowledge to others. The vignette provided is interesting from the viewpoint of teachers engaging in collaborative interchange, reflecting on learning, making system adjustments in response to newly acquired information, promoting internal networks of support and empowering others in the learning process.

At this professional development meeting, teachers discussed and demonstrated their newly acquired ICT skills which led to: development of a school web site, a power point slide show, equipment management, digital camera use for teaching purposes and implementation of newly acquired ICT strategies in classrooms.

²³² Knowledge is defined as information gleaned from professional input external or internal in source. External input is generally associated with course attendance or outside agency / Ministry of Education association. Internal input is associated with collecting and analysing evidence of stakeholder and system need gained from systems such as reviews and appraisals.

²³³ Predictive purpose is taken to mean the ability to determine future pathways of action from evidential data and processed information gathered, analysed and modified to site specification.

The power point slide show, created by one teacher with her five year old students, captured the interest of others. The aim was to integrate ICT techniques to enhance literacy development. Students had photographed their own art works and attached narrated captions. As the teacher noted, *“This is a good way to keep the art works in the classroom”* and, *“I run this in my room all the time so parents can see what we are doing”*. The teacher shared processes involved in creating a slide show. This built a collective knowledge base. At the following staff meeting, another teacher demonstrated her use of ‘passed-on’ information to produce a similar power point presentation. The comment made by yet another teacher interviewed captured the influence of peer modelling / coaching in inciting new learning, *“I’m really impressed with the power point presentation that (teacher) presented. Maybe when I go for the ICT training I’m going to learn how to do the power point presentation and slide show”* (ISF5) (Observation Notes: OWS11; Refer Appendix Q).

As the vignette captures, improving teacher pedagogical practice and content knowledge are related to student learning. Close links between teacher learning and student learning reinforces an improvement mind set, empowerment and a learning community. Collaborative interchange, reflection and networking hallmark social processing of information to create collective knowledge. Processes involved establish group learning norms. Embedded in the culture, learning norms promote individual, collective and systemic learning capacities. Learning becomes a motivational force that sustains and reinforces further cycles of knowledge production and utilisation. Self-perpetuating, ongoing learning facilitates change.

The notion of a learning community, inclusive of parents, is strongly supported by staff. The school encourages parental knowledge development through parent chat meetings, home-school partnership evenings and informal and formal get-togethers. Home-school links confirm the importance of building parents’ / caregivers’ knowledge capacities through structured and unstructured opportunities for learning. In the next example, a staff member was observed facilitating a series of parent chat sessions on ‘positive parenting’. Staff and parents’ / caregivers’ partnerships generate an inclusive learning community. This comment by a parent captures the school’s stance well:

There is this desire to include the community and make parents aware of what’s happening and what’s required really and what they need to do to help kids along the way. That’s really important for this school because of its makeup... you’ve got lots of immigrant families who don’t really understand the system. I think it is really important for them too because they’re learning as well (IP4).

The session observed was one of three parent chat sessions on 'Positive Parenting'. It was facilitated by the school's special education coordinator. Ten parents attended the meeting²³⁴. The meeting took place in the parents' room.

The facilitator commenced the session by encouraging parents to share aspects of child rearing they found challenging. Issues discussed related to sibling rivalry, behaviour and teenage rebellion. Skills that could be used in dealing with such issues were discussed. Suggestions included: exercising patience, not yelling at children, providing time for children to take control and solve their own problems, cooperation and affirmation of family values. The facilitator reminded parents of the power of positive thinking contained in the school's 'You Can Do It' programme. Messages of advice, in the form of catchy statements, were provided and discussed. These included: *"Treat me with respect; when I am angry let me cool down; read to me every day; I copy what you do so make sure you are a good role model; catch me behaving well and praise me positively; never give up on me; talk things over with me; spend time with me; and please correct my behaviour in private"*. Much dialogue ensued between the facilitator and parents over such issues. Messages delivered by the facilitator focused on positive ways to handle difficult child rearing issues. Parents displayed enthusiasm in wanting to learn more by indicating their desire to return for the next two sessions (Observation Notes: OPC1).

5.1.3 Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Collaborative Interchange

Engagement in collaborative interchange enhances knowledge production and utilisation. Collaborative interchange expands on mere compliance or development of collegial relationships and facilitates, instead, the asking of 'hard' questions of what is beneficial and, likewise, of impediment in the learning / goal achievement process. Collectively working through issues encourages reflection on current practice in an effort to promote effectiveness and build individual, collective and systemic learning capacities. As observed, social processing of knowledge facilitates learning and refinement of systems, processes and structures in support. The following vignette illustrates how teachers, through collaborative interchange, contribute to each other's cognitive development.

This session was part of a pre-scheduled whole staff professional development meeting aimed at constructing an integrated unit. Staff came prepared to engage in discussion. They brought along past lesson plans, additional resources and internet information. Such processes of knowledge production and utilisation were observed in other school sites where joint construction in task accomplishment produces common meaning, learning and a pool of practical, relevant knowledge.

The session was facilitated by the deputy principal who, in the early stage of initiating discussion, invited staff to contribute resources and ideas towards collective knowledge generation. Knowledge sharing is one way of avoiding information hoarding that can occur among teams. Creation of a combined knowledge pool was followed by guidance on how to plan an integrated unit. This was provided by the deputy principal. Opportunities for teachers to utilise available information in the

²³⁴ 2 Somalian, 3 Indian, 2 Pacific Island parents and the rest of European descent. All but one were mothers. All parents had their children currently enrolled in the school.

generation of age / student specific plans were provided. During this activity, the principal, deputy principal and specialist support teachers circulated among groups providing assistance in deconstructing official curriculum documents, reinforcing planning requirements as stipulated in school policy and generally locating and distributing information on the topic of inquiry. Group activity lasted an hour followed by the deputy principal initiating feedback from groups on learning outcomes, experiences and methods of assessment. Feedback of this kind encourages collaborative interchange, reflection, and clarification of pedagogical requirements across year level groupings. All group (team) plans were collected by the deputy principal who intended to collate and redistribute information for further deliberation and fine tuning in teams (Observation Notes: OWS2).

Action witnessed in this vignette highlights the importance of collaborative interchange that goes further than task accomplishment. Talking through issues of teaching and learning reinforces and extends existing knowledge bases within collective, non-threatening, supportive and meaningful group structures. Although the main facilitator was the deputy principal, the principal and other specialist staff assisted as peer coaches. Informal assistance, apparent in conversations that occurred, facilitated individual and collective advancement of knowledge, school-wide systemic cohesiveness and consistency of practice. Feedback that brought closure to the meeting reinforced common understandings of learning outcomes, experiences and assessment across age levels. It cemented in teachers' minds what to expect from students in terms of abilities and skills at various ages and stages of development.

As facilitator, the deputy principal's curriculum knowledge and skills were employed effectively to guide staff in the production of an integrated unit plan. Her tacit knowledge had the potential to increase individual and collective curriculum content and pedagogical knowledge. Her encouragement of collective dialogue in deconstructing and modifying official curriculum objectives created learning opportunities and an eclectic knowledge base with 'fit' in response to parameters of context. Involvement in the knowledge production and utilisation cycle was seen to generate a professional learning community ethos.

The next vignette takes the notion of collaborative interchange to a team level. It illustrates how members of a team worked collaboratively in the design of an assessment tool²³⁵ to evaluate learning outcomes and student progress in mathematics. Tool design was a scheduled event on the team's professional development agenda for that term. In preparation, staff brought their long terms plans, overview folders and evidence of students' work:

In the compilation of the assessment tool, all team members contributed ideas and suggestions as per format and item inclusion. For example, the beginning teacher suggested ways to gauge understanding of patterning across levels. Another teacher

²³⁵ Assessment tool focused on measuring progress in Algebra.

contributed ideas for assessing students who had achieved mastery and required extension work. The team leader actively sought the opinion of all in constructing test items. During the observation it became obvious that the notion of ‘authentic assessment’ had been raised. One teacher had tried, but was unsuccessful in finding additional information on authentic assessment via the TKI web site²³⁶.

Tool design was based on learning outcomes and students’ progress over the period of instruction²³⁷. This created a shared knowledge base from which to operate. One team member accepted full responsibility in tool design. The team leader expressed her thanks, openly acknowledging, “*She knows what to do, she is the computer expert*”. Throughout the construction process, staff attention was drawn to achievement levels in official curriculum documents. Teacher talk related to: “*These are all Level 1 items. What about Level 2? Do we need another page for Level 2? Any ideas for Level 2?*” In tool construction, official curriculum exemplars, the school’s overview and evidential data from students’ work were used. The session concluded with all members reaching agreement on various aspects of tool design: format, item inclusion and administration. The team leader requested that the assessment tool be placed in the team folder alongside other examples of assessment (Observation Notes: OTM2).

This vignette can be analysed in terms of collaborative action that builds individual and team knowledge capacity:

- Shared involvement in task accomplishment (construction of the assessment tool) reflects teaching and learning conducted over a period of time. Information gained is meaningful to teachers in addressing ongoing needs of students and promoting best practice. The process, deliberated and shared with all team members, produces a pool of shared knowledge. Learning that occurs is both individualised and collective;
- Collective deconstruction and utilisation of curriculum objectives in tool design increases team members’ understanding of official achievement levels as stated in the curriculum documents. This is one way of continuing to support planning and assessment. Collaborative interchange creates opportunities to modify and adapt the curriculum in line with the needs of students. The process advances system wide coherence and consistency of practice related not only to the school documents but also to *The National Educational Guidelines*;
- Opportunities for learning talk promote inquiry into practice;
- Shared construction of the assessment tool reflects and promotes collaboration around ‘doing what is best for students’; and
- Collaborative interchange builds team spirit.

²³⁶ The team leader offered to help this teacher navigate her way through the TKI web site.

²³⁷ Teachers constantly referred to student exercise books and long terms plans. The tool constructed was context and data driven

5.1.4 Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Reflective Practice

Reflective practice promotes student centred learning, improvement, empowerment and a learning community through critical attention of data that identifies and addresses need. Reflective practice can be individual, in the form of appraisals or peer reviews, or collective, where teaching staff consider and evaluate their practice as a group. Reflection always involves data analysis to improve practice and outcomes. Reflective practice has the potential to stimulate new ways of doing things. The process encourages a search for answers to ‘Why?’ and ‘With what effect?’ questions. In all professional development sessions observed, staff engagement in collective reflection was seen to promote critique of practice – an appreciation of what is working well and what should be improved. Successful reflection creates positive interdependencies among group members, familiarisation with school systems, processes and structures, high quality evidential data, buy-in to learning and social norms of collaboration and belief in self and community capabilities to manage processes of knowledge production and utilisation. In this setting, reflection on practice advances:

- Rigorous analysis of data to promote honest identification and assessment of school and stakeholder need;
- Empowerment of staff in knowledge production and utilisation;
- Continuous professional learning and ‘openness to new ideas’ that builds individual and collective learning;
- Problem solving within self-governing / self-managing frameworks; and
- Development of creative and flexible systems, processes and structures (staff appraisals, for example) in response to need.

The vignette chosen to highlight elements of reflective practice is one where teachers were encouraged to reflect on current literacy strategies aimed at increasing ESOL students’ oral language capabilities. The observation was part of a scheduled whole staff professional development meeting. Two staff members with literacy expertise facilitated the session. By way of introduction, one drew teachers’ attention to evidential data thus challenging thinking, “*This is reality at this school so we have to give them (students) the skills. We can’t teach in the same way. We have to modify the programme*” (Observation notes: OWS5). The nature and type of reflection observed occurs frequently in response to teaching and learning.

The first facilitator asked: “*Are we doing the best for our ESOL children? Is the child hearing what you are saying? How do you know? How do we support our ESOL children in their vocabulary development?*” She initiated discussion by providing typed versions of children’s speech from a recently conducted series of tests intended to provide the Ministry with current data on ESOL students’ literacy levels. Teachers were guided in their examination of students’ oral language scripts by focused

attention on vocabulary development, use of language, ability to express ideas, understanding of concepts and accuracy of speech.

Feedback engendered debate: *“they (students) don’t have much vocabulary; all these ‘negatives’ – this is a worry; but a ‘no would be because they were reluctant to talk’.* Throughout the discussion, the facilitator guided discussion to, *“so what does this all mean for teaching?”* Ideas discussed indicated the need to consider alternative instruction that could enhance ESOL students’ oral language development. The session concluded with the facilitator presenting generic literacy information gained from a course she and her colleague had attended. There followed a reminder: *“Lots of opportunities to use vocab and think of ways to recycle vocabulary in your classrooms as part of daily practise”.*

The second facilitator shared information on “three level guides”, a strategy with potential to assist students’ process information to higher levels. This part of the session commenced with ascertaining prior teacher knowledge on strategy use. One teacher commented, *“I used the guides but the kids just raced through it”.* Samples of three level guide packs were provided. Teachers considered their strengths and limitations. Inquiries pertained to management issues, *“Can you expect a five year old to relate to Level 3?”* The message reinforced repeatedly was, *“You are trying to push for deeper levels of thinking”.* The facilitator covered strategy use and links to planning and assessment (Observation Notes: OWS5).

Reflection on practice, as illustrated, occurs in response to improving practice. The next vignette of a team meeting depicts how the senior teacher created opportunities for reflection in the construction of an instructional writing unit. Processes of knowledge production and utilisation are embedded in context and purpose driven.

The senior teacher photocopied appropriate pages of a teacher resource manual on instructional writing to generate team discussion. She also brought along related teacher resources. Utilising the curriculum documents and resources, she facilitated discussion on specific features of instructional writing. Achievement objectives, as stipulated in the English curriculum document, were unpacked in terms of learning outcomes and experiences suited to context. Teacher talk reflected team and students’ needs. Teachers had opportunities to articulate thinking and increase their collective knowledge base within a collective framework of scaffolded support. This ensured a relevant, practical and flexible approach to creating knowledge for team decision-making. Last year’s plans were produced as a basis of critique and reflection. Building on past endeavours and a review of the current situation resulted in the design of new, more appropriate plans. Teachers swapped ideas, information and effective teaching strategies. Such group involvement has the potential to initiate pedagogical change. Student centred learning was continually endorsed. For example, the senior teacher suggested, *“Write the definition on the board and leave it there while the unit is being taught. Leaving it there for a long time will help children get familiar with what is involved”.* Scaffolded opportunities to reflect, enhanced knowledge production and utilisation in ways that not only achieved the task, but increased individual and collective learning capacities (Observation Notes: OTM2).

Previous vignettes have, to a large extent, covered aspects of collective reflection. In all events, individual reflection appears a necessary part of group reflection and a social

responsibility. In this school, individual appraisals enhance reflective practice. As it was considered unethical practice to delve into personal dimensions of appraisals, a cross-section of views, on the subject, was sought. Views expressed (interestingly consistent) conveyed the message that staff felt supervised and benefited from such practice. Benefits recounted were: learning, *“I have a tutor teacher and we used to meet up quite regularly and she has so many resources so she could help me a lot”* (ISF7); appreciation for work undertaken, *“You can’t be in a place that you are working hard in and not be appreciated by someone and normally it is someone in that leadership role”* (ISF12); building self efficacy, *“every year we are encouraged to fill out our goals for the year – what we would like to learn, what we would like to do and they (senior managers) take that on board...they encourage you to do professional development for what you think are your weak points”* (ISFS1) and *“Now we have goals for ourselves”* (ISF8); and reinforcement of vision, *“most teachers’ goals are to improve children’s achievement and, you know, emotional and social well being”* (ISF9). Reflection on practice reinforces professionalism; teachers are encouraged to supervise themselves according to agreed professional competencies.

In addition to formalised individual appraisals, peer reviews are undertaken. In partnership with senior staff, individualised achievement goals are decided. In the year of data collection, a school-wide literacy focus formed the basis of all peer reviews. The deputy principal explains the process as:

Teachers have a peer reviewer basically who works with them. They choose that person ...so what they do is that they have their literacy goals ...they meet three times a year maybe more, sit down and discuss their goals and work through anything that they have done from say the last time they met...so they report on that. Then at the end of the year, when it is appraisal time, that goal is looked at with the appraiser and reported on. That’s one way to get staff ‘buddying up’ and professionally developing and supporting each other in professional development.

Processes of reflective practice, albeit individual, collective and / or systemic, are documented. Documents form the basis for further reviews, modification of practice, systemic change, vision enhancement and individual and collective learning. As explained by the principal, documents serve as: accountability measures, *“Well they (Board) are certainly informed about all the results...The deputy principal explained the reading review thoroughly to them, took them through that so they had a really good idea of what was happening. And of course with targets now having to send those to the Ministry – we had to talk about that”* (IFG2) and, in terms of base-line data for future planning, *“also setting targets for this year came from the reading reviews”* (IFG2). This comment captures the value of individual

appraisals in establishing personal goals, *“I think it’s really good to help me personally monitor myself. I used to think I knew everything but each year I learn new things”* (ISF8).

5.1.5 Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Networking

Networking implies association or connection with others in knowledge production and utilisation. Internally facilitated staff networks generate situated knowledge. New knowledge brought into the school by outside course attendance, tapping into outside agency support and buy-in to Ministry of Education contracts expands the existing pool of site-based knowledge. Externally sourced information, shared with others, engenders new insights on practice.

In this setting, individual networks are combined to create expanded networks. The principal explains, *“The deputy principal and I had a whole lot of other people where we’ve both been working and (combined)...we had one huge group of networks”* (IFG2). Tapping into networks has the potential to increase individual, collective and systemic knowledge. Sharing ideas in collegial ways develop awareness of one’s own ability to produce and influence the learning of others. In this school, everyone is considered a leader in knowledge production and utilisation. In all meetings, individuals and groups were observed exchanging new ideas and strategies gained through experimenting in new teaching strategies and / or information transference through course attendance. Stakeholder control over selection, modification and adjustment of new information to suit individual, collective and site conditions is evident. The ability to exercise judgement and control over learning enhances professional autonomy. The next vignette captures this well. Here a teacher with curriculum responsibility in technology attended a course and on return ran a staff meeting on information gained.

The staff member handed out technology exemplars from the course attended. She invited teachers to examine the material in pairs. Discussion concerned examining characteristics of the technology curriculum, use of technology exemplars in planning and debate on next steps in school-wide development of technology. At all times, the teacher initiated dialogue linked to student learning: *“What can one expect from a Year 1 child? How does this develop and change for a Year 2 and 3 child?”*

She handed out a matrix with identified technology characteristics. An explanation of each was provided and teachers asked to consider student progression across the levels. Teachers were in mixed syndicate groupings for this activity. Twenty minutes for this activity was allowed, followed by feedback. Teachers were then provided with a unit plan and asked to identify achievement levels. They were encouraged to use the matrix to note year level learning outcomes. Further time was allocated for group activity. By way of feedback, comments received focused on ways to improve planning. Interesting points were raised, such as, *“children might very well be functioning at one level for one characteristic but at different levels for others”*. The teacher in charge pushed for systemic change by asking, *“Where do you think we should go next and what should be our next learning target?”* Various suggestions were provided. The message enforced was that all planning had to reflect students’

needs and appropriate use of pedagogy to maximise delivery of the curriculum. All groups provided feedback on use of the matrix as a tool for enhancing teaching. Responses included matrix use to develop lesson plans and for reporting purposes (Observation Notes: OWS6).

From this observation, several knowledge production and utilisation principles emerge. Internal and external networking encourages social processing of new knowledge. The teacher with technology responsibilities had attended an external course and on return delivered newly acquired information to others at a staff meeting. In the delivery, opportunities were created for all staff to update their existing knowledge bases. As events unfolded, the following were observed: justification of current teaching strategies that were working well and needed to be maintained, synthesis of old and new knowledge to achieve fresh levels of understanding, strategy use associated with future goal setting and pedagogical improvement and systemic support in response. Social norms of collaboration and teamness enable all to tap into a collective body of information. Internal and external networking engenders an expansive knowledge base.

Networking practices, as exemplified in this vignette, were observed occurring at different sites across the school. For example, at a middle syndicate team meeting, a teacher who had attended an art course returned with knowledge to share and coached her team into adopting new ways of teaching art. The beginning teacher shared ideas he had gathered on mathematics planning and assessment from a beginning teachers' session attended. Networking ensures collaborative interchange and reflection in knowledge generation. It keeps everyone in touch with new educational developments. Individual, collective and systemic knowledge capacities are advanced.

5.1.6 Knowledge Production and Utilisation: Systemic Development

In this setting, knowledge production and utilisation extends beyond consideration of individual and collective learning. Knowledge production and utilisation is very much part of systemic development; that is, renewal of systems, processes and structures in light of changing conditions. Knowledge produced through vision-led activity, collaborative interchange, reflection on practice and networking has the potential to transform school systems, processes and structures in ways that address stakeholders and the school needs. Vignettes and analysed review documents as presented here capture links between knowledge production and utilisation and systemic change.

In the following vignette, student portfolios are the focus of attention. The deputy principal was observed facilitating a discussion around portfolio purpose, management and use. The

discussion was a scheduled event on the junior school professional development agenda and followed a series of staff meetings on portfolio realignment aimed at authentic assessment.

The deputy principal led the discussion: *“What is authentic assessment? Think about what’s realistic, what’s important to children. Reading assessment needs to be progressive. How do we make assessment realistic and true?”* Teacher talk that resulted promoted a discussion of situated issues:

- Manageability, *“Time is an issue. It takes time to go around each child to have a conversation”*;
- Consistency of practice, *“We have to decide as a team what we want. It might be important to team up and target what is important such as transition into school”*;
- Inquiry into current practice, *“What we already do in portfolios is really good, for example in art...Let’s look at alphabet testing and technology...We could take a photograph and have some writing and note the learning that has happened”*;
- Selection and pace of change, *“Suppose we start afresh in terms of assessment next term. This term we could observe how (student) has settled in and for next term pick up and assess something else. By the end of the year we should have assessments from each area”*;
- Reporting back to parents, *“What will parents expect? Parents don’t expect a photo all the time”*; and
- Feasibility issues, *“Are the tools going to be there for us to do this and people who can do this?”*

Knowledge produced provided base line information for the framing, making and taking of decisions. The deputy principal summed up proceedings by saying, *“You need to go back a step and ask the question are we planning too many things in one term. Are we giving ourselves enough time to cover the topics and assess them properly? How can we do things differently? How can we improve our practice?”* (Observation Notes: OTJ4).

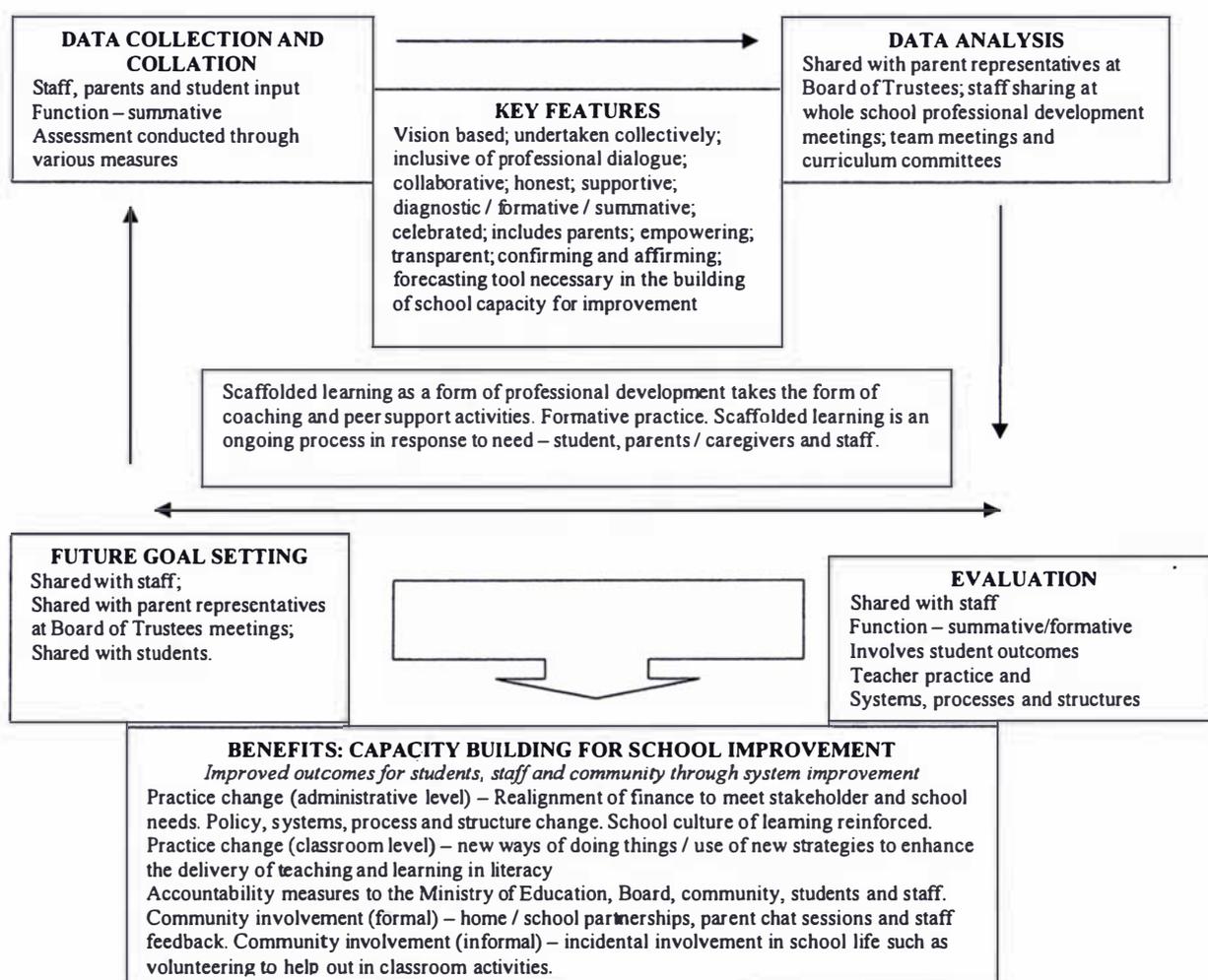
As illustrated, knowledge produced provided an authentic base for decision making. Although the deputy principal facilitated the discussion, decision making was the team’s responsibility. Collaborative interchange, reflective practice and internal networking promoted thinking through issues, reasoning, communicating, reflecting and critiquing current practice. Such processes pave the way to modify and transform systems in line with need.

Curriculum reviews provide opportunities to collect and analyse evidential data for future target setting (see reading review, Figure 7). Reviews identify strengths and weaknesses of programmes and practices linked to student progress and school development. Direct links to *The National Education Guidelines* ensure compliance to mandated legislation. Combined stakeholder input in data collection, collation, analysis and evaluation is valued as this comment implies: *“It means everybody is aware of what a child learns at five right through to the seniors. I think it has helped teachers focus on their part of the curriculum”* (ISF11). Analysis of the *Written Language Review* (2004) and reading review (see Figure 7) confirm the school:

- Reports on school-wide progress in the designated curriculum area;

- Ascertains current levels of students' achievement;
- Utilises exemplars to level student work;
- Identifies and targets areas requiring specific attention;
- Ensures staff familiarisation of official exemplars and their usage;
- Sets budgets according to need;
- Initiates staff professional development aligned to effective teaching practice;
- Assures equitable outcomes for minority groups; and
- Identifies barriers to learning through analysis of data.

Figure 7: Reading Review (2004)



Reviews promote:

- Reflection that is individual, collective and futures orientated;
- Increased knowledge on school practices, curriculum, pedagogy and stakeholder / system needs;

- Growth and development of a learning culture;
- Opportunities to adapt and modify practice in response to changing conditions;
- Knowledge production and utilisation in pursuit of vision ideals;
- Ability to engage in ‘other’ reviews as knowledge of review procedures increase; and
- System coherence and consistency of practice.

In continuing to push for a deeper understanding of knowledge production and utilisation in systemic development, the invitation to observe construction of the school’s 2005 strategic plan was accepted. As illustrated in this vignette, stakeholder participation (inclusive of board input) produced baseline data and debate on future school directions:

Dialogue initiated by the principal confirmed positioning values at the core of all activity. The principal asked, “*What as a team do we want our kids to leave with?*” Comments, in response, included: “*desire of learning*”; “*getting along with others*”; “*engagement in critical thinking*”; “*becoming life long learners*”; “*independence in making decisions and shouldering responsibility*”; “*fulfilment of dreams*”; “*planning for the future*”; “*developing persistence*” and “*knowing and believing in self*”. Board representatives confirmed above viewpoints with comments such as, “*a lot of these kids will pull themselves back so it’s about building up communication with parents...mentoring and guiding children together so that they feel valued*”. Verbal attestation of core values was followed by an examination of the 2004 strategic plan to ensure that what was articulated was indeed recorded. Reassessment and alignment of values to educational goals were discussed on the basis of improving current practice. In all discussions, the search for accurate information, openness to new ideas and use of evidential data prevailed. There was no attempt to withhold information, conceal or mislead people. Review data was presented honestly and with an accompanying sense of realism. The focus remained on ways to improve practice. Knowledge production served as catalyst for decision making within parameters of institutional constraints – availability of resources, funding and staffing. This facilitated decision-making embedded in reality. Board questioning of practice promoted discussion of alternative perspectives and generated further insights on systemic improvement (Observation Notes: OSM3).

5.1.7 Knowledge Production and Utilisation – Summary

As signalled previously, it is impossible to present illustrations of all systems, processes and structures involved in knowledge production and utilisation. In Section 5.1, vision-led activity, collaborative interchange, reflective practice, networking and systemic development have been discussed from staff, team and parents’ / caregivers’ levels of action. The list is by no means absolute. Practices of knowledge production and utilisation enhance the learning mode of individual, collective and systemic capacity building. They create connectedness amongst stakeholders in learning.

Section 5.2 considers practices that involve stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities in building capacity for school improvement. The section is titled, ‘Division of Labour: Roles and

Responsibilities'. 'Switching on' mentality also involves stakeholder input but of the kind that engenders motivation, builds passion and sustains 'heart'. Explanations follow in Section 5.3.

5.2 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities

Connell (1985) states: "Teachers are workers, teaching is work, and the school is a workplace" (p. 69). In this school, various types of 'work' networks exist. Board of trustees and staff form working relationships, as governors, to ensure the school meets *The National Education Guidelines* and reports to the Ministry on its stated aims and objectives. Board members have designated roles and responsibilities. At board meetings, the chair facilitates all meetings. Other members were observed having their own roles and responsibilities associated with curriculum, finance, property and personnel portfolios. The principal reports on curriculum, staffing and other issues. The staff representative presents views of the staff to the board.

Designated teaching and administrative roles and responsibilities of staff represent another form of work related networking. The principal manages the day to day operation of the school. Deputy and assistant principals are middle managers with administrative and teaching responsibilities. Senior teachers manage syndicates and undertake curriculum and systemic delegated tasks. Specialist staff have assigned job descriptions. The Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO), English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) coordinator and reading recovery teachers establish and maintain systems that meet specific student, staff and systemic needs. Classroom teachers have roles and responsibilities for classroom management and in some cases systemic development related to curriculum responsibilities (teacher curriculum coordinators manage budgets and staff professional development).

Another layer of networking involves support staff. Teacher aides, bi-lingual support workers, secretaries, caretaker and ground personnel all have their own delegated work responsibilities. They demonstrate flexible work patterns to 'fit' workplace demands. Although there is a fixed element to their work schedules, flexibility and negotiation are continually displayed with respect to altered site conditions. For example, teacher aides' roles and responsibilities change in response to students' needs. This may occur during the term, on completion of work, or even on a daily basis, "*If a particular child we are working with isn't here we know that we may have to work with another child*" (ISFS3).

Stakeholders' designated roles and responsibilities create a working community ethos, described as, "*I don't think there feels that there is much of a hierarchy...OK we have our principal, deputy principal etc. You know we respect them but amongst the staff there is no*

sort of I've been here longer therefore I'm more important" (ISF9). A working climate means, *"Hard work is a value. Everyone is trying to give of their best"* (IA3). The principal explains, *"I guess this is a community and in this community there's always been a big heart...The talk has changed now... to more of a professional air"*. Each staff member is aware of the other's official role and responsibility. However, patterns of behaviour suggest designated roles and responsibilities appear amalgamated, more in keeping with social norms of collaboration that require a giving of self for the benefit of others. This is a community where people contribute to the well-being of others. As noted by a teacher aide, *"We ask the teachers if we don't know anything and they love to help us"* (ISFS4).

Given that what is observed is a harmonious working environment, constant demands for change require ongoing adjustment to existing roles and responsibilities. Change sometimes means, *"extra work"* (ISF12); *"The curriculum is so full that sometimes we feel we aren't doing justice"* (ISF10). Statements such as these are not directed at the school per se but at the wider education system, *"But then that's the nature of the job I think"* (ISF12); *"But I think that's an educational problem so that's not just at this school. I hear it everywhere. I come from a family of teachers you know and you hear the comments"* (ISF10).

Internal demands for change (such as, staff departure) mean adaptation and modification of roles and responsibilities to suit altered conditions. In this site, renegotiation and modification of roles and responsibilities are undertaken collectively. A 'working with' attitude maintains systemic equilibrium and minimises resistance to change. Support provided means new adjustments are initiated in practice as part of self-management as this comment implies, *"I know (teacher) is being released so that she can learn about the library because (teacher) is leaving next term and had the responsibility for it. So it's giving (teacher) time to learn how it works but in school time"* (IA3). Division of labour: roles and responsibilities involves, *"working as a team"* (ISFS4). Team work enhances collaboration, reflective practice, networking and systemic development in line with vision.

5.2.1 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: The Importance of Vision

In this setting, all school stakeholders (staff and parents) assume roles of vision guardianship. Staff are described as, *"neat people who apart from being professional and organised have the vision which is literally going forward on all fronts"* (ISF4). Vision guardianship necessitates involvement in vision construction, implementation, transmission and renewal. In practice, such roles and responsibilities equate to: challenging existing practice, ensuring improvement, empowering others to bring about change, providing systemic support and

reviewing and adjusting strategies that achieve organisational 'fit'. The vignette presented illustrates an individual teacher's allegiance to implementing vision tenets in an attempt to transform practice:

The teacher had attended a weekend course on gifted and talented students. On return, she reported on new learning gained. She reminded staff that although this school is not located in a high socio-economic area, it has students who display exceptional skills and abilities. She introduced a gifted and talented identification guide from the course and requested staff discuss its strengths and limitations. She identified school personnel who could assist in identification of students with exceptional abilities. Policy change, she noted, was a necessary part of accommodating new procedures, practices and legislative mandates. She informed staff that the director of the 'Gifted and Talented' association had been invited to run further professional development sessions on the topic. This was in response to interest and need for further action expressed by staff members (Observation Notes: OWS1).

Implementing vision ideals is part of work. As captured in the vignette, reflection on practice initiates calls to:

- Exercise vigilance in identifying students needs;
- Seek advice from peers in programming work that extends students' learning;
- Initiate practice change in response to need;
- Initiate policy change accordingly; and
- Utilise outside 'expert' knowledge to trigger change and expand practice.

Vision implementation is taken seriously. The following example demonstrates how the principal, deputy principal and ESOL coordinator's support of bi-lingual tutors' professional learning engenders vision guardianship:

At a bi-lingual tutor professional development meeting, the principal, deputy principal, ESOL coordinator and bi-lingual support workers discussed what it meant to bridge the gap between home and school for refugee families. The principal stated, "*Your job is not easy. We want to improve and get better in the way we reach out to parents and the children so we need your help*". Help meant: developing home-school links, working with staff to construct individual education plans, assisting in building school resources, assisting teachers in meeting the needs of refugee students and helping staff ascertain authentic assessment of student need. To facilitate this role, school staff outlined a series of professional development sessions they intended to deliver by way of support. Bi-lingual support workers were invited to add to a collective pool of site-based knowledge by presenting professional development sessions on Ethiopian and Somalian cultures (Observation Notes: OBT1).

Vision promotion, as depicted, is not left to chance. It is orchestrated to form part of everyone's role and responsibility. Collective support and guidance ensures vision implementation has a good chance of succeeding. Vision guardianship is reinforced as part of daily work undertaken by all school stakeholders in this setting.

The desire to see vision goals implemented continues to draw people back to the school. The term ‘people’ is used generically to include former board members, teachers and community groups who volunteer time and expertise in helping out, ‘working’ in the best interests of the school. Voluntary assistance was seen to encompass aspects of designated duty. In other words, volunteering to complete tasks has official and unofficial tags as illustrated:

An ex board member volunteered to ‘project manage’ the building of the school hall. This meant supervising progress and attending every board meeting to provide updates of latest developments. The ex member was also involved in Nga Ringa Awhina’s relocation. He was able to tap into grants, monitored the hall construction and kept the board fully informed of progress (Observation Notes: OB3; OB4).

The school’s vision underscores work. It enhances individual and collective receptiveness to change. Stakeholders’ designated roles and responsibilities have an implied guardianship role and enacting this makes them transformative change agents as evident in the vignettes.

5.2.2 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Collaboration

Collaboration is regarded a social responsibility. In relation to designated roles and responsibilities, collaboration is discussed in the context of decision-making. In this school, the framing, making and taking of decisions is undertaken collectively, “*They (senior staff) discuss it, say let’s look at the validity of what you want to do*” (ISF10). Roles and responsibilities within this school’s collaborative culture suggest senior staff, “*see themselves as part of a huge team really but also understand that they do actually have to lead*” (ISF10). Teachers consider themselves empowered to have a say in the decision-making process.

Collaborative decision-making is influenced by many internal and external school factors: vision buy-in, teacher empowerment, a learning community focus, pressure to manage workload through shared practice, an ethos of self-governance and self-management, trust and ‘readiness’ in response to changing situational dynamics. Observations conducted at staff, team and curriculum meetings confirm individual and collective voice in decision-making. Collaborative decisions are embedded in evidential data and ensure transparency of process. Participatory decision-making hallmarks the way things are done around here.

Numerous examples of collaborative decision-making were observed at the time of data collection. The following example was taken from a literacy committee meeting attended. Literacy committee meetings are open to everyone. Notices of forthcoming meetings are placed on the whiteboard well in advance to encourage attendance by all. Dialogue generated

connects to classroom and systemic practice. In the next vignette, decisions made in developing a spelling programme confirm collaboration, a valuing of teacher voice, “*they know best and know where the kids are*” (IA2), reflection on practice, systemic development and networking in line with vision.

Stakeholders’ roles and responsibilities varied at this meeting but, as always, communal involvement focused on doing what was best for the school and its students. The principal acted as overseer, ensuring discussed items were financially viable and received support (financial and human). Her knowledge of school systems, stakeholder needs, resource availability and obtaining additional funds from the Ministry proved crucial in establishing a rich information base. She fully supported the deputy principal who facilitated the session. She acknowledged staff willingness to provide time, knowledge and expertise in contributing towards the decision making process.

The deputy principal actively sought the views of others on, for example, resource purchase, future programming of spelling and teacher professional development. In all dialogue, she ensured current student data informed the decision-making process. Collective action was emphasised. For example, the deputy principal provided a spelling plan and sought the views of others in using the plan as a springboard for future planning in keeping with this school’s needs. Modification, she emphasised, required collective input. Issues of teaching consistency and ongoing support to ensure success of the programme were clarified with staff.

Teachers contributed their practical knowledge to the decision-making process. By way of follow up, teachers communicated information discussed at the literacy committee meeting back to members of their own teams. In teams, further discussion on the topic occurred with representatives reporting back staff views at the next committee meeting (Observation Notes: OLC1).

Decision making, as captured, depicts a sense of collectiveness and inclusion. Decisions are made collaboratively. Although collaboration is an unspoken requirement, there is room to negotiate individual position. For example, in relation to attending literacy meetings, staff elect to come and / or are asked to be representatives of certain groups. Representation means communal voice is heard through the person representing the group. As with other examples, room to express doubt, raise debate and query existing practice is encouraged. An expectation of members who attend such meetings is to represent their team and communicate back information from meetings. A flow of information encourages professional dependence and a community of practice workplace environment.

5.2.3 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Reflective Practice

Reflective practice invokes the ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’ vision ideal. Staff roles and responsibilities are tied to ensuring reflective practice is initiated and implemented in ways that ensure high expectations of curriculum delivery quality and equity.

Individual appraisals and systemic reviews are formal ways of monitoring practice. Daily conversations present opportunities for informal monitoring of practice.

The push for professionalism underpins all forms of supervisory activity. Legislatively it matters that teachers are systematically appraised, seen to be accountable and that the school has a robust system of supervision. Supervision is part of risk management that ensures this continues to be an effective, safe, learning place. Traditional connections means the principal, assisted by the deputy principal, conducts staff appraisals while teachers' structure and manage their own peer reviews. The principal appraises senior managers and is herself appraised by board and outside consultants.

5.2.4 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Networking

Networking, covered in the knowledge production and utilisation section, related to learning. In this section, roles and responsibilities receive attention. As it is impossible to present data on all network connections, this section focuses on roles and responsibilities of the principal and the board of trustees. The principal was selected as she is a central player in all networks and exercises a crucial role in maintaining system efficiency. The board's role in networking provides yet another angle to view capacity building for school improvement. Commenting on board involvement captures the governance level of systemic networking. The following vignette captures the principal's knowledge creation role at the governance level of practice:

At all board meetings, the principal presents monthly reports on matters of school business and education in general. Correspondence presented relates to Ministry of Education edicts, such as: initiatives concerning employment of social workers, making a difference to student achievement, health issues, legal issues pertaining to suspensions and other miscellaneous information contained in circulars. As a disseminator of information, the principal regularly updates the board on new legislation and current trends in education. This role is crucial in building board capacity. Bringing new information to the board's attention facilitates their learning and a gradual building of collective knowledge within which informed governance decisions can be made. In reporting on school matters, the principal provides information specific to site activity. For example, in one meeting attended, updates on curriculum issues, purchase of keyboards, fun and celebratory events, budgets and staffing were raised for discussion. School knowledge keeps the board in touch with current events. The principal's ability to provide necessary information is crucial in gaining board support, developing positive work relationships, building community and advancing a collective knowledge base (Observation Notes: OB2).

Board members also play their part in establishing networks. During the time spent observing board meetings, the following board initiated activities were witnessed:

Networking to obtain additional funds. For example, from community groups for the building of the school hall (OB2; OB3; OB4);

Networking to build collegiality and community. For example, the board chair was observed organising the 75th jubilee celebrations. In her report she drew attention to speakers she had organised, research undertaken in retrieving historical school documents and advertising to promote the event (Observation notes: OB2); and

Networking to build school unity. Some members of the board are also on other committees. Members' reporting back on information from other meetings sustains inter-group connectedness. Board collective knowledge expands as a result of sharing information (Observation notes: OB2).

5.2.5 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities: Systemic Development

As part of a working community, school stakeholders were observed developing systems, processes and structures that maximise delivery of the curriculum. The principal was observed on several occasions initiating systemic change in response to new legislation as this vignette illustrates:

At a staff meeting, the principal was seen communicating current legislative information on health and safety regulations. This staff meeting aimed at: updating staff knowledge on new health and safety mandates; reviewing current systems, processes and structures in line with the new legislation; modifying and adapting systems accordingly; and engendering collective buy-in to systemic change. The principal utilised a hands-on teaching approach to ascertain staff knowledge on health and safety protocols in use. She asked staff to contribute ideas towards improving current practice. Actions initiated brought about the following changes to existing health and safety protocols:

- A health and safety visitors' book was initiated;
- The staff injuries book was reinstated and placed in the staff room for use by all staff;
- Student involvement in creating a healthier school environment was discussed; and
- A review of the health and safety policy was scheduled so new procedural guidelines could be formulated, ratified and endorsed (Observation Notes: OWS1).

As school governors, the board plays a part in systemic development. At board meetings attended, members provide an independent voice of support and / or inquiry that encourages deeper reflection of practice from a community perspective. Such input depicts a strong desire to gain a deeper appreciation of what happens in practice. Dialogue that unfolds in the next vignette endorses the value placed on collective and participatory decision-making in policy construction:

Principal: *"I recommend we read this together. In this school we make sure we deal with each child in an as equitable way as possible."*

Board member 1: *"In the purposes section, item number three is repeated in the guidelines. Can we change this? With the second guideline, how will this happen?"*

Principal: *"We have to keep this fairly open ended."* (Discussion continues)

Board member 2: *"Is that because it covers a lot of things such as children with special abilities?"*

Debate on policy guidelines and purposes continued until understanding and agreement were reached and all parties expressed a need to move on. At this meeting, the Science and the ESOL policies were also examined in a similar way. Once

agreements were reached and amendments made, policies were ratified (Observation Notes: OB3).

Systemic development requires financial management. This aspect of the board governance is critical in building school capacity. The board receives funding from the government at a variety of levels: base funding according to decile ranking, roll size and other special characteristics. This funding, termed the Operations Grant, is utilised for curriculum, property, personnel (other than teachers' salaries), special needs, resources and all other items covered by legal requirements. It is the board's responsibility to allocate funds to cover the above expenditures in the best way that it can. Other sources of revenue received from donations (fund raising activities, for example) are also utilised for similar purposes. The board, in accordance with the strategic plan, allocates funds for systemic development.

In all board of trustees meetings, school finances were discussed. In some cases, decisions advanced value debates. In the case of the proposed professional development trip to Samoa, the board expressed concern on timing and community perception. Staff arguments were based on serving the Samoan community / students' needs, building team spirit and extending content and pedagogical knowledge in teaching children from Samoa. This incident provides a good example of decision-making that encourages value debates in line with doing what is best for the school and its stakeholders. Negotiation, collaboration, flexibility and remaining true to vision promote decisions that enhance systemic development.

5.2.6 Division of Labour: Roles and Responsibilities – Summary

In this setting, formal workplace structures and networks underscored by vision enhance: collaborative decision-making, value debates, vision implementation, monitoring of quality, accountability and a working community ethos. Power structures tend to be of a flat management type. Senior managers, board, teaching staff, support staff and parents / caregivers work together for the betterment of the school and its stakeholders. School systems and ways of working encourage shared roles and responsibilities whereby, *“channels of communication and procedures are in place and people know exactly where they stand and what's expected...clarity, expectation, follow through are expected”* (ISF6).

5.3 'Switching on' Mentality

'Switching on' mentality is defined as, *“Everybody gets involved. Like the staff, the families and everything. I am thinking we all just want to be involved in it. We all want to be a part of it”* (IB2); *“Sometimes it feels like we just come here to have fun. You can laugh at yourself and others. It's not a mocking laugh. It's warm and definitely fun”* (ISFS3). 'Switching on'

relates to the interpersonal mode of practice. The concern is on motivating people to engage in activities that build capacity for improvement.

5.3.1 'Switching on' Mentality: The Importance of Vision

Vision generates connectedness among stakeholders to a common purpose – 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'. Connectedness to vision accounts for the following school descriptors: "It's really positive and encouraging" (ISF5); "I feel proud to be part of that to be honest" (ISF12); and "You know the people out in the wider community look at our school and know it is a good place to send their kids and that they are going to get a really good deal" (ISF3). The vision is embedded in school culture. Espousal, enactment and recording of vision are captured as: "I see its vision is to make learning fun and inclusive of the family...It's current. It's vibrant. Modern sort of way of doing things" (IP2); "I think it's busy, always looks like its moving people forward. It is always friendly. People come in and say hi and smile" (IP4); "it's basically what teaching is about. You know about getting the children to achieve but just not on an academic level but grow within themselves and become good people at the end of the day" (IB1). Working with vision means continually responding to the "Where we want to be?" questions (ISF3). 'Where we want to be?' question underpins actions of stakeholders in knowledge production and utilisation and division of labour: roles and responsibilities. The following vignette captures stakeholders debating 'Where we want to be?' in construction of a new mission statement that addresses context conditions better:

The principal asked, "Are you happy with the mission statement or can it be changed? We want something that people can espouse". Much discussion was invoked on the existing mission statement: "we want to put in the word positive before learning"; "Perhaps we need to say develop organisation skills which include goal setting. It comes back to the values. Perhaps we need to say: To enable the students to give and receive feedback". At this stage, the conversation was mainly teacher generated. One Board member noted, "The 'You Can Do It' programme is taught but doesn't the 'You Can Do It' underpin the school?" This generated the following conversation:

Principal: "It started as a programme but is beginning to be a mantra underpinning the school".

Senior teacher 1: "Shall it be part of the mission statement?"

Deputy principal: "Might not be part of the mission statement for ever. We could be using another programme. The programme is a tool. Still we need to mention it".

Principal: "The 'You Can Do It' is filtering through though".

Board member 1: "I think it should be in the mission statement".

Board member 2: "This is emphasised in all newsletters".

Senior teacher 2: "Maybe we should leave the 'You Can Do It' in the values section".

Principal: "I would like a short snappy mission statement. I think it is part of the school too".

Board member 1: "It is part of the discipline programme too".

Principal: "If I came to this school as a visitor I would get nothing from the mission statement as it stands. What about a 'You Can Do It' learning community".

Deputy principal: "*Why don't we say I can do it learning community?*"
Senior teacher 2: "*Yes that's what we want*".
Assistant principal: "*You can do it means that there is someone else supporting you*".
Deputy principal: "*I would be happy with that*".
Principal: "*What about 'I can do it. You can do it'?*"
Senior teacher 2: "*Yes that gets the belief out to the community*".
Board member 2: "*That brings the people on board*".
Senior teacher 2: "*I like the word together*".
Deputy principal: "*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*".

This conversation produced the new mission statement: "*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*" (DOC6); a statement born from collaborative interchange, reflection and inclusion of all viewpoints to represent this school's identity.

Several principles emerge that explain 'switching on' behaviours when it comes to 'striving to be the best'. Collaboration, among stakeholders, encourages a sharing of viewpoints. Collaborative interchange, reflection and valuing what others have to say, creates openness to new ideas and flexibility. A strong desire to negotiate win-win outcomes is evident, not only in this example, but across the school, at different sites. In this setting, issues are raised and debated but extremes of position modified by a binding concern for adherence to vision.

5.3.2 'Switching On' Mentality: Collaboration

Calls to collaborate²³⁸ are openly voiced, described as, "*the arrows go everywhere*" (ISF11). In the following vignette, the call to collaborate was observed as enforcing democratic ways of working. The incident presented seeks collective responsibility for staff representation at monthly 'Friends of the School' meetings.

A staff member noted that representation on a regular basis by one staff member at the 'Friends of the School' meetings needed reconsideration. In her words, "*Going out to this meeting and attending another meeting is just too much for one person in one week*". The staff member suggested that staff representation at 'Friends of the School' meetings should demonstrate collective responsibility. The request was duly noted and senior staff made aware of calls to restructure this role. This request was discussed at both senior team and staff levels with agreement reached that all staff should share in the responsibility of representing the school at 'Friends of the School' meetings (Observation Notes: OTJ4).

The vignette reveals that a culture of collaboration is not something solely concerned with the development of a learning culture or linked to displays of shared roles and responsibilities. Collaboration is a cultural hallmark valued in sustaining democratic ways of working. It forms part of the social glue that binds this group together. Messages of collaboration are conveyed openly. In the vignette provided, senior staff acted ethically by not dismissing calls to alter practice. They opened the situation for debate and made necessary changes.

²³⁸ Detailed in Chapter Four

Responding to such challenges in ethical ways dictates how things are around here. Empowerment that ensues means, *“Teachers feel that they have a say in what is happening. So it’s not something that’s been put down from above but that the teachers have some ownership of it as well. Otherwise you don’t get change. Once you get it going it snowballs”* (IOA2).

Collaboration is willingness to help without being asked and having an expectation that support is available should the need arise. Language that captures this is collective use of ‘we’. Underpinning frequent use of ‘we’ are values of respect, collegiality, fun, tolerance and community as this vignette indicates:

The event observed occurred at a syndicate meeting where team members jointly constructed a farewell programme for a teacher leaving the school. The senior teacher stated, *“We need to fix up the assembly roster for this special occasion. Who would like to get the speakers?”* Teachers willingly opted to fulfil task requirements such as: collecting letters of thanks from children, arranging musical items, putting on a play and buying an appropriate gift of thanks (Observation Notes: OTM1).

Collaboration builds trust. Trust in people, processes and systems create environments where freedom to question and raise debate flourishes. The synergy this creates makes task completion enjoyable, manageable and ethical as illustrated:

Planning an integrated science / technology unit involved all team members working collaboratively. The senior teacher handed out a unit plan and encouraged team members to adapt it for collective use, *“Let’s do some brainstorming of our own of all the ideas to do with healthy construction of ice blocks”*. Collaboration denotes professional trust in members to contribute tacit knowledge for collective group benefit. Decision-making reinforces professional and personal trust among individuals to work for the benefit of others. An atmosphere of trust facilitates critique of practice in an effort to improve it. In this team, collaboration, teamness, doing one’s best, respect for the others, learning and improvement are placed at the forefront of all activity. All facets of team work elevate individual and collective well-being as important (Observation Notes: OTM2).

5.3.3 ‘Switching On’ Mentality: Reflective Practice

The role of stakeholders as transformational change agents is important. Transformational leadership flourishes in environments where trusting relationships exist. In this school, trust and mutual dependence are fostered through scheduled opportunities for team building. Friday afternoon gatherings, end of term socials and home-school events such as the ‘Fun Fiesta’ night promotes positive relationships.

Reflection that involves value debates has a transformational quality. Value debates operate at a deeper level of practice with attention on 'purpose' and justification for action. Value debates contribute to a 'working towards vision' stance, the benefits of which are:

- Readiness for change;
- Receptivity and preparedness to make adjustments and modification in response to internal and external shifting dynamics; and
- Insistence on collective input in processes of decision-making.

Reflective practice promotes a 'switching on' mentality by taking seriously the voices of stakeholders. Each individual, operating from a position of self as contributor to change, creates a groundswell of passion and support for capacity building and school improvement.

5.3.4 'Switching On' Mentality: Networking

Networking in Section 5.1 was discussed from a learning perspective. In Section 5.2, the emphasis was on work. Networking, here, is discussed from a position of school culture. A community or family feel defines this school. For example, teachers maintain that parents' / caregivers' involvement builds community ethos. Parents / caregivers demonstrate loyalty to the school and staff. During the time spent collecting data, parents were observed: managing school resources, helping out at special events, assisting with in class support, leading culture group activities and fund raising. Parents' / caregivers' input helps in building the human, social and fiscal capacities of this school.

Staff patterns of behaviour support this notion of community. Shared roles and responsibilities promote a giving and sharing attitude in service of others. Community forms the base line for action. The feeling of togetherness is empowering and necessary to support the work of stakeholders. In this school 'switching on' is also connected to learning inclusive of parents / caregivers as this comment implies:

...you could see the buzz...there were lots of parents there. More than we have ever had before and they were all really enthusiastic and they were talking about reading and maths, what was happening and what was going to happen that year ...I said wow this is neat this is what needs to happen...Cause you have got to switch parents on to that learning as well. You have got to get them involved (IP4).

In terms of capacity building for school improvement, parents / caregivers involvement means: "so it's not just telling the parents what we're doing but it's again that collaborative thing – getting them on board and involving them in the process so that it becomes a

partnership” (ISF3); “people who come and work here as volunteers...comment you know I had no idea that this is what it was really like” and, “it is only them going out and telling other people about what is happening within the school that you turn around perceptions of a school” (ISF3) and, “I guess it’s the parents’ changes in attitude...that it’s something they want to be a part of and that they are coming on board” (ISF3).

5.3.5 ‘Switching On’ Mentality: Systemic Development

Systems, processes and structures create a safe place. Participants note, *“people have to feel safe. They have to feel that they are valued. It provides ease and creativity and flexibility and all those things” (IOA3); “Teachers feel safe enough that if they have an idea or if they think I really want to go with this then it is acceptable if you discuss it and it is planned. There is room for new ideas” (ISF1).* A safe place occurs in response to:

- *“Pastoral caring that makes people feel that they can do things” (IOA3);*
- Processes, systems and structures evolving to meet situational demands;
- Change that is managed, supported and monitored;
- Being present, *“the leaders are always there” (ISF1);* and
- Closure of the vision / reality gap.

The researcher attended four school assemblies to identify symbols, rituals and behaviour patterns that reinforce this school as a ‘safe place’. Assemblies are structures where:

- The vision ideal is reinforced and transmitted;
- Vision tenets are enforced;
- Stakeholder guardianship of vision is acknowledged; and
- Achievements are celebrated.

Assemblies are positively charged school events. Awards are given to students on a regular basis. These include: golden box award²³⁹, certificates for academic and other achievements, spot prizes for participation and rewards for supporting wider school events such as the ‘Fun Fiesta night’.

Assemblies are action orientated. Built-in opportunities for fun lift energy levels. For example, at one assembly, a teacher aide dressed up in a multi coloured outfit because of a dare²⁴⁰ she had with the principal. The story of the dare was recounted and shared much

²³⁹ Teachers on playground duty reward children caught doing the right thing in terms of behaviour. The children’s names are put into the box and students whose names are drawn out at assemblies receive small tangible rewards. Certificates are awarded for academic and non-academic achievement

²⁴⁰ The dare concerned the building of the new school hall. The school had been planning to build a new hall for the last twelve years. Most staff members were resigned to this not eventuating for some time. The teacher aide happened to mention this to the principal who confirmed the building would commence by the end of the month. The dare was that should this occur, then the teacher aide would dress up in a multi-colored outfit and attend assembly and share her story.

to the audience's amusement. Jump-jam activities are regular fun events that encourage collective participation.

At all assemblies parents join in with jump-jam and other activities. Parents bring along their pre-schoolers creating a family atmosphere. The message promoted is that this is a community school. Messages enforced at assemblies support the vision. Student centred learning is awarded attention with improvement high on the agenda. School assemblies promote the message that this school is a safe place. (Observation Notes: OASO4; OASO7; OASO9).

5.3.6 'Switching On' Mentality – Summary

'Switching on' mentality endorses collaboration and collegiality. This school is seen as a place with a 'heart' that beats strong. It is a place where people want to be, "*I personally have found this to be one great place to be. It would probably take me a long time before I left*" (ISFS3); "*It's just this living breathing thing that occupies a space in my heart*" (ISF12).

Reasons for 'wanting to be here' result from:

- People feel they are listened to, their voices are heard. The atmosphere builds trusting relationships, "*you are allowed to say what you want to say or say how you feel and they're not going to shout you down*" (ISFS3);
- The stance adopted is action orientated with openness to new ideas, "*We were talking about the old hall and saying it is really small. So it took some time. They were planning it for twelve years. But it is happening now*" (ISF5);
- Collaboration is endorsed, "*The thing is all the leaders, the team leaders what they do is they try to ask other teachers their opinion for example about books that they need to buy*" (ISF5);
- Open, transparent communication is practised, "*When things are happening they do tell us and so all of us know the same thing*" (ISF5); and
- Integrity is valued, "*I have found that the (principal) and (deputy principal) take things on board...so its lots of practise before they say things and they do it and they show us and they say see this is how it can be done*" (ISF5).

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter presented data on knowledge production and utilisation, division of labour into shared roles and responsibilities and 'switching on' mentality aligned to: vision-led activity, collaboration, reflective practice, networking and systemic development. Each practice portrayed a particular contribution towards capacity building. Although the decision was made to present data on each practice separately, their combined synergistic qualities strengthen the building of capacity in this setting. Selected vignettes, commentaries and flow

diagrams provided a snapshot of each practice at a particular moment in time. Capacity building for school improvement is time and situation dependent.

All three dimensions of practice are complex and interactive. They ensure connectedness not only among stakeholders but also at the systemic level of practice. Practices of knowledge production and utilisation engender connectedness through learning. Division of labour: roles and responsibilities focus on workplace structures that encourage team work. 'Switching on' mentality is what builds this school's 'heart'. 'Switching on' practices highlight the interpersonal mode of relationships.

From a detailed examination of attributes and practices, four main themes that emerge underscore the capacity building for school improvement theory. The four themes include: situated activity; connectedness; governance, leadership and management; and capacity outcomes. Chapter Six presents a discussion of the four major themes and subsequently, the development of a substantive theory, theoretical model, of capacity building for school improvement grounded in data.

CHAPTER SIX: THEORISING ON CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

6 Introduction

The purpose of Chapter Six is to use the field work data on attributes and practices to develop a substantive theory, a theoretical model of capacity building for school improvement. This chapter explains capacity building for school improvement through a discussion of four themes that emerge from a detailed examination of the findings. First, capacity building is a situated activity embedded in context. Data on attributes – vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development emphasise the importance of context and the situatedness of resulting practice. Second, capacity building is the result of connectedness. Connectedness concerns meaningful relationships in activities that ‘promote student learning’. Meaningful relationships are enhanced through: knowledge production and utilisation that engenders learning, a ‘switching on’ mentality that denotes the way things are done around here and division of labour into shared roles and responsibilities that enhance team work. School systems, processes and structures achieve connectedness at the external / internal interface and in practice. Third, capacity building involves effective governance, leadership and management. All three aspects of organisational life are interwoven and are very much part of what happens in this school that facilitates capacity building for school improvement. Fourth, capacity building has outcomes. Outcomes represent desirable future states – individual, collective and systemic – related to purpose. Outcomes provide opportunities for feedback which, when used to inform practice, perpetuate and support ongoing cycles of capacity building. All four themes are embedded and emerge from the data on attributes and practices. They underscore the capacity building theoretical model as captured in Figure 8 (p. 248). In the discussion that follows, attributes and practices that purport each theme and links to capacity building receive attention.

6.1 Situated Activity

Literature suggests schools are nested within layers of society (Dantley, 2005). They are interconnected (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006) and operate as open systems (Lam & Punch, 2001; Pristine & Nelson, 2005) influenced by macro and micro cultural norms. In New Zealand, macro cultural norms of accountability, compliance and improvement align with Ministry of Education’s aims of raising student achievement and reducing disparity (MOE, 1999a, 2004; Alton-Lee, 2003). Key forces underpinning the aims are: responsiveness to diverse cultures and a wide range of needs and aspirations, globalisation, the impact of technology and information and development of a knowledge-based economy. The Ministry’s emphasis on achievement is targeted at: effective teaching for all students; family and community

engagement in education; and development of quality providers (MOE, 2004). A wide range of legislative mandates²⁴¹ ensure aims are met in practice. Government policy demands of schools accountability, compliance and improvement. Alongside socio-economic factors, such requirements influence what happens in practice.

Data from this research suggest the school complies with Ministry and local community requirements. Capacity building for school improvement is a considered response to macro and micro calls for accountability, compliance and improvement. Macro and micro contexts are not static states of ‘being’ but they change in relation to acts of ‘doing’. Shifting tensions and opportunities for growth and development impact on the work of stakeholders (see Leithwood, 2001; Dalin, 2005). Capacity building results from minimisation of limitations and maximisation of opportunities to benefit the school and its stakeholders. The importance of situatedness in enhancing capacity cannot be dismissed.

Data indicate the following characteristics of ‘situatedness’ as important. First, vision construction, implementation and renewal underpin all capacity building for school improvement activity. Furthermore, vision construction is an act of ‘deliberate choice’ in response to macro and micro cultural values and challenges of context. In this setting, a socially constructed vision is articulated as ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’. It is supported by four tenets of student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. The vision balances external demands with needs of the school / stakeholders. Second, vision espousal and enactment sets parameters for managing tensions; that is, minimisation of limitations and maximisation of opportunities benefit the school and its stakeholders. Third, capacity building for improvement has historical connections, current applicability and a futuristic outlook. The construct is unique and situated in context.

6.1.1 A Socially Constructed Vision – A Deliberate Choice

Occupying the core of capacity building is vision. The vision, articulated as ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’, is an inspirational ideal that unites parents / caregivers, students, staff, outside agencies, Ministry officials and businesses in supporting the school’s position. Barth (1990) claims vision bind people to a common cause. This appears to be the case in this school. The school’s vision is a confluence of macro and micro values resulting in a universally appealing message – ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’. It defines ‘work’; that is, stakeholders buy-in to vision results in individual and collective

²⁴¹ See for example *The National Education Guidelines* (1990) and *The New Zealand Curriculum Framework* (1993).

allegiance to the four tenets of student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. The mission statement, *'I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals'* is an empowering mantra that enhances a 'work hard' for improvement ethic. The vision is portrayed as a living document; a purveyor of hope in a context where tensions of funding, parents' / caregivers' involvement, accountability and compliance, low socio-economic factors and multi-ethnic considerations delimit capacity for improvement.

Vision is grounded in reality and its evolution is a continuous process. Fullan (1993) captures this best when he suggests visions coming later "are pursued more authentically while avoiding premature formalisation" (p. 28). Stakeholders' input in vision conceptualisation, transmission, implementation and renewal makes them agents of change. Their transformative agency is not without tensions however; decisions concerning direction and goal setting / attainment are debated from positions of particular group values and beliefs. Contestation of values and beliefs challenge the existing status quo or 'how things are done around here' (Deal & Kennedy, 1982; 1983). Challenge which raises doubt is defined by Schechter (2004) as an honourable moral objective facilitating growth and dialogue around purpose. Similar claims are made by Annan et al. (2003) with regard to 'learning talk'. In this site, opportunities for collaborative interchange, reflection, 'openness to new ideas' and value debates create dialogue around purpose. Talk around promoting student learning and effective practice motivates vision renewal in pursuit of capacity that best reflects context.

In this school, reflective practice and collective dialogue inform strategic planning to address need. Once again, the focus is on situatedness. For example, when the board was asked to support (partially) the staff professional development trip to Samoa, opportunities for reflection and dialogue on viability and purpose for such a trip produced a negotiated agreement with greater awareness of others' interpretation of vision. Collective examination of philosophies, ideologies, values and beliefs that underpin vision were enhanced. In this multi-ethnic school setting with fluid and interconnecting contexts, reflection and dialogue create a grounded reality to make and take decisions for improvement.

The National Education Guidelines inform the vision because of statutory links to the school's charter and strategic plans. The NEGs and the NAGs, accommodated in practice, mean that accountability, compliance and improvement requirements are part of daily activity. Implementation of new legislation renews and refines systems, processes and structures to create institutional well-being. Systemic renewal not only ensures adaptability to changing environmental conditions but also realignment of vision in meeting school and stakeholders' needs. School improvement is gauged against external and internal benchmarks

documented in the PATH chart and strategic plans. Attention is placed on building capacity for improvement that best serves the school and its stakeholders.

One of the hallmarks of capacity building is purpose driven action that can be traced to stakeholders' desire to improve outcomes for students. Of interest is the energy it takes to drive and sustain improvement over a prolonged period of time. Sustaining energy flow is acknowledged as hard work given challenges of setting. Data suggest that 'coming back' to the vision maintains direction; a groundswell of support and passion that sustains the 'living with vision' ethos. As Barth (1990), West et al. (2000) and Weller et al. (1994) point out, vision inform the way things are done around here. In this setting, the vision's firm footing in reality fuels the much needed energy to maximise capacity building for improvement according to 'fit'.

It would seem from the discussion that vision meets the aspirations and needs of all stakeholders. It is a force for change. It is also an anchor that sustains equilibrium (at the external / internal interface and in practice). Underpinning these claims is situatedness of vision. The four tenets of student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community promote a unique brand of capacity building. Observed in practice and documented in the PATH chart and successive strategic plans, vision offers a 'blueprint' or map for managing tensions.

6.1.2 Managing Tensions – Minimising Limitations / Maximising Opportunities

An organisation does not exist in a vacuum (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Dantley, 2005; Pristine & Nelson, 2005; Lam & Punch, 2001). Schools are part of complex systems influenced by macro and micro cultural norms. The literature suggests that the current educational climate is driven by Neo-Liberal, market ideologies that promote norms of accountability, compliance and improvement (Boyd, 1998; Codd, 1990; 2005; Hawk & Hill, 1997; Leithwood, 2001). Leithwood (2001) claims this presents practitioners with tensions related to markets, decentralisation, professionalisation and management – government approaches to accountability. Codd (2005) states that overzealous support of managerial ideals and values, together with cultures of performance, produce technical rationality and the pursuit of quality reduced to key performance indicators which are easily measured and recorded. Robinson et al. (2005) add that freedom to manage does not imply reduced accountability to the government; government priorities remain mandatory but with a shift from inputs and procedures to outputs and outcomes. Moreover, results-orientated

accountability is difficult to achieve given board attention to legislative requirements, fiscal responsibilities, health and safety matters and curriculum delivery.

Accountability demands aside, tensions accompany the rhetoric that devolved responsibilities to school boards makes for a more efficient system in meeting school and community needs. For example, Dalin (2005) suggests lay governance in decision-making can compromise professional autonomy; Rae (2005) observes that vital energy of boards, principals and staff are continually diverted away from learning and teaching and capacity building towards fulfilment of managerial task; Timperley et al. (2004) state links between accountability and governance are contentious – board members are expected to, but do not necessarily have adequate knowledge of issues surrounding achievement, target setting and monitoring of progress to hold professionals accountable; and Leithwood (2001) comments that autonomy to govern and manage requires lengthy learning, adjustment, negotiation and cultural change.

Increased demands for accountability and compliance, set within a school improvement paradigm, exert pressure on schools to perform. The Ministry's focus on raising achievement and reducing disparity is embedded in key policy statements and endorsed by reform initiatives (see for example, MOE, 1999a; Alton-Lee, 2003; MOE, 2004). In a critique of such policies, Honig and Hatch (2004) attribute their limiting effects to incoherence which, Rae (2005) concedes, loosely connects to classroom concerns of teaching and students and families. Coburn (2003) claims that reforms fail to recognise complex challenges of reaching out broadly while cultivating depth of change. Levin (2001) notes government levers for implementing policy are unlikely to promote improvement automatically but depend on the extent and manner in which reform initiatives are taken up by those they are designed to serve. To create deep and lasting improvement, Elmore (1995) advocates movement away from 'adding on' structures or programmes; Honig and Hatch (2004) suggest crafting coherence; and Barth (1990) advances the 'improvement from within' message. McCauley and Roddick (2001) suggest that school improvement is not straightforward but complex and should not be conceived as a single programme with a uniform set of short term goals.

Adding to the milieu of tensions affecting stakeholders' ability to build capacity are challenges a multi-cultural, low decile location presents. In today's society, schools are increasingly multicultural (MOE, 2004; Alton Lee, 2003; ERO, 2000) and required to respond to immediate needs of diverse student / community populations. However, as ERO (2000) explains, respective legislative guidelines appear nebulous with schools experiencing difficulty interpreting goals and ascertaining if equity targets are met. Problems associated with multiculturalism extend beyond that of culture (ERO, 2000). Multicultural schools,

generally located in poor socio-economic areas, may experience limited parental involvement and, in some cases, poor governance and management and weak or failed teaching provisions (ERO, 1996; 2006c). Robinson et al. (2005), reporting on governance issues in low decile schools, question the ability of boards to contribute to capacity building for school improvement based on limited understanding of role requirements and ‘good’ governance, lack of first hand experience of tasks and activities over which they are governing and conceptions of ‘good’ governance related to quality of relationships; that is, communicating appreciation and minimising conflict at the expense of mutual accountability, challenge and capacity building.

Research suggests low decile location factors undermine a school’s capacity to improve student learning outcomes. Hawk and Hill (1997), in their AIMHI study, identified selected policies, differing home-school expectations and “low incomes, high unemployment or high over-employment, large families, dysfunctional families, poor housing, overcrowding, poor health, lack of private space and lack of furnishings and household equipment” (p. 4) as generating learning, health, social, economic and welfare needs. Hawk and Hill conclude that low socio-economic factors have implications on schools and their capacity to improve student learning outcomes.

In today’s educational landscape, opportunities for growth and expansion accompany tensions. One positive aspect of the reforms is that schools gain from having a greater say in managing their own affairs (Dalin, 2005). Devolution of authority leads to empowerment and a growing sense of duty to engage in local decision-making. In terms of system-wide improvement, Ministry sponsored initiatives to ‘scale up’ school sector reforms are awarded acclaim. A cluster approach (MOE, 2004) is said to achieve critical mass of new learning in bounded areas (Coburn, 2003). McCauley and Roddick (2001) note that ongoing Ministry support for schools results in certain benefits: creation of learning cultures, access to a variety of support structures, establishment of positive relationships with the Ministry, other schools and the community, access to additional funds and the purchase of consultants and advisors for extra guidance and support.

Participants’ voices reflect aforementioned tensions and opportunities. School stakeholders strive to build capacity by managing tensions; that is, minimising limitations and maximising opportunities to benefit the school and its stakeholders. The uniformly appealing ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’ ideal underpins all activity. Management of tensions means balancing demands of an external environment with collaborative ideals of:

- Building school ‘heart’;

- Establishing a learning community inclusive of parents;
- Encouraging collective stakeholder involvement in student centred learning;
- Building parents' / caregivers' knowledge base for effective partnerships; and
- Acknowledging and celebrating diversity.

In the following discussion, tensions of funding, parents' / caregivers' involvement, accountability and compliance, location factors and multiculturalism / biculturalism are examined within a situated perspective. Highlighted is the way this school minimises limitations and maximises opportunities to build capacity that best reflects context. Although tensions are individually presented, their integrated complexity is not to be discounted. Stakeholders employ multi-faceted strategies to solve complex problems of context.

6.1.2.1 Funding

Funding linked to school improvement contains contradictory messages. Raudenbush (2005) notes increased funding has only marginal impact on the quality of classroom learning and student outcomes. Earl and Lee (1998) claim little direct relationship exists between funding and successful school reform. Other educators and researchers (see Codd, 2005; Hawk & Hill, 1997) maintain that funding shortages impact negatively on school improvement because the funding pro rata formula leads to interschool competitiveness for students. Participants confirm that funding shortfalls limit school improvement. For example, lack of ICT equipment was said to limit implementation of newly acquired skills and strategies in classroom practice. While school stakeholders acknowledge the negative effects of limited funds, alternative pathways – accessing grants and support of local businesses, parents / caregivers and staff in building resources – achieve goals as stated in the PATH chart and strategic plans.

Funding shortfalls have historical antecedents. When the school was experiencing a crisis, negative perceptions and families enrolling their children in neighbouring schools generated a declining roll and subsequent reduction in funding. As part of the improvement drive, energy and time went into creating a safe, attractive, physical environment and marketing this school in positive ways. Attention, devoted to changing this school's perception through improving the physical environment and attention to pedagogy, promoted, over a two year period, a 'moving' school reputation. This school type is described by Hopkins et al. (1994) as demonstrating "a healthy blend of change and stability, and balanced development and maintenance ...as it adapts successfully to an often rapidly changing environment" (p. 91). Although stakeholders' efforts have achieved a remarkable school turnaround, the energy

involved is said to be ‘hugely exhausting’, but, crucial in promoting roll growth and related funds; precursors, if you like, for capacity building.

Despite an improved school image, tensions of a quasi-market, competitive environment continue to be felt. School stakeholders are very much aware that macro cultural norms of school choice and interschool competition can assist or restrict their school’s growth. In response, a readiness for change exists. This means marketing the school vigorously, advancing authentic messages about school practice, raising additional funds through donations and entrepreneurial activities and scanning the environment for patterns and trends that retain this school’s ‘cutting edge of knowledge production and utilisation’ position. This is a situated response to counteracting tensions of limited funds. Balancing demands of the market and upholding vision ideals demonstrates negotiation of position to benefit the school. Public demand for ‘school choice’ means creating this school as a ‘school of choice’ for all students.

Situated ways of working build capacity for school improvement despite acknowledged shortfalls of funding. Buy-in to Ministry of Education contracts, for example, increases individual, collective and systemic knowledge capacities. Establishment of a ‘one day’ gifted and talented school on site provides opportunities for staff and students to tap into a knowledge base that ‘experts’ in the field are able to provide. Adult educational classes for refugee families and after school homework sessions meet the needs of minority groups and community respectively. Additional assistance by bi-lingual tutors bridges the home-school divide for refugee families. Such examples confirm a situated approach that promotes individual, collective and systemic growth.

6.1.2.2 Parents’ / Caregivers’ Involvement

The Ministry of Education advocates parental involvement in schools as advancing student learning (MOE, 1999a; 2004). McCauley and Roddick (2001) Hawk and Hill, (1997) and Robinson et al. (2005) endorse this viewpoint. Although links between parental involvement and student learning are advanced, barriers or limitations are also noted (see for example, Gold et al., 2005; Robinson et al., 2005; Hawk & Hill, 1997). This school’s commitment to building parents’ / caregivers’ educational and personal knowledge is claimed to increase involvement in student learning. Home-school partnership evenings, parent chat sessions and other formal and informal meetings assist in the transference of knowledge, albeit personal and / or educational, to parents / caregivers. Community surveys gauge satisfaction levels with site-based programmes designed to increase knowledge. The resulting evidence base informs future goal setting in line with community needs and aspirations. Building parents’ /

caregivers' knowledge capacities reportedly advances home-school links. The support and empathy that results between parents / caregivers and school personnel fuels a collective passion in supporting capacity building for school improvement.

The New Zealand context assumes and pursues high levels of parental involvement consistent with the devolution of governance and management, to school boards and principals (McCauley & Roddick, 2001). The literature consistently presents this as a source of much tension (see for example, Robinson et al., 2005; Timperley et al., 2004; Leithwood, 2001). In this school, parents / caregivers share in the decision making process at the governance level of practice. As educational leaders, parents / caregivers work with staff to facilitate home-school partnerships. They fund raise and provide volunteer assistance in numerous ways. This is a community of practice where a give and take of information and communal 'hard work' promotes goodwill that builds capacity.

6.1.2.3 Accountability and Compliance

As noted earlier, Dalin (2005), Robinson et al. (2005), Codd (2005), Thrupp (2001), Rae (2005) and Thrupp and Willmott (2003) note that transference of decision making from the state to schools is accompanied by strengthening government accountability over curriculum, assessment of learning and teaching and professional development. Freedom to manage does not imply reduced accountability (Robinson et al., 2005) rather, as Leithwood (2001) claims, it "increases administrators' accountability to the central district or board office for the efficient expenditure of resources" (p. 223). In addition, Leithwood cautions that school leaders may not be well placed to deal with such huge task expectations; success is heavily dependent on individual attributes that may be severely compromised in settings where a lack of knowledge, skills and experience fail to promote professionalism or improvement. The already complex mix is compounded by compliance demands for increased professionalism from policies directed at teachers' and principals' competencies to "stay abreast of best professional practices" (Leithwood, 2001, p. 225).

In this school, calls for accountability, compliance and improvement are addressed as part of 'good' practice reflective of context. Findings confirm the school has robust systems, collective networks of support and shared or distributed roles and responsibilities that manage situational demands from an improvement perspective. Parents / caregivers and staff work collaboratively to achieve self-management and self-governance that ensures accountability, compliance and improvement requirements, met in practice, create this school as a safe place.

In this setting, staff and parents / caregivers take their accountability, compliance and improvement roles and responsibilities seriously. For example, the desire to increase knowledge of site-based operations is displayed by trustees justified as supporting staff and managing governance roles and responsibilities better. Mutual dependence and shared accountability not only addresses Ministry demands, but also advances the vision.

6.1.2.4 Low Decile Socio-economic Factors

This school's decile two ranking places it in a low socio-economic bracket with a unique set of challenges similar to that identified by Hawk and Hill (1997). Staff claim their work is more demanding because of student management difficulties, family aspects, ESOL issues and lack of home support for student learning. Such issues are confronted regularly. They are seen to limit individual, collective and systemic capacities as extra resources – time and energy – are given to maintaining organisational equilibrium and improvement amidst pressures to meet entrenched social and community needs.

In this site, challenges of location are not dismissed lightly but addressed in various ways. The school's vision and resulting practices insist on an inclusive community approach to building capacity for improvement. For example, surveying parents / caregivers to establish need builds an evidence base which deepens staff appreciation of community reality; that is, to confrontations, conflicts and struggle community members face. An operational framework of knowledge input together with an open door policy supports parents' / caregivers' partnership in education. Regular communication ensures information given and received accurately reflects what happens in this school. Opportunities to get parents / caregivers 'on side' increases community goodwill. Practice here affirm Driscoll and Goldring's (2005) claim that parents build schools' social, financial and human capital.

6.1.2.5 Multi-ethnic Issues

This school is a low decile, multicultural, primary school. Staff recognise and respect the different ethnicities that compose its population. Adherence to vision means policies, practices and curriculum delivery systems are adjusted to encompass cultural diversity. Although events such as shared lunches, cultural activities, chat sessions, home-school partnerships, input from bi-lingual tutors and newsletters translated to reach community groups are attempts to bond people together and develop community spirit, successful integration of all groups is still perceived as difficult. Regardless, an inclusive approach to building community continues to be supported, justified as ultimately benefiting students.

In summary, the literature acknowledges that accountability, compliance, improvement and low-socio-economic factors create tensions that impact on stakeholders' intent on building and sustaining capacity for improvement. In this setting, data confirm the existence of tensions but equally their management from positions of minimising limitations and maximising opportunities – a situated response. Selected tensions are presented here by way of illustration. They do not provide full coverage of tensions experienced and corresponding approaches to management. They do, however, paint a picture of contextual responses to tensions that enhance capacity building for school improvement.

6.1.3 Shifting Dimensions of Capacity Building for School Improvement

Capacity building for school improvement is a constantly evolving construct (Potter, Reynolds & Chapman, 2002), dependent on external and internal political, cultural and socio-economic drivers for its conception. Processes inherent in capacity construction are hard to define accurately because of shifting dimensions of context (McCauley & Roddick, 2001), compounded by what Harris and Young (2000) and McCauley and Roddick (2001) claim is poor knowledge about what promotes school effectiveness and improvement.

School stakeholders define capacity building for improvement as a situated activity with corresponding outcomes. For example, at the time the school was reported to be in crisis, outside agencies worked alongside the principal to ensure organisational stability. Capacity building, in this early phase of improvement, necessitated:

- The principal prioritising and enacting systemic solutions in response to need;
- Utilisation of outside 'experts' to improve practice;
- Creation and reflection of an evidence base for inquiry into practice;
- Construction and implementation of school vision;
- Creation of opportunities to engage in professional talk; and
- Openness to new ideas with growing motivation to learn and stay current.

External agency input in capacity building related to:

- Input of content knowledge and pedagogical skills;
- Initiation of reflective practice through professional dialogue;
- Collective sharing of information and generation of a 'working' team ethos; and
- Establishment of consistency of practice through:
 - Focused attention on vision;
 - Systemic modification and adaptation to situational need; and
 - Development of infrastructures to support the work of staff.

Capacity building outcomes related to achieving organisational stability through: buy-in to a common sense of direction, development of a positive, working school culture and creation of a safe learning environment. Outside agency representatives were change agents as site-based knowledge, expertise and skills were lacking. As signalled previously, capacity building for school improvement reflects action at a particular time and in response to unique political, cultural and socio-economic drivers. With continued drive for school improvement from the principal and newly appointed deputy principal, an internal capacity for self-governance and self-management strengthened. This was largely due to senior managers' knowledge, skills, expertise, collaborative strategies and networks of support in advancing the work previously accomplished by outside agencies. A working culture, opportunities for professional development and staff enthusiasm for change altered school conditions. Capacity building measures expanded to include:

- Building teacher confidence to take risks;
- Pushing the boundaries of practice through engagement in new learning;
- Raised teaching and learning expectations;
- Participation in collective pursuit of capacity building;
- Increased responsiveness to demands for change (external and internal);
- Development of a collaborative, working and learning environment inclusive of parents / caregivers;
- Ongoing systemic support in response to altered school / stakeholder need; and
- Sustainment of a positive school image.

Data indicate that no single definition captures the essence of capacity building for school improvement over time. A lack of uniformity is ascribed to uniqueness of individual perception, time, situational constraints / opportunities and multiplicity of tasks requiring attention. Capacity building is the result of situated activity; a response to site-based demands for change that involves:

- Construction of a grounded, shared, evolving vision;
- Vision informed practice; and
- Management of tensions – minimising limitations and maximising opportunities to benefit the school and its stakeholders.

6.1.4 Summary

Capacity building for school improvement is a situated activity with vision at its core. Vision accounts for a set of attributes and practices that are considered to be key elements of capacity

building. Attributes and practices have attached political, cultural and socio-economic drivers that depict how things are done around here. Processes involved are far from neutral. Values that underpin vision invoke debate on what is morally right and important to stakeholders. Value debates establish group norms or ways of working that reinforce the 'situatedness' of practice.

As a situated activity, capacity building has an incremental quality. This suggests ongoing attention to actions that continue to protect and advance the interest of this school and its stakeholders. Stakeholder actions and practices that are repeated, shared, have a history and evolve in response to external and internal change demands are seen to manage tensions. Management of tensions, which incorporates minimising limitations and maximising opportunities, builds capacity for improvement.

6.2 Connectedness

Connectedness is the development of meaningful relationships in pursuit of activities that 'promote student learning'. Connectedness is a multi-dimensional concept that emerges when all stakeholders (Ministry of Education, outside agencies, businesses, parents / caregivers, staff and students) support the school's vision. Internal connectedness is achieved through practices of knowledge production and utilisation that generate learning; a 'switching on' mentality that reinforces norms of how things are around here; and division of labour, shared roles and responsibilities that advances team work – collaboration in getting things done. Data reveal an inevitable connection to *The National Education Guidelines* because of statutory links that connect the school's vision to guidelines contained in the NEGs and the NAGs. School documents, systems, processes and structures promote external / internal links that have beneficial flow-on effects in building capacity.

6.2.1 Connectedness at the External / Internal Interface

Connectedness at the external / internal interface occurs on several levels with benefits to the school and its stakeholders. First, addressing mandated requirements means the school meets health and safety standards (ERO, 2005). In addition, implementation of new legislation sustains a 'safe place' ethos that participants note is conducive to learning. Second, the Ministry of Education, outside agencies, tertiary institutions, schools and other community groups serve as catalysts for change through provision of new information. Opportunities to participate in Ministry contracts and buy-in of outside agency support for curriculum and pedagogical development is reported as advancing individual, collective and systemic 'working' knowledge capacities. Similar claims are made of association with professional

networks. Participants claim outside knowledge raises standards of expectations, motivates learning and precipitates new, more effective ways of doing things. The value of outside connections in improving teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills is acknowledged by various authors (see for example, Symes et al., 2001; Phillips et al., 2001; Timperley & Robinson, 2000). Third, connectedness with the Ministry, outside agencies and community groups bolsters the school's 'working' resource base. For example: Ministry facilitators and outside agency representatives were observed assisting staff to develop systems, processes and structures to suit altered work arrangements; additional funds from the Ministry meant continuation of support structures such as the bi-lingual tutors' initiative; and parents' / caregivers' 'hands-on' involvement in school life was seen to reduce work load.

In this site, internal / external connectedness achieves 'crafted coherence' (see Honig and Hatch, 2004) where, "ongoing investments in the institutional capacity of schools and district central offices to engage in practices...help schools manage multiple external demands productively" (p. 27). Crafting coherence is a connected, situated activity as the school seeks assistance and exercises control over its improvement trajectory. School stakeholders negotiate scope of support needed to achieve goals. In other words, connectedness and situatedness promotes meaningful relationships in activities that 'promote student learning'. The discussion that follows explains site-based development of meaningful relationships with 'others' in pursuit of 'promoting student learning' through practices of knowledge production and utilisation, a switching on mentality and division of labour: roles and responsibilities.

6.2.2 Connectedness: Knowledge Production and Utilisation

Literature suggests professional development raises teacher professionalism (MOE, 1999a; 2000) and initiates school improvement (see for example, Day & Sachs, 2004; Alton-Lee, 2003; Elmore, 2002; Fullan & Mascal, 2000; Barth, 1990). Findings from this study confirm the above. In addition, findings suggest that learning is a result of collaboration and initiation of collaborative forms of professional development that encourage teachers to work and talk to one another on issues of improving practice. Collaborative professional development is linked with social processing of knowledge to enhance learning (see for example, Duncombe & Armour; 2004; Annan et al., 2003; Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002; Barth, 1990). In this school, professional development strategies that incite social processing of knowledge include: collaborative interchange, reflection on practice, openness to new ideas and ways of managing professional development that ensure relevancy, flexibility and scaffolded learning. Strategies ensure teacher learning connects to student learning and effective practice. The result is systemic coherence, consistency of practice and development of a professional learning community. In this school, professional development focuses attention on tangible

outcomes as stated in reviews and strategic plans; facilitates learning that meets individual, collective and systemic need; and promotes social processing of knowledge – learning within a social constructivist framework²⁴².

The professional development package creates a situated, layered approach to learning with connections at the individual, collective and school level of practice. Attention relates to ensuring the individual, collective and system connects to preferred ways of working; that is, in teams with shared responsibility for task achievement. For this to happen, new ideas are introduced at a collective staff level and developed in teams and amongst individuals to create meaning and purpose. The learning that eventuates is specific to context. Situated, layered learning, a product of shared responsibility in task completion, creates connectedness. For example, collective construction of unit plans encourages conversations on teaching and learning among group members. Knowledge generation and the learning that results enhances systemic coherence, consistency of practice and a learning enriched environment which, Rosenholtz (1989) claims, creates excitement and motivation for learning as daily activity.

A situated, layered approach to learning facilitates connectedness because:

- New knowledge, added to an existing tacit knowledge base, increases individual, collective and systemic depth of content and pedagogical knowledge / understanding;
- Monitoring of practice (systemic and individual) ensures learning has the potential to reach the classroom level of practice to benefit students;
- Scaffolded learning opportunities create opportunities for feedback which reportedly improves practice (see Knight, 2003); and
- The approach to learning is community based. This ensures parents / caregivers are part of the holistic drive to improve delivery of the curriculum.

An attitude of ‘openness to new ideas’ prevails in this setting. ‘Openness to new ideas’ reflects a mentality that endorses connection with outside sources of knowledge. Ministry of Education contracts are valued for their potential to expand individual, collective and systemic knowledge in specified curriculum areas. The same can be said of one-day workshops and conference attendance. Although one-day workshops are critiqued for promoting a narrow perception of change (Boyle, Lamprianou & Boyle, 2005), decontextualised (Duncombe & Armour, 2004) and passive learning (Fullan & Mascal, 2000), staff who attend one-day workshops or conferences return with knowledge to share. Through reflective practice and dialogue, they assist others to take risks and experiment with

²⁴² Refer to section 2.2.4.1 for principles underpinning learning in a social constructivist frame as suggested by Wink and Putney (2002).

new strategies. Outside information, transformed to site-based knowledge, places this school and its stakeholders at the cutting edge of new knowledge development. Continuously enforced is the concept of connectedness to outside sources of information and group ways of working that expand individual, collective and systemic knowledge bases.

Learning in this site is situated and connected; that is, individualised learning frameworks are constructed based on authenticated need. Situatedness and connectedness means:

- Everyone is considered a learner, a leader, a catalyst for change and a change agent;
- Opportunities for professional development promote lifelong learning mindsets;
- Mutual respect and trust facilitate the raising of doubt and the asking of 'hard questions' to alter habits and beliefs concerning teaching and learning;
- Collective dialogue and reflection generates knowledge at individual, collective and systemic levels of practice; and
- Attention is always on 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'.

6.2.3 Connectedness: A 'Switching on' Mentality

Deal and Kennedy (1982; 1983) define culture as 'the way we do things around here'. Beare, Caldwell and Millikan (1989) refer to culture as verbal, behavioural and visual manifestations enacted in practice. Schein (1985) defines the concept as, "basic assumptions and beliefs that are shared by members of an organisation, that operate unconsciously, and that define in a basic 'taken-for-granted' fashion an organisation's view of itself and its environment" (p. 6). Embedded in these comments is the importance of symbolic, practical, linguistic and interpersonal relationships of a setting that create connectedness.

In this school, cultural hallmarks that emerge from actions, behaviours and expectations of stakeholders, identify how things are around here. They denote aspects of school life that are important. Cultural hallmarks, espoused and enacted, relate to a learning culture, an inclusive culture, collaboration, commitment, community and a safe place. Cultural hallmarks create a school identity that connects and binds people together.

All stakeholders in this school connect with and value learning. Valuing learning means engineering time and place for collective dialogue or learning talk to occur. Such comments are frequently expressed in support: "*we want children to come in and be switched on to learning, have a desire to learn*" (ISF2) and "*developing learners for the future is important*" (ISF6). Valuing learning and stakeholder' involvement in the learning process generates a professional learning community, as confirmed by ERO (2005). A professional learning

community promotes and sustains the learning of all stakeholders. The importance of a professional learning community is stressed as facilitating school improvement. These aspects are endorsed by the literature (see for example, Bolman et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006).

In this school, respect for biculturalism and multiculturalism is evident in the verbal, behavioural and visual manifestations of culture. Combined, this generates an inclusive 'family' ethos. 'Family' denotes celebration of cultural diversity as "unique systems of perceiving and organising the world" (Helu-Thaman, 1998, p. 120). Values of tolerance, fairness, caring or compassion, non-sexism and non-racism underpin the 'family' ethos. In practice this means school systems, processes and structures are geared towards achieving equitable outcomes for all students. Acceptance and celebration of diversity and displays of cultural sensitivity are interwoven into practice. The family ethos draws different stakeholder groups together in supporting this school.

The value of collaborative cultures in facilitating school improvement is endorsed by many authors (see for example, Hargreaves, 1994; Hopkins et al., 1994; Nias et al., 1989). In this school, a culture of collaboration fosters team work and community spirit. The principal, senior managers, teaching and non-teaching staff and parents / caregivers are described as team players. Their participatory actions endorse togetherness in goal achievement. School systems, processes and structures support collaboration (for example, in creating opportunities for collective dialogue and participatory decision-making). In the spirit of collaboration, connectedness is achieved. Collaboration in task completion endorses mutual dependence and professional interdependencies. The culture of collaboration experienced in this setting is, as Hargreaves (1991, cited in Hopkins et al. 1994) describes: spontaneous, voluntary, development oriented, pervasive across time and space and unpredictable. Most importantly, it achieves connectedness among stakeholders in building capacity for school improvement.

In this school, individuals espouse and enact commitment to the collective. Commitment builds trust in people to act professionally as individuals and within a collective. Group ways of working account for distributed practice (Gronn, 2002), mutual trust (Codd, 2005), empowerment and networks of support (Muijs & Harris, 2003). These hallmarks create a safe environment where meaningful relationships promote student learning.

Participants' responses and observations of practice negate the presence of subcultures that denote fragmented individualism, contrived collegiality and balkanisation (Hargreaves, 1994). In this site, expression of voice and opinion is encouraged. Here, thinking through

issues as a collective promotes joint 'ways of doing things'. Stakeholders are encouraged to grow through expression of voice. The culture of this school fits Hargreaves' (1995) moving school description. Here, optimal social cohesion and control and high expectations with in-built layers of support create a 'switching on' mentality.

6.2.4 Connectedness: Division of Labour: Shared Roles / Responsibilities

In this school, connectedness occurs through working in teams. For example, educational leadership is not just the prerogative of those in positions of authority but shared amongst others. Educational leadership denotes aspects of distributed practice (see for example, Gronn, 2002; Harris, 2004), teacher leadership (York-Barr & Duke, 2004) and parallel leadership (Andrews & Crowther, 2002). The general feeling is that team work achieves more. As captured in the mission statement: '*I can do it you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*', team work is an enacted group norm exercised at all levels of practice.

At the governance level of practice, board and staff enter into accountability partnerships. Current research by Timperley et al. (2004) and Robinson et al. (2005) indicate that lack of knowledge and understanding of school issues limits board involvement and contribution towards capacity building. In this site, board capacity for effective governance is enhanced through team work. Board members engage in information sharing, collective dialogue and participatory decision-making. This builds mutual trust, respect and connectedness to the school and each other. With respect to capacity building, team work at the board level enhances:

- Collaboration in meeting accountability, compliance and improvement demands;
- Opportunities for individual / collective representation;
- Development of an eclectic knowledge base for decision-making;
- Team spirit;
- Collective dialogue and participatory decision-making;
- A valuing of interdependence amongst members;
- Promotion of trust and learning;
- Systemic coherence and consistency of practice; and
- As Nias et al. (1989) note, relationships that "are tough and flexible enough to withstand shocks and uncertainties from within and without" (p. 74).

Shared task accomplishment epitomises teamness among staff in advancing effective school functioning. Distributed practice is evident throughout the school. For example, teacher leadership ensures the improvement agenda is grounded. Involvement in decision-making

increases self-efficacy and high levels of morale (see York-Barr and Duke, 2004). All staff are strategic thinkers. Their roles and responsibilities are crucial in sustaining capacity for improvement.

Parents / caregivers involvement in, for example, Friends of the School, Whanau and Samoan groups, contribute to connectedness in practical ways. Parents / caregivers:

- Raise funds;
- Engender community involvement in education and school life through home-school partnerships;
- Provide educational leadership in cultural group activities;
- Advance the profile of the school through community networks; and
- Assist staff in daily activity.

Stakeholders' roles and responsibilities are enmeshed. A working together attitude serves the individual, collective and school well. Meaningful relationships in supporting student learning flourish in an atmosphere where individual contributions are valued just as much as interdependencies that exist in teams.

6.2.5 Summary

Connectedness is a multi-dimensional construct. It concerns the development of meaningful relationships in pursuit of activities that 'promote student learning'. Connectedness to *The National Education Guidelines* is inevitable. Mandated guidelines, addressed in practice, promote this school as a safe place for learning. A systemic approach ensures connectedness at the external / internal interface and in practice. Internal connectedness is achieved through practices of knowledge production and utilisation, a 'switching on' mentality and division of labour into shared roles and responsibilities. Connectedness is directly linked to situatedness. It is an essential component of capacity building for school improvement.

6.3 Governance, Leadership and Management

Capacity building for school improvement requires effective governance, leadership and management. Governance, leadership and management inevitably means meeting accountability, compliance and improvement demands as stipulated in *The National Education Guidelines*. Observations and participants' responses indicate stakeholders are aware of their roles and responsibilities aligned to the NEGs and the NAGs and to each other. They manage calls for accountability, compliance and improvement as individuals and within

a collective to maintain organisational equilibrium and advance improvement. Stakeholders work as change agents to build capacity for improvement. As change agents they exercise:

- Visionary leadership;
- Educational leadership;
- Network building; and
- Systemic development;

6.3.1 Visionary Leadership

Stakeholders are guardians of the vision. As vision guardians, they perpetuate its construction. Their input keeps the vision alive and grounded in reality. Vision renewal is not imposed but created from practice; not isolated but part of everyday life; and planned in terms of initiating growth and development. The '*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*' statement enhances collective buy-in to vision. Stakeholders are forever mindful of avoiding the 'blunting of vision' (Barth, 1990) effect with respect to tensions of context.

In this school, 'blunting of vision' is minimised by working towards vision in thoughtful, planned and collective ways. Stakeholders ensure that vision ideals permeate through all levels of practice to promote student learning. Vision is embedded in this school's culture and its implementation monitored and reinforced through governance, management and leadership activities. Collective construction of vision raises communal consciousness to its implementation. Stakeholders' espousal and enactment of values and beliefs create cultural hallmarks that assist in vision implementation. Internalisation and continued enactment of cultural hallmarks make stakeholders, in governance, leadership and management capacities, agents of change – recreating what they believe to be moral and ethical practice.

6.3.2 Educational Leadership

As signalled and discussed previously, all stakeholders provide educational leadership. The board endorses professional development through allocation of funds in accordance with stated goals contained in the PATH chart and strategic plans. Staff drive the professional development agenda. Their engagement in individual and systemic reviews creates base line data from which to construct learning trajectories – individual, collective and systemic. Staff engagement in monitoring of professional development increases their professionalism.

In this school, educational leadership draws on skills and abilities of all stakeholders. To quote from Fitzgerald and Gunter's (2006) study, "The leadership of learning is not necessarily undertaken solely by those with formal responsibility that is denoted by a title or

label” (p. 53). The culture that emerges in this school is best described as a professional learning community. A community of educational leaders and learners enhances capacity for school improvement.

6.3.3 Network Builders

In this school, many forms of formal / informal and internal / external networks exist to support community life. Participants claim that a flat management structure promotes networking and team work. Observations of practice suggest that team arrangements serve as powerful structures to push for capacity building. Networking and team work in governance, leadership and management capacities offers:

- Access to information from which to engage in knowledge creation;
- Access to systemic and collegial support;
- Engagement in processes of participatory decision-making;
- Opportunities to consult and negotiate future plans as a collective;
- Engagement in value debates;
- Ability to meet accountability, compliance and improvement demands in effective, collective ways;
- Opportunities to attach meaning and purpose to work;
- Opportunities to solve problems and deal with conflict in creative ways; and
- Opportunities to build and sustain coherency in accordance with purpose – ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’.

6.3.4 System Developers

All stakeholders with governance, leadership and management roles and responsibilities are system developers. Systemic development is achieved through participatory, distributed practice. This is a school where school structures are ‘regularised’ to promote sharing of practice (Gronn, 2002). The overall school structure promotes teamness as preferred ways of working but not at the expense of professional autonomy. Work here is, as Sayles (1964) describes it, “coordinated and undertaken interdependently” (p. 115). Individuals contribute to a collective knowledge base that is of pragmatic use in systemic development. A systemic approach values both individual and collective contribution to school capacity building for improvement.

Systemic development requires leadership qualities of governors, leaders and managers which are transformational (see for example, Northouse, 2004) and post-transformational (see for example, West et al., 2000; Fullan, 2000; Day, 2000; Sergiovanni, 2006). In addition,

distributed leadership practices, as defined by Gronn (2002), and management practices, as purported by Dalin (2005) and Hallinger & Snidvongs (2005), are required. The demand for inclusive approaches to governance, leadership and management (see for example, Furman & Shields, 2005; Shields & Sayani, 2005; Lindsey, Roberts & Cambell Jones, 2005) coupled with calls to develop a professional learning community (see for example, Barth, 1990; Bolman et al., 2005; Stoll et al., 2006) are also frequently raised. Observation of practice suggests that a systemic approach receives the attention of stakeholders in performing the multitude of tasks expected of them. School systems, processes and structures ensure decisions made collectively serve the best interest of the school and its stakeholders. A systemic approach offers best 'fit' with conditions of context (external and internal). Systemic development draws on all stakeholders' support in sustaining school improvement. Collective input assists in the management of tensions and in the building of capacity for school improvement.

6.3.5 Summary

Stakeholders intent on building capacity for school improvement face tensions of context. Of importance are managing tensions and constraints in ways that support the vision and promote student learning. Stakeholders' actions and patterns of behaviour, in advancing capacity building, can be traced to visionary leadership, educational leadership, network building and systemic development. In a site that promotes flat management, governance, leadership and management draws on all stakeholders' abilities and skills in building capacity for school improvement.

6.4 Capacity Outcomes

Outcomes are inherent in all capacity building activities. Outcomes are traceable to the vision statement – 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning' and invariably, to the NEGs and the NAGs. Participants' comments indicate that being 'the best' is multi-dimensional. For example, it draws on:

- Working towards vision and support of the four tenets;
- Provision of a balanced curriculum that address the diverse needs of students;
- Development of a professional learning culture inclusive of all stakeholders;
- Creating practices in support of biculturalism and multiculturalism;
- Competing favourably with other schools in promoting roll growth;
- Effective management of tensions;
- Promotion of this school as 'school of choice';
- Productive partnerships between staff and parents / caregivers;

- Connectedness among all parties in doing what is best for the school; and
- Systemic coherence and consistency of practice.

Data indicate that capacity building has both process and product outcomes related to specific practices of knowledge production and utilisation, switching on mentality and division of labour into shared roles and responsibilities. Commonly associated outcomes for all practices include:

- Focused attention on promoting student learning;
- Reinforcement of the tenets in support of the vision ideal;
- Doing the ordinary things better;
- Maintaining a sense of equilibrium coupled with that of improvement;
- Building on past endeavours to meet current and future needs; and
- Promoting this school as a safe place.

Outcomes are a necessary part of organisational existence for both legislative and internal reasons. However, Busher's (2006) comments on the multifaceted nature of outcomes indicate that only some are relatively easy to measure. Furthermore, although governments place importance on academic attainment of students, "it is the other outcomes – people's personal, social, physical, aesthetic and moral developments – that are more important and of greater consequence in shaping ... adult lives" (p. 2). The point Busher makes is valid when making judgement calls on what builds capacity for improvement.

Findings from this study indicate that this school has robust systems, processes and structures that monitor, collate, analyse and utilise data in improving practice. Outcomes related to student progress are measured and reported in accordance with mandatory requirements. Results depict the school as complying with the NEGs and the NAGs and the Ministry's broad aims of raising achievement and reducing disparity. This school does, however, have outcomes that are more holistic in nature, as noted in the PATH chart and successive strategic plans. The concern, therefore, is how to measure the effect of vision, culture and professional development to promote school improvement and, specifically, to advance student learning.

This school's philosophy of 'promoting student learning' means that all aspects of organisational life are scrutinised in attempt to improve practice. To authenticate effectiveness of vision, school culture and professional development on improving practice that is more than just an account of 'feel', attention is paid to staff accounts of their personal and professional growth reflective of context. It is in the telling of stories and collaborative

interchanges or dialogue that change of practice gets acknowledged. As sustainability of improvement is important, judgements calls, that record altered habits and beliefs and movement to more effective ways of doing things, are gained through talking to people and:

- Observation of practice (senior management and peers);
- Individual appraisals;
- Self-monitoring of practice; and
- Systemic reviews that generate a collective data base.

6.4.1 Summary

In this school, outcomes matter in building capacity for school improvement. Stakeholders express the need to see change and have that change recorded. Outcomes are collectively decided and recorded in school documents such as strategic plans. Systems of monitoring, recording and reporting on outcomes promote a sense of rigour to the claim that this school does indeed 'strive to be the best in promoting student learning'. Outcomes related to measuring student data (so called hard data) generally fall into more measurable categories than those attached to change of culture, implementation of vision and teacher professional growth and development (so called soft data). Measurement of both data types is undertaken to determine overall school improvement. In all forms of measurement, attention is given to utilising evidential data to record:

- Starting points for change;
- Outcomes in response;
- Steps taken to achieve outcomes;
- Monitoring and evaluation of the journey towards improvement; and
- Future planning in response to need.

6.5 Conclusion: A Substantive Theory – Theoretical Model of Capacity Building for School Improvement

Capacity building for school improvement is a difficult concept to define. Hopkins et al. (1998) define it as enabling conditions that allow process to affect product. Enabling conditions refer to staff development, enquiry and reflection on progress, involvement of students in the teaching and learning process, distributed leadership, collaborative planning and coordinated school-wide activity that establishes coherence. Fullan (2005) suggests the construct relates to development of collective ability to act together to bring about change. Stoll et al. (2006) link the construct to sustainable school improvement best achieved in professional learning communities. Stoll et al. (2006) define capacity building as a "complex blend of motivation, skill, positive learning, organisational conditions and culture, and

infrastructure of support...(that) gives individuals, groups, whole school communities and school systems the power to get involved in and sustain learning over time” (p. 221).

These definitions do not fully position or capture the complexity of the construct in context. Context in itself is a multi-dimensional concept that requires deconstruction. Schools are embedded in external and internal contexts within which capacity building for school improvement eventuates. Both external and internal contexts exert influence on how the construct is conceived. Values, beliefs and norms of an external context, coupled with those of an internal context, influence a particular brand of capacity building with specific improvement outcomes. Capacity building, therefore, can be considered an act of making informed choices and being able to justify the choices made. Making choices in a landscape filled with competing values and beliefs create tensions for stakeholders’ intent on building capacity for school improvement.

New Zealand schools operate within external and internal contexts influenced by society and a national education system, in particular. Macro cultural norms of accountability, compliance and improvement and socio-economic location factors are influences and shape what happens in schools. They determine what is of value. Macro and micro values provide a framework within which vision construction occurs. This school’s vision is an act of deliberate choice. The school’s vision is encapsulated in a powerful message – ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’. The vision ideal is supported by four tenets: student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. The particular way the school defines and works towards making vision a reality creates a distinctive brand of capacity building for school improvement.

A substantive theory of capacity building for improvement places vision as the core category. Vision is considered an attribute along with stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. All four attributes determine the nature of practice. An examination of data reveals three key practices as important. These include knowledge production and utilisation, division of labour: roles and responsibilities and a ‘switching on mentality’. Detailed examination of attributes and practices reveal four themes that underscore capacity building for school improvement. These are: situated activity; connectedness; governance leadership and management; and outcomes.

Capacity building for school improvement is a situated activity, embedded in context. It also requires connectedness explained as meaningful relationships in support of activities that ‘promote student learning’. Stakeholders’ governance, leadership and management attributes,

skills, roles and responsibilities set the parameters for practice. All three are essential in ensuring the construct is well conceived and inclusive of all stakeholders. Outcomes reflect the situatedness of context and feedback into practice promotes ongoing cycles of capacity building for school improvement.

In short, the process of building capacity is complex. In this school, all four themes form the basis of a substantive theory – theoretical model of capacity building for school improvement. Combined they underscore how stakeholders of this school build capacity for improvement. Figure 8 (p. 248) captures the complexity of the construct and interconnection among all components to explain capacity building for school improvement.

CAPACITY BUILDING FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: THEMES

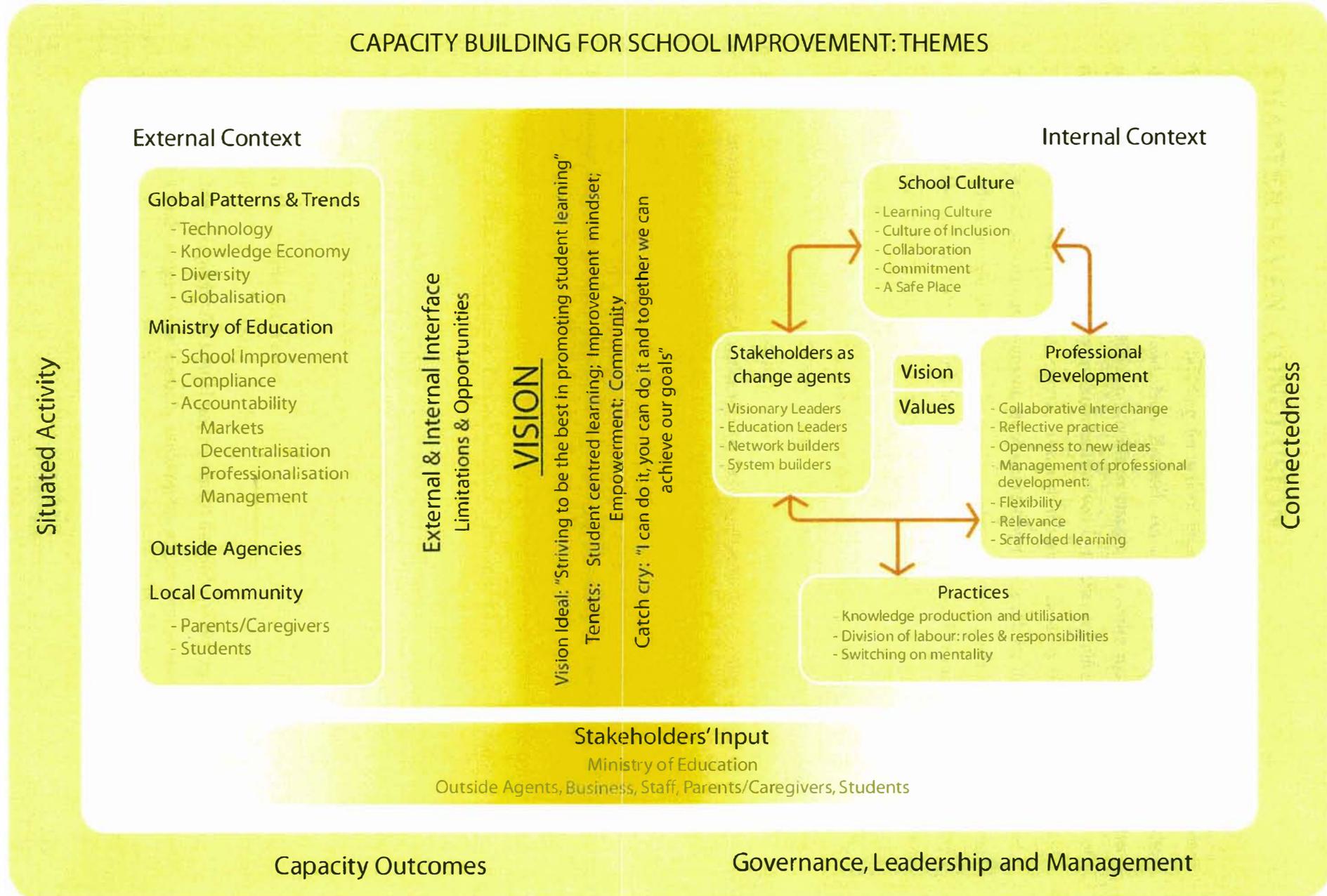


Figure 8 Capacity Building: Themes.

CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUSION

7 Introduction

This research examined capacity building for school improvement in one multi-cultural, low decile, primary school in Auckland, New Zealand. An interest in the topic arose from the researcher's professional background in schools as teacher and senior manager as well as her experience as a lecturer in tertiary institutions involved in teacher training and in the Master of Educational Administration degree course. Although the topic 'capacity building' is mentioned synonymously with school improvement, empirical research that explores the construct is limited. Increasingly, educators are identifying the need to understand more about capacity building and its links to improving schools. This research is timely in that it sought an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon from the perspective of those who live it. The research was guided by the following questions:

- How is capacity for school improvement defined – what are its features?
- How do internal school factors – vision, stakeholder activity, culture and professional development – evolve capacity?
- In what ways do external wider societal factors influence the development of capacity?
- What links exist between capacity building and improvement as evidenced in this school setting?

The research questions were concerned with gaining participants' perceptions of capacity building for school improvement. A substantive theory or theoretical model of the phenomenon was constructed utilising an interpretivist case study approach and data gathered from interviews, observations and document analysis. Grounded theory methods were used for data analysis.

Chapter Seven concludes this thesis by addressing again the research questions. Limitations and strengths of the theory and the research are discussed as are implications drawn from the findings and suggestions for future research.

7.1 Research Questions Answered

Question 1: How is capacity for school improvement defined – what are its features?

Data from this study suggests that capacity building for school improvement is time and context dependent. Its conceptualisation is unique to setting. Capacity building for school improvement is

a response to meeting individual, collective and systemic needs in ways that sustain equilibrium while moving in the direction of improvement. Attributes inherent in its construction are vision, stakeholders as change agents, school culture and professional development. The main practices are: knowledge production and utilisation; switching-on mentality; and division of labour: roles and responsibilities. From attributes and practices emerge four themes: situated activity; connectedness; leadership, governance and management; and outcomes. Attributes, practices and themes explain capacity building for school improvement in one setting. In the words of an outside agency representative interviewed, capacity building for school improvement “*is the ability to recognise that there is a situation and then to access the resources to meet the needs that that situation has exposed*” (IOAI). The capacity of an organisation, to manage tensions and address need, ensures individual, collective and systemic equilibrium while moving in the direction of improvement.

Question 2: How do internal school factors – vision, stakeholder activity, culture and professional development – evolve capacity?

The importance of vision in the crafting of capacity cannot be over emphasised. Vision is at the core of all practice. The school’s vision creates a bond among stakeholders to achieve the ideal, ‘striving to be the best in promoting student learning’. The four support tenets – student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community – lend structure to the work of stakeholders. The empowering catch cry “*I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals*” fuels the passion to reduce the vision / reality gap. The school’s vision is not only articulated but also documented. This has the desired effect of making it a blueprint or map that guides practice. School stakeholders’ involvement in processes of vision construction, transmission and evolution keeps the vision alive. The school’s vision, underpinned by micro and macro value sets, serves as a bridge connecting external and internal contexts. Bridge building works in the best interests of the school and its stakeholders. As data from this study suggests, school stakeholders in governance, leadership and management roles design goals and action steps to meet and address goals in ways that build individual, collective and systemic capacities. This school’s vision and stakeholders’ actions enhance situated and connected practice that builds capacity for improvement.

Capacity building for school improvement is concerned with change and management of change. All change disestablishes equilibrium and increases uncertainty as new ways of doing things are required. Here the concept of school stakeholders as change agents becomes important. Data from

this study suggest that this school's ability to build capacity through change management is achieved through all school stakeholders working as change agents. The stance promoted is best explained as appreciating what someone else has to offer and working in ways that meet individual, collective and systemic need.

Stakeholders are not prepared to adopt a reactive stance to external / internal challenges of change. Their actions and mindset suggest they scan the environment for signs of change and consider ways to make systemic adjustment and modifications in line with vision. Responses are not knee-jerk reactions but strategically implemented through systems, structures and processes, allowing time for communication which brings 'others' on board. In all forms of systemic development, challenges at the internal / external interface receive considerable attention. Meeting challenges and addressing need, in lieu of what works for the best interest of this school and its stakeholders, builds capacity for school improvement.

The culture of this school is friendly, supportive, collaborative, learning orientated and professional. Equal attention is given to social cohesion and work place requirements. Both aspects of school life enhance collaboration and professionalism. They create an environment conducive to building capacity for improvement.

Culture has a major impact on people and school related activities. In this school, there is acknowledgement of diversity and a willingness to incorporate all school stakeholders in creating an inclusive, professional learning community. Here, being part of a 'family' means the school is considered supportive, inclusive and empowering of its school stakeholders. Cultural hallmarks reduce anxiety often associated with change. The potential for conflict and misunderstanding is minimised because of the stance taken in collectively maximising curriculum delivery, building relationships and encouraging home-school partnerships. Working towards greater parent / caregiver involvement in school life is an attempt to counteract some of the barriers ethnic minority groups face. This school's culture is influenced by macro and micro cultural norms, school practices, history and people associated with it. A blending of all creates a fertile ground within which to construct and enact processes that build capacity for school improvement.

Crafting capacity for school improvement not only requires a platform to enact performance, but also professional development to achieve change. Collaborative professional development and situated, layered opportunities for learning increase systemic knowledge and stakeholders'

capacities to meet challenges of change. The value given to learning transforms this school into a professional learning community where all stakeholders are learners and leaders in learning.

Question 3: In what ways do external wider societal factors influence the development of capacity?

The current educational landscape is riddled with accountability, compliance and improvement demands. Meeting such demands is left to schools, although external reviews performed by ERO make judgement calls on school performance according to statutory regulations. Reporting on accountability, compliance and improvement demands is still the school's responsibility. Stakeholders of this school manage accountability, compliance and improvement demands from the dual perspectives of doing what is right for the school and its stakeholders and fitting in with statutory requirements. This promotes a safe school ethos that participants claim is crucial in promoting learning.

This research has shown that stakeholders encounter external / internal interface tensions in building capacity for school improvement. The research also suggests that stakeholders manage tensions by minimising limitations and maximising opportunities. They negotiate positions where demands of context are met in line with vision. Management of tensions sustains equilibrium and an improvement trajectory. Capacity building can be considered a crafted activity in response to the ambiguities, tensions and compromises macro and micro contexts present.

Perceived attitudes by the community to schools can affect their ability to perform. Indeed, negative perception can damage a school. The converse is also true. It is the ability of the school to market and project itself in the best way it can that creates a positive profile. Findings from this study confirm that stakeholders put effort and time in creating a positive school image where student centred learning is placed at the hub of all activity. Increasing connectedness through home-school partnerships, for example, helps develop a positive image. In addition, building connectedness through networks with Ministry of Education and groups outside the school is advantageous in 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning'.

Question 4: What links exist between capacity building and improvement as evidenced in this school setting?

Links between capacity building and school improvement are multi-dimensional with a focus invariably on student learning. The rationale for capacity building for school improvement

appears to be the 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning' ideal supported by the four tenets of student centred learning, improvement mindset, empowerment and community. Outcomes in line with each are reflected in the PATH chart and successive strategic documents. Effective governance, leadership and management ensure outcomes and pathways for their achievement are monitored, assessed and evaluated. Once achieved, new outcomes are planned and implemented to ensure the occurrence of ongoing cycles of capacity building for school improvement.

Building community and valuing the cultures represented in the school is another outcome of capacity building for school improvement. Support programmes, policy adjustments, auxiliary staff appointment in support of refugee families, and inclusion of families in learning programmes – home-school evenings and parent chat sessions – are mechanisms that ensure parents / caregivers and respective cultures are valued and supported. The expectation is that this school, given its low decile multi-cultural location, assists in building collective knowledge capacity to address need.

The challenges of a low decile location are complex and multi-faceted. For example, those associated with location and interschool competition affect the way this school is perceived by its community. Data suggests that hesitancy among the community to become involved can negatively affect roll growth. An outcome of capacity building for school improvement is, realistically, to develop a positive school image and increase roll growth. School personnel, board of trustees and parents' / caregivers' efforts have created a more positive school image and increased roll growth through self-governance and self-management systems, processes and structures. Capacity building linked to school improvement is also portrayed as overcoming tensions and challenges of location to uplift school image and incite roll growth.

7.2 Limitations of the Substantive Theory / Research

There are limitations to the substantive theory – theoretical model – and its conceptualisation. As noted in the chapter on methodology, a substantive theory is grounded in research in one particular area and might be taken to apply to that specific area. At a low level of conceptualisation, such a theory cannot be considered to have wide application to numerous settings. It may, however, be a springboard with implications and relevance to the development of a grounded formal theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The substantive theory, constructed from the data, is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm. The theoretical model is considered a

product of participants' perceptions in context. Furthermore, its conceptualisation reflects action two years after school improvement was first initiated. The context and time period for data collection have implications in terms of limitations. For example, resistance that usually accompanies change was not directly witnessed at the time of data collection. This aspect of change management was not as pronounced as it may have been if the research had been initiated at an earlier phase of the school improvement trajectory. Resistance to change, however, was recalled by participants in hindsight. It needs noting, therefore, that as conceptualisation of capacity building for improvement is context and time specific, based on the analysis of perceptions and interpretations of people at a particular moment in time, 'other' relevant information pertaining to the topic may not be forthcoming in the period allocated for data collection.

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An interpretivist paradigm recognises that multiple realities exist and alter over time. This has implications for theory generation based on world views or lived realities of participants. It can be argued that the phenomenon of capacity building for school improvement can be perceived and understood differently by participants at different time periods and in various contexts. In terms of theory building, the resulting theory / theoretical model may not represent multiple realities of the phenomenon even though the data that informed its conceptualisation have been rigorously developed and cross-checked.

Capacity building for school improvement is complex. It is a reflection of values and beliefs of interconnecting contexts. Context is not a static state of 'being' but reflects acts of 'doing' which makes any conceptualisation difficult to accurately capture. The ensuing theory may have limitations. It may be considered over simplified. For example, limiting the scope of the study to certain aspects and omitting others may have added to a simplified conceptualisation of the construct. The decision not to interview students directly but to gain their views through parents / caregivers and staff meant theory construction was limited to certain perspectives only. Limiting the study to specific outside agency representatives, school staff and parents / caregivers was deemed appropriate for both the size and scope of the study. However, inclusion of student voice and extending the range of outside agency representatives associated with the school may well have introduced further dimensions. Exclusion of 'other' voices meant the perspective gained was limited.

Not only are there limitations of the theory and its formal conceptualisation but also there are limitations of design. One of the main limitations was the time frame of data collection within a year. To gain an in-depth understanding of associated complexity, a study would ideally follow the changing dynamics of capacity building over a number of years. Participant selection from within a specific time period contributed towards problems associated with limited dimensions of change. Prolonged contact in the school would have strengthened the data in terms of trustworthiness; that is, extended contact would have ensured greater credibility and confirmability of data collected.

7.3 Strengths of the Substantive Theory / Research

This research is a documented journey of one school's attempt to build capacity for school improvement. The ensuing theory of capacity building may be of some use to school practitioners and others in pursuit of school improvement.

The study has created a depth of information on school practice from different perspectives and organisational levels. Such depth promotes a view of the phenomenon as holistic, set within multiple contexts of influence.

Findings from this study point to the underestimated but significant role parents / caregivers play in the process. Research in this area is limited and information available covers a narrow band of influence – that of voluntary assistance. Although this research suggests parents / caregivers play influential roles in capacity building for school improvement, further research on nature and type of involvement is needed.

The four themes of situated activity; connectedness; effective governance, leadership and management; and capacity outcomes underscore the phenomenon and provide a much needed reality base. The four themes are able to be modified and adapted to other site conditions.

The position advocated by the researcher in undertaking this study is one of balance. Findings suggest that capacity building for school improvement concerns management of tensions in ways that minimise limitations and maximise opportunities to benefit the school. The researcher has attempted to record this from a balanced perspective. Tensions of context are identified and discussed, but, so too are ways of managing them to build capacity.

Literature on capacity building for school improvement is limited. This study, albeit of a single case, attempts to add to existing knowledge in the field. For example, the research suggests capacity building is a situated activity, the result of connectedness and effective governance, leadership and management with agreed outcomes. Fresh perspectives also emerge concerning well established themes of vision, stakeholder activity, school culture and professional development related to school improvement. Such revelations promote a new take on the topic. Exploration of capacity building for school improvement is embedded in a political, cultural and socio-economic context. Research that examines the impact of context on schools, in particular on school improvement, is limited.

The research is honest and transparent in its delivery of the theory / theoretical model. It is grounded in the lived reality of participants. It provides an interesting story of the journey participants in this school have taken to build capacity for school improvement.

7.4 Reflections on Methodology

The aim of the research was to deepen understanding of capacity building for school improvement in response to the research questions and based on participants' worldviews. The study is positioned within an interpretivist paradigm underscored by respective ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions. The school, as a unit of analysis, meant adoption of a case study approach. Although data were predominantly gathered from interviews, observations and document analysis, extended time spent in the field contributed richer understandings of issues involved. Utilisation of grounded theory methods for data analysis facilitated development of a substantive theory, a theoretical model embedded in context. The research design provided a comprehensive framework, within the parameters and aims of this inquiry, to generate a low level conceptual theory on capacity building for improvement. Trustworthiness and authenticity criteria, interwoven in the design, ensured research rigour.

7.5 Implications

In light of the research findings, implications for the Ministry of Education, schools and parents / caregivers are raised.

7.5.1 Implications for the Ministry of Education

This research found that strong networks among Ministry, outside agencies and school stakeholders, at local and national levels, provided important input for the preservation and

further development of capacity building for improvement. Such networks enabled this school to manage tensions and issues of context in line with vision. It is important, in light of the findings, that schools feel reassured that building capacity for school improvement is not an isolated venture but support and assistance from external agencies contributes to success. In other words, networking and building micro / macro level connections meet individual, collective and systemic needs to enhance capacity building for improvement.

Networking and a commitment to assisting schools on an individual basis require full acknowledgement and support by the Ministry of Education and outside agencies. As Honig and Hatch (2004) note “ongoing processes where schools and central agencies work together to manage external demands” (p. 27) challenges the stereotypical role of policy makers as primary decision makers, replacing them with supportive roles for schools and their decisions. The Ministry and outside agencies need to be more open to suggestions from school stakeholders as to what works in building capacity in context. A situated, connected response to highly complex issues of context, sustain and strengthen a school’s capacity for improvement.

7.5.2 Implications for School Staff

In light of the research findings, the school’s vision forms the core of all capacity building for school improvement activities. In terms of its construction, the vision engenders passion, purpose and movement in the one direction. Working with vision promotes purpose driven action that buffers and protects the school from undue demands for change. Although the power of vision is central, there is a need to deconstruct the ideal and express it in practical terms so as to achieve a ‘blueprint’ for action and attach meaning to work. It is imperative, therefore, to consider how documentation, policies, procedures and management systems connect with vision and corresponding values if authentic capacity building for school improvement is to be achieved. An implication for boards of trustees, school leaders, teachers and parents is to focus specifically on clearly articulating their school’s vision and implementing it in ways that develop congruence between philosophy, values, sense of purpose and practice.

Current educational trends, as outlined in the literature review and findings chapters, present major challenges for school stakeholders desirous of capacity building for school improvement. Some ideas espoused by the ‘new right’ ideology, however, appear to sit comfortably alongside capacity building for school improvement. For example, the need for efficiency, effectiveness and accountability can be argued as essential capacity drivers. The goal of building community and

partnerships is equally well placed here. Indeed, as the data reveals, such concepts underpin this school's vision and are vital in building its sound capacity base. Given this, however, it is essential that school stakeholders continue to adopt a critical stance to what drives them, for example, in vision construction. Furthermore, whilst it is important to 'take on board' key aspects the 'new right' ideology proposes, the philosophy that binds and drives the capacity building process must be the ideal. Core messages, such as, 'striving to be the best in promoting student learning', must be explicitly expressed and implicitly modelled despite pressures to accommodate any assertive market approaches.

There is a need for each school to ensure that its core philosophy, values and beliefs are fully integrated in school life to form a culture supportive of improvement. For example, contradictions between what is articulated and enacted may serve to negate the capacity building for school improvement process. For boards of trustees and staff this necessitates evaluating the culture of the school, the quality of interpersonal relationships and ascertaining the degree to which both contribute to capacity building for school improvement. If all school stakeholders are to be held responsible for assisting in capacity building for school improvement, then all should be involved in periodic reviews of the school's culture and offered assistance on how to support the building of capacity for improvement. It is also important that new staff, board members and parents have regular opportunities to 'come on board' by developing their knowledge and understanding of systems, processes and structures; that is, what happens in schools. A system that enables new school stakeholders to learn about the school, with assistance from others, may help avoid any future misconceptions and conflict.

Professional development that is simply focused on expanding individual teacher's repertoire of classroom practice is not adequate in building capacity for school improvement. Professional development has to contain elements of increasing institutional as well as collective and individual application. Collaborative forms of professional development, a situated, layered approach and a learning community culture allows stakeholders opportunities to discuss beliefs about teaching and learning, critique their own and others' practice, take risks and share in processes of knowledge production and utilisation. The learning that results connects stakeholders to a situation with outcomes aligned to purpose. Learning, albeit individual, collective and / or systemic, is transformative. Such practices must be encouraged in context to build capacity for school improvement.

7.5.3 Implications for Parents / Caregivers

Findings from this study indicate that parents / caregivers are involved in capacity building for school improvement in a variety of ways. For example, parents / caregivers, through the board of trustees, bring a community perspective to matters of governance. Other parent groups, such as 'Friends of the School' and ethnic groups offer support in terms of fund raising and cultural activities. All activities are pathways that promote situated, connected outcomes and focused practice in the building of capacity. However, if increasing parental involvement in school life is desirous and preservation and honouring of the true meaning of partnership required, then, schools and educational leaders must critically assess issues that negate the above. A deeper understanding of issues such as those associated with low socio-economic factors, communication difficulties among the ethnic groups, lack of time and energy to get involved and perpetuated myths about school life, is needed. Maintaining a critical perspective to building authentic partnerships may add to the pressures and tensions schools already face in building capacity for school improvement. In light of the research findings, however, further research into nature, type and purpose of parental involvement at both the micro-level by individual schools and at a macro-level by educational authorities is deemed necessary to provide a more authentic take on the rhetoric 'parents as partners in the education of their children'. Without valid information, the rhetoric is liable to perpetuate unchallenged and the true value of partnership may fail to be established.

7.6 Further Research

This research has hopefully increased understanding on the nature of capacity building for school improvement. It has explored processes of capacity building and links between capacity building and school improvement. However, it needs mentioning that the theoretical model needs ongoing research. There is still much to be learnt about the complex and dynamic nature of the phenomenon. A longitudinal study, designed to follow engagement in capacity building over a number of years, would yield additional understanding of processes underpinning the construct. It is suggested that a longitudinal study extending over a period of two to three years in a range of schools be conducted to obtain data of significant worth.

The other dimension that is clearly missing from this study is the direct voice of students. There is strong evidence that student voice is important in considering ways schools can improve their practice. It is recommended that any future research design explore and account for student voice on the topic.

Few studies have explored the influence of parents / caregivers in capacity building for improvement. Given the important role parents / caregivers play in capacity building, there requires built in scope within the parameters of future research to evaluate their contribution in detail.

7.7 Conclusion

It is clear from the findings of this research that the phenomenon of capacity building for school improvement is hard to define, complex in its construction and situated in context. Capacity building for school improvement is deeply embedded in school practice, informed by a shared vision and demands connectedness in its sustained construction. A unique brand of capacity for school improvement offers a blueprint or map for managing tensions of context. Managing tensions of context is said to require effective governance, leadership and management and outcomes to achieve a desired future. In practical terms, capacity building for school improvement concerns maintaining individual, collective and systemic equilibrium while moving in the direction of improvement.

The journey this school has taken to achieve school turnaround is nothing short of remarkable. Given tensions and dilemmas of context, school stakeholders' input, in striving to make this school the 'best in promoting student learning', deserves praise. This school's strong capacity base means individual, collective and systemic capacities, despite ambiguities, tensions and dilemmas of context, promote student learning. A healthy capacity base creates an effective and safe place where the promise of improving student learning is firmly upheld as something to preserve and achieve.

7.8 Final Words

In response to sharing the final thesis with the school's principal and deputy principal, both agreed that the contents and the theoretical model required no change. They wrote a joint statement in which they expressed their overall view of events reported in this thesis:

The journey highlights the importance of a strong, shared vision which is transparent for staff, students, parents and the wider community. Underpinning the vision, developing positive relationships is paramount. Things just don't happen without trust, commitment, determination and above all a sense of passion for what you are doing. The school is now recognised by staff, parents, community as well as educational professionals. The staff

are recognised for their dedication and achievement in providing strong, rich teaching programmes. It is worth celebrating being part of such a diverse and nurturing environment. As a result of the journey so far, there is now a firm foundation for the future.

Individually, both informants expressed their feelings of excitement in approaching the next phase of their school's journey. The principal states:

I look forward to continuing the journey with the school. There are further goals to be met that can only be achieved by all of us working together. I would like to thank the board of trustees, parents and students for working collaboratively to achieve our goals thus far.

The deputy principal commented:

I have taken the experience of this journey with me to a new context. The building of a shared vision and relationships with a new group of people is my task at present. I have loved my time at the school and the opportunities that I have had. The people will always be important to me. The heart has always been there and the lessons learnt will stay with me forever. Value yourself, value your learning and respect all others.

Perhaps such thoughts are best summed up in the sentence that has arisen frequently throughout this research:

"I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals"

APPENDIX A

Summary of Research Activities Conducted in November, 2004

Code	Date	Event
Informal conversations	2/11/04 – 3.00 – 4.30 p.m.	SF5, interview transcript; SF3, bi-lingual questions for the focus group meeting; SF4, No Bulling handbook; and A2 negotiated times for future data collection. Venue: various sites.
Informal conversations	3/11/04 – 3.00 – 4.00 p.m.	Group of teachers about daily activities that generate capacity. Venue: staff room.
ISF8	4/11/04 – 11.00 – 11.45 am.	Interview SF8. Venue: Interview room.
ISF9	4/11/04 – 1.00 – 1.40 pm.	Interview SF9. Venue: Interview room.
OLC2	9/11/04 – 7.30 – 9.30am	Observation: second literacy committee meeting. Topic – reviews of literacy – writing and reading. Venue: Interview room.
OFS1	9/11/04 – 6.00 – 7.30pm.	Observation at the Friends of the School meeting – Preparation for Fiesta night. Venue: staff room.
OBT2	10/11/04 – 9.00 – 10.30am.	Observation of second professional development meeting for bi-lingual support workers. Venue staff room.
IFG1	10/11/04 – 11.00 – 11.40am.	Focus group discussion with bi-lingual support workers and teacher representative (Part 1). Venue: ESOL room.
OASO3	12/11/04 – 12.00 – 2.00pm.	Observation of Prime Minister's visit – official acknowledgement of commencing construction of the new school hall.
OWS13	15/11/04 – 3.15 – 5.00pm.	Observation whole school staff meeting. Venue: staff room.
OSG1	17/11/04 – 9.00 – 10.00am.	Observation of Samoan group meeting. Venue: parent room.
Informal conversation)	17/11/04 – 10.00 – 11.00am.	Informal conversation with teacher - literacy tests. Venue: reading recovery room
IFG2	17/11/04 – 11.00 – 11.40am.	Focus group discussion with bi-lingual support workers and teacher representative (Part 2). Venue: ESOL room.
OSM1	17/11/04 – 1.15 – 3.30 pm.	Observation at senior management staff meeting. Venue: principal's office.
OASO4	19/11/04 – 9.00 – 9.30am.	Observation Whole School assembly 2. Venue: space outside classrooms (middle school block
OPC3	19/11/04 – 9.30 – 11.00am	Observation of parent chat session. Venue: parent room.
OWS14	22/11/04 – 3.00 – 5.00 pm.	Observation whole school professional development meeting. Venue: staff room.
OSM2	23/11/04 – 9.30am. – 3.30 pm	Observation strategic planning. Venue: Kohia Teachers Centre.
OSM4	26/11/04 – 8.00 – 9.00 am.	Observation of senior management meeting. Venue: principal's office.
OPC4	26/11/04 – 9.30 – 11.00am	Observation of parent chat session. Venue: parent room.
OB3	30/11/04 – 7.00pm – 10.00pm.	Observation of Board of Trustees meeting. Venue: staff room

Summary of 'giving back' Activity: November 2004

Date	Time	Room	Year level	Subject taken
2/11/04	1.30 – 3.00pm	Room 7	Yr3/4	Written/oral

				language
3/11/04	1.30 – 3.00pm	Room 5	Yr3/4	Art
4/11/04	11.45 – 1.00 pm.	Room 5&6	Yr3/4	Sport
8/11/04	11.30 – 1.00pm.	Rooms 5,6,7,and 8	Yr3/4	CWSA art
	1.30 – 3.00pm	Room 6	Yr3/4	Teacher release
13/11/04	10.00 – 5.00pm.	Foyer	-	Painting library mural
15/11/04	11.00 – 1.30 pm.	Rooms 5,6,7 and 8	Yr ¾	CWSA art
	1.30 – 3.00pm.	Room 1	NE/Y1	Teacher release
22/11/04	11.00 – 1.30 pm.	Rooms 5,6,7 and 8	Yr ¾	CWSA art
26/11/04	9.00 – 9.30 am	Lynda's office		Preparation for Friends of the School's 'Fun Fiesta' night
29/11/04	11.00 – 1.30 pm	Rooms 5,6,7 and 8	Yr ¾	CWSA Art

Summary of interviews with outside agency representatives November 2004

Code	Date	Event
IOA1	18/11/04 – 9.30 – 10.30am.	Interview OA1

Time spent in the field: Approximately 64 hours

Data Collection Outline**OBSERVATIONS****Non-participant Observations – Team**

No.	DATE	TIME	SYNDICATE
OTM1	25 May 04	3.15 – 4.30 pm	Middle School Syndicate
OTM2	8 June 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Middle School Syndicate
OTM3	15 June 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Middle School Syndicate
OTJ4	27 July 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Junior School Syndicate
OTJ5	3 August 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Junior School Syndicate
OTJ6	24 August 04	3.15 – 4.45 pm	Junior School Syndicate
OTS7	5 October 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Senior School Syndicate
OTS8	11 October 04	3.15 – 4.30 pm	Senior School Syndicate
OTS9	19 October 04	3.15 – 5.30 pm	Senior School Syndicate

Non-participant Observations – Professional Development Whole-School

No.	DATE	TIME	TOPICS
OWS1	17 May 04	3.15 – 4.30 pm	Health and Safety
OWS2	21 June 04	3.15 – 4.30 pm	Unit planning – ‘Olympics’
OWS3	26 July 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Evaluation of the Kbb Music programme
OWS4	9 August 04	3.15 – 4.45 pm	ICT; Maths; Conference on Leadership – Feedback by deputy principal
OWS5	16 August 04	3.15 – 4.45 pm	English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) programme support/3 level guides
OWS6	23 August 04	3.15 – 4.45 pm	Technology – Development of technology exemplars
OWS7	30 August 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Project Early – Behaviour Management Programme
OWS8	6 September 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Initial feedback – findings on school culture by researcher; writing reports; management of computers.
OWS9	13 September 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Art development – Curriculum Unit development for Term 4
OWS10	4 October 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Spelling; future planning – school environment
OWS11	12 October 04	3.15 – 4.30 pm	ICT review
OWS12	18 October 04	3.15 – 4.45 pm	Spelling
OWS13	17 November 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Reviews – future planning based on reading and written language reviews
OWS14	22 November 04	3.15 – 5.00 pm	Planning for 2005

Non-participant Observations – Bi-lingual Tutors Professional Development

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENT
OBT1	8 October 04	1.30 – 3.00 pm	Bi-lingual support workers professional development meeting
OBT2	10 November 04	9.00 – 10.30 am	Bi-lingual support workers professional development meeting

Non-participant Observations – Literacy Committee

No.	DATE	TIME	TOPICS
OLC1	12 October 04	8.00 – 8.45 pm	Literacy Committee Meeting – Budget; written language review; spelling

OLC2	9 November 04	7.30 – 9.30 am	Literacy Committee Meeting – Literacy reviews (reading and written language)
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Non-participant Observations – Senior Management

No.	DATE	TIME	TOPICS
OSM1	15 October 04	7.30 – 9.00 am	Senior management administration meeting
OSM2	17 November 04	1.15 – 3.30 pm	Review of Maths contract with facilitator
OSM3	23 November 04	9.30 – 3.30 pm	Strategic Planning day
OSM4	26 November	8.00 – 9.00 am	Topic planning for 2005

Non-participant Observations – Board of Trustees

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENT
OB1	12 March 04	7.00 – 10.30 pm	Board meeting
OB2	19 October 04	7.00 – 10.30 pm	Board meeting
OB3	30 November 04	7.00 – 10.00 pm	Board meeting
OB4	6 December	7.00 – 10.30 pm	Board meeting

Non-participant Observations – Friends of the School

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENT
OFS1	9 November 04	6.00 – 7.30 pm	Friends of the School meeting – preparation for Fiesta night

Non-participant Observation – Samoan Cultural Group

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENT
OSG1	17 November 04	9.00 – 10.00 am	Samoan Parent group meeting

Non-participant Observation – Home / School Partnership

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENT
OHSP1	10 August 04	9.00 – 10.00 am	Parent session – Maths development – How parents can assist their children in mathematics.

Non-participant Observation – Parent Chat sessions

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENT
OPC1	15 October 04	9.30 – 11.00 am	Parent chat session (1)– Positive parenting sessions “Instant Parenting success”
OPC2	29 October 04	9.30 – 11.00 am	Parent Chat session (2)– Positive parenting sessions – Workshop
OPC3	19 November 04	9.30 – 11.00 am	Parent Chat Session (3) – PMP
OPC4	26 November 04	9.30 – 11.00 am	Parent Chat Session (4)– Evaluation of parent chat sessions – value/ how to improve

Participant Observations – Assemblies / Special Occasions

No.	DATE	TIME	EVENTS
OASO1	18 June 04	11.30 – 1.00pm	Parent Lunch. Celebration of different cultures.
OASO2	15 October 04	9.00 – 9.30	Whole school assembly
OASO3	12 November 04	12.00 – 2.00 pm	Prime Minister’s visit – building of new school hall

OASO4	19 November 04	9.00 – 9.30 am	Whole school assembly
OASO5	2 December 04	5.00 – 8.00 pm	Fun Fiesta Night – Friends of the School
OASO6	7 December 04	10.30 – 11.30 am	Thank-you morning tea for school helpers
OASO7	7 December 04	9.00 – 10.00 am	Whole school assembly – Special assembly; thank-you to sponsors of Casio key boards.
OASO8	13 December 04	7.00 – 9.30 pm	Year 6 graduation ceremony
OASO9	14 December 04	11.30 – 1.00 pm	End of the year school assembly – prize giving.

INTERVIEWS: School Staff

<u>School Leaders</u>	<u>Staff (teaching)</u>	<u>Staff (support)</u>	<u>Group Interviews</u>
Senior managers: A1, A2 & A3	Senior teachers: SF1 & SF2; Specialist support staff (ESOL / SENCO): SF3 & SF4; Classroom teachers: SF5, SF6, SF7, SF8, SF9, SF10, SF11 & SF12	Teacher aides: SFS1, SFS2, SFS3 & SFS4 Property personnel: SFS5 & SFS6	Bi-lingual support workers FG1 Senior management FG2

INTERVIEWS: Outside Agencies and Parents

<u>Outside Agencies</u>	<u>Parents</u>	<u>Board Representatives</u>
Outside Agency OA1, OA2 & OA3	Parent representatives: P1, P2, P3 & P4	Board representatives: B1 & B2

DOCUMENTS:

Year 8 Literacy Profile: DOC 1

Reading Review: DOC 2

Mathematics Review: DOC 3

Written Language Review: DOC 4

Reviews of Gifted and Talented: DOC 5

Strategic Plans (2004 & 2005): DOC 6

School Charter: DOC 7

ERO review (2005): DOC 8

Policy manual: DOC 9

School newsletters (2004): DOC 10

The School's prospectus: DOC 11

Consent Form – Board of Trustees

**VISION LED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ORGANISATIONAL
LEARNING**

**CONSENT FORM
BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

I agree for this study to be undertaken at ...School during this time period of March 2004 – December 2004.

Signature (on behalf of the Board of Trustees): _____ Date:

Full Name – printed

Participant Information Sheet

VISION LED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT: BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ORGANISATIONAL LEARNING

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Dear

My name is Patricia Stringer and I am completing my Doctor of Education degree at Massey University. I am currently lecturing part-time in the Master of Educational Administration degree at Massey University, Albany Campus. My thesis is situated in the field of school improvement focusing specifically on capacity building for organisational learning. This research investigates the interconnectedness of school vision, leadership, school culture and professional development in the capacity building process. The title of the project is: 'Vision Led School Improvement: Building Capacity for Organisational Learning'. This research will be used as partial fulfilment of the requirement for a Doctor of Education degree and it is anticipated that the knowledge produced will add to the pool of knowledge relating to school improvement in the New Zealand setting.

Participant Recruitment

I am inviting you to participate in this research, but you are under no obligation to do this. School was selected for this study because it fulfilled the following criteria and demonstrated:

- a strong desire for organisational change based on the school's vision;
- strong professional leadership;
- a drive to develop teacher efficacy and pedagogy through ongoing professional development;
- a focus on improving student achievement levels; and
- a commitment to building a supportive, professional school culture.

Project Information and Procedures

The aims of this project are:

- to collaboratively construct a holistic picture of how one school builds its capacity for organisational learning based on the interconnectedness of school vision, leadership, school culture and professional development;
- to investigate the connectedness of school vision, leadership, school culture and professional development in the capacity building process; and
- To explore the connection between organisational learning and school improvement supportive of teachers' development of practice and students' purposeful engagement in learning.

The study has two broad questions that serve as guidelines or 'maps' for the inquiry:

1. How does a school's capacity for organisational learning evolve based on the interconnectedness of the school's vision, leadership, school culture and professional development?
2. In what way is this essential for school improvement?

Participant involvement

This letter is an invitation to participate in an individual interview. The interview adopts a conversational style format. You are invited to complete a consent form indicating a willingness to participate in this study. Time commitment for the individual interview is expected to be no longer than an hour.

Confidentiality and Anonymity

Confidentiality and anonymity of the participant and the school will be protected at all times via pseudonyms or code names. The researcher cannot guarantee absolute anonymity but all reasonable care will be taken to ensure this does occur. Information provided by you will be confidential to the researcher and project supervisors.

Access and Storage of data

All physical records (including notes, photocopied documents, tape recordings and computer disks) will be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the researcher at Massey University. The researcher and supervisors will be the only persons accessing the data. The cabinet and office are locked and the computer is password protected. Data will be retained for a period of five years. Following the end of the retention period, data will be returned to the participants if requested. Otherwise physical records will be shredded and disposed of using a confidential waste disposal method. Audio data and computer records will be electronically deleted.

Participant Rights

As a participant in this project you have a right to:

- decline to answer any particular question;
- withdraw from the study within three weeks;
- ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;
- provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;
- be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded and
- Understand that you have a right to ask for the audio tape to be turned off at any time during the interview.

Committee Approval Statements

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee, Albany Protocol 04/007. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Associate Professor Kerry Chamberlain, Chair, Massey University Campus Human Ethics Committee: Albany, telephone 09 414 0800 x9078, email humanethcisalb@massey.ac.nz

If you are willing to participate I would appreciate it if you would complete the consent form attached and return it to me at the time of the interview.

If you would like more information please contact me or my supervisors listed below.

Yours sincerely

Patricia Stringer

Project Contacts

(All care of the Department of Social and Policy Studies in Education, College of Education, Massey University)

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Consent Form – Participant Consent Form

**VISION LED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ORGANISATIONAL
LEARNING**

**CONSENT FORM
PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM**

This consent form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I have read the information sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

Section 1

This section relates to the researcher conducting observations of whole school and syndicate professional development staff meeting as agreed to by the school. In this respect all staff are involved and invited to participate in the study.

I agree to participate in this study under conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full Name – printed _____

Section 2

This section relates to interviews and focus group discussions. In this respect selected staff and parents are invited to complete this section of the form.

I agree/do not agree to the interview being audio taped

I wish /do not wish to have my tapes returned to me

I agree to not disclose anything discussed in the Focus Group

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full Name – printed _____



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12 March 2004

Patricia Stringer
C/o Dr Mollie Neville
College of Education
Massey University
Albany

Dear Patricia

HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL APPLICATION - MUAHEC 04/007
"Vision Led School Improvement"

Thank you for your application. It has been fully considered, and approved by the Massey University, Albany Campus, Human Ethics Committee.

If you make any significant departure from the Application as approved then you should return this project to the Human Ethics Committee, Albany Campus, for further consideration and approval.

Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, a new application must be submitted at that time.

Yours sincerely

Associate-Professor Kerry Chamberlain
Chairperson,
Human Ethics Committee
Albany Campus

cc: Dr Mollie Neville, Professor Wayne Edwards
College of Education



Interview Guide

INTERVIEW GUIDE
(Principal, deputy principal and assistant principal)
MARCH 2004

These questions are a guide for the researcher. As the interviews will be at the most semi-structured, the questions will not necessarily follow this strict order.

General

In this school what does promoting and supporting student learning look like in practice?

In this school what does promoting and supporting staff learning look like in practice?

How do the practices in this school promote and support student learning?

In the last two years can you describe any changes to school practice?

Can you give examples of how changes in practice have contributed to improving outcomes for students (formal and informal)?

When changing practice what are important issues to consider for:

- school leaders;
- staff;
- parents; and
- Board of Trustees?

What school conditions develop and enhance a readiness to change?

What are the barriers to change?

School Vision

How does the school's vision work towards establishing whole staff consensus regarding school priorities and goals?

How does the school's vision communicate these priorities and goals to students and staff giving a sense of overall purpose?

How would you describe the influence of school vision on staff engagement in learning?

How would you describe the influence of school vision on:

- leadership;
- school culture; and
- professional development?

Leadership

Principals, deputy principals and assistant principals assume different roles in different schools. In addition, roles change according to purpose. In this school, how would you describe your role in relation to:

- professional development;
- school culture; and
- vision initiation, implementation and institutionalisation?

What are your hopes and expectations for this school?

School Culture

How do you describe the school, staff, programmes and what it is like to teach here, to:

1. a prospective parent;
2. a new teacher;
3. the Education Review Office reviewers?

How would you describe this school's culture in terms of school improvement?

What are its strengths?

What are its weak points?

How is the school culture developed? maintained?

How does this culture contribute to staff engagement in individual/collective learning?

Professional Development

How are staff encouraged/supported to reflect on their practice and on what they are trying to achieve with students?

What facilitates staff learning in this school?

What influences professional development in this school ?

Capacity Building for Learning

What conducive school conditions promote individual/collective staff learning?

What do you consider is your role in promoting individual/collective staff learning?

In your opinion how is 'capacity for learning' enhanced at ...?

Transcript Release Form

**VISION LED SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT:
BUILDING CAPACITY FOR ORGANISATIONAL
LEARNING**

AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TAPE TRANSCRIPTS

This form will be held for a period of five (5) years

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview/s conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used by the researcher, Patsy Stringer, in reports and publications arising from the research.

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Full Name – printed _____

Microanalysis of Interview Transcript: Principal Style

<p>P was pretty new when I came...the only thing I can put it down to is ...the first thing is P and DP have worked on their working relationship. Because if they were not together there's no way I could see that it would have got to this point. I think what they have done is that...I think P sat back. She watched. She listened. She obviously thought it through. I know that she sought advice as well. I can remember her telling me that she consulted with other principals and friends that she has got in that line. She probably has not been afraid to seek advice. And I think she, little bit by little bit, sorted out what needed to be done to enhance the school not just because she wanted changes. If something is really working I don't think P tries to change it like some people tend to do. And to be quite honest with you I think she's probably hasn't. There are a lot of things that are still the same but they seem to be a little bit better. Attitudes – I think she's got a good attitude towards people.</p> <p>I – Can you tell me about her attitude towards people?</p> <p>T6 – When she approaches you or talks to you she treats you like an adult. She treats you like a professional. She treats you like somebody that she trusts to impart whatever information she wants to happen, you know. She doesn't belittle you in any way. She gets straight to the point. She's quite concise. She just says what needs to be said and leaves it at that really. She is kind of like...She respects you enough and I think she has a belief that her staff will take certain things on board. The other thing though is that if something isn't being taken on board she doesn't just turn her back on it. So she will acknowledge that this is not being taken on board...some people are and some people aren't...and so what she does is she will obviously use her syndicate leaders to talk to the whole of the team. So everybody is delivered the same message. That's the other thing we don't get double messages really.</p>	<p>Leadership – shared leadership Leadership – shared leadership view shown to staff.</p> <p>Leadership reflection Leadership – sought advice/networking Leadership – risk taking Leadership reflection on practice / planning based on school need. Action followed</p> <p>Change – Reflection on practice: planned change not just for change sake.</p> <p>Leadership qualities – supportive; no put downs or belittlements; professional; concise; respectful; belief in her staff; follow through on issues; exercises responsibility; delegates responsibility - works through syndicate leaders; consistency of message; transparency of process; engenders trust.</p>
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Note:

Colours used here are not of any significance. In the microanalysis of data process, use of colour was not employed. In this excerpt colour is one way to portray subdivision of data into chunks.

Sample of Memo Writing – Segment of Observation

EPISODE 3: BEGINNING TEACHER (BT) ATTENDS MATHEMATICS COURSE AND RETURNS WITH KNOWLEDGE TO SHARE. EXAMPLE OF KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION AND UTILISATION AT A TEAM LEVEL

- **Links with outside facilitators/courses:** BT presented information gained from attending a beginning teacher course. Points covered: planning, lesson format, maintenance tasks, summing up activities / drawing the lesson to a conclusion;
- **Leadership:** BT disseminating knowledge gained from attending his course to others. Demonstrated games. Senior teacher acknowledges the new learning BT had undertaken but also confirms that current school practice is in line with this new learning – “We do that; gosh aren’t we doing well” (*This was a form of gauging progress in line with knowledge being promoted as current out there in the external environment. Very heartening for members to hear the senior teacher speak favourably about their own practice*).
- **Distributing knowledge:** Not only through listening to what the BT had to say and reading the handouts but also through participating in the games. Everyone, including the researcher, had to join in these games. (*This also reinforces that the action element involved. Time is given to listening and discussion but also to doing and participating*). Learning by doing – use of different learning styles. Interesting to note that while the focus was on the game and learning the rules, another teacher and the senior teacher added new dimensions to the original game. Such intervention facilitated further development of ideas. Learning in this area of designing mathematics games snowballed. Teachers’ repertoire of ideas expanded through the dialogue that had occurred.
- **Connections to students;** Ways to make learning in maths fun by use of games was discussed. Also discussed were strategies that captured students’ motivation, enthusiasm and participation.
- **Links to experimenting:** Trying something new – Integrating maths strategies with oral language development.
- **Shared responsibility:** While BT was speaking another teacher volunteered to take down the notes. (*This was volunteered*)
- **Links to changes in structure:** The senior teacher asked her team to ensure these strategies were photocopied and placed in communal team folder for ease of access by all staff members.

Sample of Open Codes – Professional Development

SCHOOL PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

DESCRIPTION	CODE	PARTICIPANT:
NATURE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PD workshops – theory • PD workshops - practical • Networking with other schools • Needs based • Intense • Practical • Reflection/metacognition • Peer learning - learning from each other • Valuable • The arts • Responsive 	PD/N PD/N/ws/t PD/N/ws/p PD/N/n PD/N/nb PD/N/i PD/N/p PD/N/m PD/N/pl PD/N/v PD/N/a PD/N/r	42 42, 85-86, 88-89 27-29, 80, 82-83, 256-260 24, 31, 32-33, 50-51, 54-55, 58-60, 64-65, 94-95, 178-183 44-45, 54 45-46, 47-49, 54-55, 64, 86, 88-89 49-50, 57-60 56-58, 98-99, 100-102 54-55 170-171 264-266
TIME COMMITMENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School time • After school • In holiday breaks • Flexibility 	PD/TC PD/TC/st PD/TC/as PD/TC/h PD/TC/f	17, 51-52, 93-94, 100, 115-117, 263- 264 44-45 83-84 67-72
FORMAL FEATURES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outside agencies (Team Solutions, Project Early, Music) • Outside agencies – assistance with literacy • MoE Contracts (Numeracy, ICT, ELA) • Whole school staff development • Team led • Curriculum meetings • Parent meetings • BT course 	PD/FF PD/FF/oa PD/FF/oa/l PD/FF/MoE PD/FF/stm PD/FF/tm PD/FF/cm PD/FF/pm PD/FF/bt	25-37, 170-173 33-34 40, 51-52 17, 51-52, 93-94, 100, 115-117, 263- 264 17, 42-43, 256-262 415-419, 454-458
INFORMAL FEATURES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of other's equipment 	PD/IF PD/IF/e	136
PRINCIPAL INPUT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General statement • Timetabling of individual PD • Involvement in PD 	PD/P PD/P/g PD/P/tt PD/P/pd	21 96 169-170
DEPUTY PRINCIPAL INPUT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Knowledge input – general • Knowledge input – literacy • Knowledge input – resources • Supportive of individual teacher's request 	PD/DP PD/DP/k PD/DP/k/l PD/DP/k/r PD/DP/s/t	99 102-103, 114-115 108-110 181-183, 344-350
ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL INPUT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General statement • Observation of lessons • Feedback on observed lessons • Trigger for whole school drive – environment school 	PD/AP PD/AP/g PD/AP/ob PD/AP/ob/f PD/AP/tr/es	18 19 19 262-263
PEER INPUT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General statement • Offers of ideas and suggestion – sharing of tacit knowledge • Offer solutions to problems • Peers assistance 	PD/Peers PD/Peers/g PD/Peers/tk PD/Peers/ps PD/Peers/a	19-20 20-21, 56-58 133-134 19-21, 66-67, 98-99, 100-102, 133- 134, 136, 175
IMPACT ON INDIVIDUAL EFFECTIVENESS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff skills – management of class + • Staff skill - management of class- • Subject curriculum knowledge + • Subject curriculum knowledge - • Self-Image + • Self Image - • Motivation • Social responsibilities 	PD/IE PD/IE/sts+ PD/IE/sts- PD/IE/k+ PD/IE/k- PD/IE/si+ PD/IE/si- PD/IE/m PD/IE/sr PD/IE/b	29-30, 32, 36-37, 88, 55, 106-107, 176-177 29-30, 32, 36-37, 47-49, 55-56, 173- 176 35-36, 51-52 58-60, 178-181 56-58 74-78

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Beliefs (reflective practitioner, structure, have a go) 		
IMPACT - INTERDEPENDENCE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collective identification and solving of problems Sharing experiences and expertise Engagement in shared PD Sharing of resources Use of facilitators' expertise and knowledge Collective site-based knowledge 	PD/I PD/I/ps PD/I/sh PD/I/shpd PD/I/shr PD/I/f PD/I/sbk	133-134 56-60 56-60 107-108 56-58, 78, 94-96, 126-127, 173, 175 107-108
OPPORTUNITIES FOR PRACTICE CHANGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Innovative and creative practice Adaptation of ideas to suit school context Practice validated by evidence Benchmarks established Monitoring and evaluation Quality assurance Development of systems/protocols 	PD/OP PD/OP/ic PD/OP/ad PD/OP/ve PD/OP/bm PD/OP/me PD/OP/qa PD/OP/ds	56-60 56-58 56-58 323-326 323-326 328-331
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL STRUCTURAL CHANGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Development of systems in response to new knowledge Development of resource room 	PD/OS PD/OS/s PD/OS/rr	107-114 107-108
OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCHOOL CULTURE CHANGE <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Learning culture Team leaders seek the opinion of staff Sharing culture 	PD/OSC PD/OSC/l PD/OSC/t PD/OSC/sh	56-58 271-272 272-273
OPPORTUNITIES FOR LEARNING <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transference of new learning to classroom Transference of new learning across teams Transference of new learning from team level to admin Distributed networks of learning Individual learning Buddy learning 	PD/OL PD/OL/tc PD/OL/tt PD/OL/tta PD/OL/dn PD/OL/il PD/OL/b	56-58 56-58 270-271 56-58 63-64 63-64, 66-68
IMPACT ON STUDENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Academic progress Skills development 	PD/IST PD/IST/ac PD/IST/s	36-37, 117-119, 121, 176-177 56-58, 176
IMPACT BEYOND THE SCHOOL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interest – parent body+ Interest – parent body - Transference to community+ Transference to community- 	PD/IBS PD/IBS/ipb+ PDS/IBS/ipb- PD/IBS/tc+ PD/IBS/tc-	143-148, 149-150 143-148, 149 143
ISSUES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Time Personal issues Resources- equipment Finance Staff prior knowledge limited Different starting points in teachers' knowledge base Staff learning styles Staff motivation BT – theoretical knowledge not easily translated to practice Independent activity required Change of organisation PD overload Teacher knowledge one step ahead of the children 	PD/I PD/I/t PD/I/p PD/I/e PD/I/f PD/I/stk PD/I/st/sp PD/I/ls PD/I/m PD/I/bt PD/I/i PD/I/co PD/I/pdo PD/I/tkc	74-75, 136-139, 277 183-184 136, 150-151 151-153 14-16, 55-56, 125-131 125-131 125-131 157-161 14-16 74-75 67-70 126-127, 130-131 177-178

Sample of Axial Codes – Values

VALUES		
DESCRIPTORS	CODE	
Pedagogy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Focused on practice ● Practice makes perfect ● Children matter 	VA/p VA/p/p VA/p/i VA/p/c	234-235 112-115, 120-122 135-137 112-115, 138, 168-172
Philosophy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● You can do it 	VA/phil VA/phil/yedi	229
Teams <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Working well ● Bringing outside knowledge back to school ● Triggers - new ideas ● Offering assistance 	VA/t VA/t/ww VA/t/disk VA/t/tr VA/t/oa	67-68, 230, 232-233, 234 75, 148-151, 188-189, 191 134-135 83-87, 188-189, 191
Collaboration – knowledge development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tutor teacher assistance ● Peer assistance ● Principal assistance 	VA/c/k VA/c/k/tt VA/c/k/p VA/c/k/pr	235, 164-166, 235 83, 148-151, 234
Structures are important <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Delivery of the curriculum ● Managing pupil behaviour 	VA/s VA/s/c VA/s/mb	68-69
Self-management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Seeking assistance from other ● Risk-taking - Have a go ● Individual goal setting 	VA/sm VA/sm/a VA/sm/rt VA/sm/igs	234-235 135-137 120-126, 135-137, 167-170
Trust <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Trust that peers will assist when asked ● Trust in peer knowledge to help ● Trust leadership assistance ● Trust in outside agencies assistance ● Trust so that one can reveal own inadequacies 	VA/t VA/t/peera VA/t/pk VA/t/la VA/t/oa VA/t/roi	80-81 148-151 76-77, 88-94 205-206
Learning <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Knowledge increase ● Open to new ideas ● Triggers for new learning – team origin ● Learning together ● Vision directed ● Evaluate learning/achievement ● Individual focused 	VA/L VA/L/k VA/L/opni VA/L/tr/t VA/L/lt VA/L/vd VA/L/el VA/L/if	174-176, 179, 228-229 106-109, 174-176, 179 104-105, 110-112 104-105 115-117, 143-144, 167, 228-229 112-118, 122-126
Flexibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Change timetable to suit changing circumstances ● Change of timetable to suit pupil needs 	VA/f VA/f/ttc VA/f/ttp	88-94, 95-97, 144-148
Efficiency <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Don't waste time ● Hard work 	VA/e VA/e/wt VA/e/hw	238-241 143-144, 208-217 70-71, 74-75, 208-217
Valuing cultural diversity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cultural groups established ● Cultural groups – pupil participation school wide ● Valuing of cultures – programmes built into the timetable ● Timetable flexible to accommodate pupil needs ● Staff input – released to take cultural groups ● Food sharing 	VA/cd VA/cd/g VA/cd/sw VA/cd/tt VA/cd/tt/f VA/cd/st VA/cd/f	76, 229
Home school partnerships <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Teachers talk to parents 	VA/hsp VA/hsp/stt	
Tanking care of the environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing school gardens 	VA/E VA/E/sg	160-161 70-71
Positive environment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Having fun 	VA/PE VA/PE/f	69-72 201-206

Sample of Complete Data Set Codes – Vision

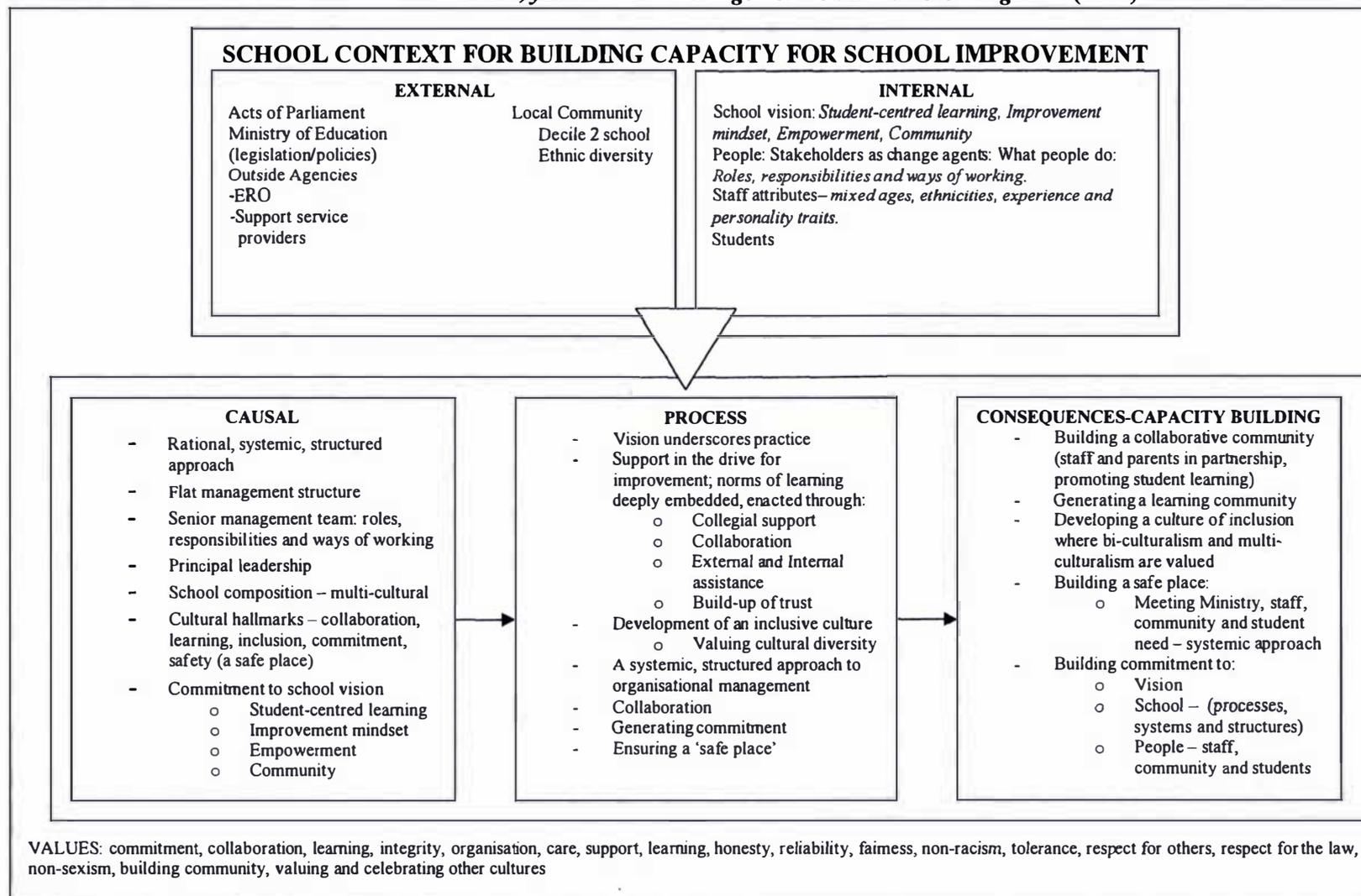
Connection with the NEGs and the NAGS		35-36, 90-116, 339- 340**		14-16, 64- 67***, 82-84, 359-367							102-105, 116- 168***		20-29, 57-65*, 70-74**		
Influence of wider societal trends – professional reading		134-137						298-300							
Influence of outside facilitators				116- 123***				241-242, 293-296			225- 226				
Local Community Influences – Bicultural and multi-cultural factors; student needs	406- 411, 413- 421	243-245, 250- 272***, 277-287, 346- 353**	143- 152***		311-315		185- 195	186, 196- 200, 205-208, 212-218, 234-236		375-386, 383- 392,312- 314, 413- 423, 453- 454	7-8, 82-89, 103- 106, 24-33, 141- 143, 145- 148	64-65	72- 76***	20-29, 151- 174***, 190- 197***	157- 166**, 311- 311- 322**, 344- 368***
'Best school in NZ'	3-16, 406- 411, 413- 421	219-220, 340- 344***, 346- 353**	23-25**, 66-70, 110- 121***, 202- 206***, 289- 293***	297- 302**	210-217	54-69, 73-77		188-189, 234-236, 239, 241, 194-195	156- 158	310- 312,316- 325	24-33, 47-48	113-162		57-65*, 70-74**, 145- 146***	121- 138***, 157- 166**
Promoting student learning															
Student-centred philosophy – "Children are worth it"	3-16, 406- 411	83- 87***, 235-239, 340- 344***, 458-	80- 93***, 110- 121***, 202- 206***	297- 302**	210-217	10-48, 54-69, 73-77	185- 195, 335- 349	188-199, 212-218	158- 160	306-307, 327-330, 375-423, 443-445, 453-460, 491-494	47-48	92, 193- 166, 116- 168***	37- 44**	145- 146***	157- 166**

		462**													
Improvement narrative – School with which you have got but continually trying to make things better (1/12/2011-22/1)															
Improved school image– structural change - physical environment	406- 411, 413- 421	1-7*, 79-83* 189- 203***	66-70	297- 302**			335- 349	258-262	160- 161	304-306, 308-309, 312-313, 316-325, 326-330	167- 169, 174- 176	37- 44**, 46-48, 51, 331- 332		192-193	
Improved school image– classroom environments		55-57, 59		297- 302**											
Feeling the need for change. Critique of practice. Creating something that is tangible and desirable in the future e.g. increase roll growth. (school wide) system/structure/practice improvement	413- 421	158— 163, 189- 203***, 322-323, 326- 329**, 344	202- 206***	16-21, 93-94, 125- 128***	249- 252***	10-48	311- 319, 335- 149	242-244	104			75-84, 116- 168***		121- 138***	
High expectations – staff - thoroughness in practice - planning/assessment and patterns of behaviour		38-42**, 292- 301**	8-14**, 16-21, 75-78, 146-158, 202- 206***, 289- 293***	16-21**	210-217	10-48						75-76, 116- 168***	58- 80***, 163- 173	57-65*, 70-74**	121- 138***
Student raised academic levels/improved behaviour, physical health and well being/ other		38-42**, 292- 301**	8-14**, 16-21, 75-78, 146-158, 202- 206***, 289- 293***	16-21**	210-217	10-48						75-76, 116- 168***	58- 80***, 163- 173	57-65*, 70-74**	121- 138***

Sample of Paradigm Framework – School Culture Links to Capacity Building for School Improvement

‘Striving to be the best in promoting student learning’

“I can do it, you can do it and together we can achieve our goals” (2004)



Excerpts

Excerpt 1 - Goal Accomplishment and Stakeholder Commitment to Vision – Painting the old hall

“We talked about it with the teachers, talked about it with the teacher aides, we talked about it with the parents. We said OK we are going to paint the hall and everybody just harnessed together. The teachers were painting after school. It was amazing. That to me and that was probably February / March last year and I mean we knew that the hall was not going to be around for a long time but we painted it because we didn’t want the kids to be in this messy hall. [Principal] was in there and everybody was in there painting. We released the teacher aides from some of their duties and they were painting... look at what’s happening at the moment like at the moment they are moving all this furniture and all of that’s happening. There are parents, there are teacher aides. ... is down there and she is our admin officer bagging the coal the other day. Bilingual support workers, teacher aides again, and parents everybody working together for a common goal which is betterment of the school. We are talking about a physical thing here but in the long run everybody has an ownership. And they know that [principal] and I are there too. And the parents are so involved in what’s happening and they can see and have a greater understanding of where the teachers are coming from and what’s happening in the school. And vice versa the teachers get closer to the parents and they value what the parents are doing for us. You know for the school.” (IA2)

Excerpt 2- Monitoring Change in line with Vision

“It’s not just what you see in the classroom but all the behind the scenes stuff and actually following things through in quite detail. Also looking at work as well so that we’re monitoring the children and we know what’s happening. Everyone else knows what’s happening in terms of Maths as well. Everyone has their own areas of responsibility. Each person or each team is meant to be profiling their area of responsibility big time and I guess at the end of the day students benefit from this” (IA3)

Excerpt 3 – EOTC – Camping evaluation

What the team will do – the group of teachers that have been on camp will do their own evaluation. What happens in the teams is that they do a report twice a year and that comes and is presented to the BoTs. They choose to do a report in two areas. We have a literacy area, numeracy will be another one and then they choose another one. I assume, and I might be wrong that part of Kauri team, because they will be evaluating camp any way, part of their report will be the outdoor education report (IA2)

Excerpt 4 – EOTC – Accommodating the views of other cultures/ You Can Do It

Well whenever we plan we think about how appropriate is it for other cultures. Camp is a prime example really. In some cultures camp is not appropriate and so it is about recognising that that's OK. And that has been an interesting issue I guess. We do have some teachers who are really, really, keen on camp and think every child should go. I mean we have had some good discussions about that because you know I have friends from all cultures and we talk about it. Some of them say: why do it? In our culture we bond and it's just a natural part of our life but that's not a reason for going on camp. And it's quite interesting to actually think about it and say OK what do we do? We have the Ethiopian community, the Somalian community the Samoans we had meetings. In the whanau meeting it was talked through with ... and then it was just generally a parent meeting for those parents who wanted to come. I was surprised that we ended up getting an Ethiopian Moslem women who is the grandmother of one of the children to come on the camp. We didn't necessarily talk her into it. Her chief concern was whether the food was suitable for her. I said to her that there will be halal food and she said but I like my food, and this was translated by a bilingual support worker who was also at the meeting, oh but I like my food really, really, really, really hot... I was staggered when she said she wanted to go on camp. And the reason that she wanted to go was that she didn't want the child to go without her. That's the reason that she went. I said good on you lady. It's amazing that this woman would do that. Another Ethiopian woman went too. But really I was blown away. That's a powerful message for our community that someone can do that and give it a go. And yet throughout all the planning for camp the teachers had to be aware that people have very valid reasons for not wanting their children to go on camp (IA2)

Excerpt 5 – Painting the hall

For example at the beginning of last year one of the teachers came in and said I am in charge of the environment of the hall. But I can't do anything about this because it's too yucky. It was in her set of goals. Principal and I said that it is not really fair on the kids to have them sitting for assemblies and things in a yucky hall. It's not fair and OK we know that we are going to get a new hall but what can we do to actually help you with this. She said paint the hall. The hall needs painting. Within a week, I tell you, the community pulled together and painted the hall... We talked about it with the teachers, talked about it with the teacher aides, we talked about it with the parents. We said OK we are going to paint the hall and everybody just harnessed together. The teachers were painting after school. It was amazing. That to me and that was probably February / March last year and I mean we knew that the hall was not going to be around for a long time but we painted it because we didn't want the kids to be in this messy hall (IA2)

Path Chart for Vision Achievement

Causal Conditions	Phenomenon	Context	Intervening conditions	Action/interaction strategies	Consequences
<p>Site based contextual conditions</p> <p><i>Properties of support include:</i> Parents as partners – home / school partnership; parents as volunteer helpers</p> <p>Programmes reflect multi-cultural school dimensions</p> <p>Systems of support – bi-lingual workers; behaviour management systems; support programmes / staff</p> <p>Links outside of the school – Duffy books</p> <p>Appointment of new principal</p>	<p>Setting future direction</p> <p><i>Dimensions:</i> School improvement</p> <p>Site / based, community focus</p> <p>Team approach</p> <p>Links with educational groups outside of the school context</p>	In school context	<p><i>Blocks:</i> Teacher stress owing to: Workload; Lack of resources; Time; Funding; Current knowledge; Personal and professional issues; Accommodating change; and Meeting students' diverse needs.</p>	<p><i>Networking with outside educational groups</i> Utilisation of outside experts' knowledge and expertise to achieve academic targets set</p> <p>Establishment of links to other school / tertiary institutions – professional development</p> <p>Establishment of links to minority group parents in terms of increasing own knowledge about personal issues and ways to help their own children</p> <p>Enlisting the help of the business community – raising funds for a new hall for example.</p> <p>Continue to encourage parent voluntary help</p> <p><i>Networking – internal</i> Sharing of staff knowledge and expertise; working collaboratively to solve problems</p>	<p><i>Improvement – structural changes</i> New hall; School networked; Purchase of equipment e.g. sports</p> <p><i>Improvement in systems linked to student-centred learning</i> Monitoring of academic achievements; bi-lingual classes</p> <p><i>Improvement in practice</i> Raised literacy levels; Promotion of health promoting schools/links to parents</p> <p><i>Improvement community relationships</i> Establish parent drop in centre; Home / school partnerships; and parent chat sessions. After school homework centre</p> <p><i>Positive messages about school to the community</i> Pride in the school</p>

Power Point Slide Show – CD
CD inserted (back cover)

APPENDIX R

Professional Development – External and Internal

	Links	2002	2003	2004
External				
Literacy – Team Solutions. Facilitator: Ministry identified Focus: School wide reading and written language programme development Type – School / individual staff focus, systems / pedagogical change			Building on/cumulative	
Numeracy – Ministry Contract Facilitator: Ministry identified Focus: Junior level numeracy programme Type: Junior school individual staff development-systems change	External: Home / school partnerships		Building on/cumulative	
Numeracy – Ministry Contract Facilitator: Ministry identified Focus: Senior level numeracy programme Type: Senior school individual staff development-systems change	External: Home / school partnerships			Initiated
ICT: Ministry Contract Facilitator: Ministry identified Focus: Whole school professional development Type: Individual teacher development with whole school focus	School / community: Class newsletters		Building on/cumulative	
Home / School Partnerships: Ministry Contract Facilitators: ministry identified Focus: Parents as Partners Type: School staff and lead parents professional development	External / Internal links Home / school partnerships		Building on/cumulative	
Music: Facilitator: Contract identified Focus: Whole school staff and student learning in keyboard instruction Type: Staff and student learning – keyboards skills	School / community: inquiries-after school music			Initiated On-going staff led
Behaviour: Project Early Facilitators: Project Early staff Focus: Whole school focus – managing behaviour Type: Whole school staff development; individual mentoring of staff	Parent chat, Individual parent/student partnership			On-going
English Language Assistant (ELA): Ministry Contract Facilitator: Ministry identified Focus: Teacher aide development in literacy Type: Individual / group professional development	External / Internal – Teacher aide staff feedback		Building on/cumulative	
Internal				
Literacy: Site based Facilitator: Deputy principal Focus: Whole school Type: Whole school staff meetings; individual mentoring of staff	School / community: Portfolios; reading log		Building on/cumulative	
Technology: Site based Facilitator: Teacher in charge of technology Focus: Technology curriculum-planning; identification/benchmarking Type: Staff meeting	External / Internal Teacher input-outside course			Initiated
‘You can do it’ – Site based Facilitator: SENCO Focus: Whole school – Tenets of the ‘You can do it’ programme revised Links: Parent chat sessions – ‘Positive parenting’	Parent chat – ‘Positive parenting’ sessions		Building on/cumulative	
Bi-lingual support workers literacy professional development: Site based Facilitator: Deputy Principal and ESOL coordinator Focus: Strategies for teaching reading and written language Type: Group and individual professional development	School / community links. Teacher assistance		Building on/cumulative	

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