

Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.

Title:

The Professional Learning Pathways of Urban New Zealand

Primary Principals.

*A case study into the beliefs, practices, and perceived impact of
professional learning on primary principals.*

Anne Malcolm

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Education,

Massey University, 2012

Abstract

The research contributes to school leadership literature considering the role of formal and informal learning. In particular, the diverse modes of learning, varied pathways to principalship and the need for on-going learning, to include the 'novice' phase of being a principal. Urban New Zealand principals, through a purposive sample case study, identified why and how learning was meaningful to them.

An email survey was triangulated with fifteen principals' narratives and four individual interviews to determine the access to and value of principals' professional learning. The findings support balanced modes of direct and indirect learning. An articulated principalship learning pathway is required using both explicit and tacit learning approaches. Principals determined that formal learning is paramount to their professionalism and their ability to be effective in the role. They equally valued peer networks as learning environments. Mentoring at all phases of principalship provided invaluable support.

Despite the importance of developing and evaluating curriculum and student learning, principal leadership included growing future leaders, change management, day to day leadership, and management tasking. This created a work portfolio that could conceivably diminish a leader's personal time for learning. Seemingly, this was inaccurate. Principals are self-motivated adult learners challenged to study in order to improve what happens in their schools, for students, teachers and, for some, the wider community. Data analysis revealed that principals exhibit an on-going moral commitment to learning, their staff, and students.

There is no one course or method of learning that teaches all. Principals learned on the job, through reading, contact with other principals and through degree-type programmes. The First Time Principals' Programme provided consistency but insufficient recognition of experience or link to qualification status. In New Zealand, principals with educational leadership qualifications are not fiscally recognised.

The research contributes to the body of New Zealand leadership literature through the rich and real descriptions of principals' experiences. The findings identify a range of suitable learning methodologies that could be developed for principals. The research opens opportunities for further New Zealand research that develops the principals' voice.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for degree recognition at any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the dissertation contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the dissertation itself.

Signed

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'A' followed by a long horizontal line.

Anne Sutherland Malcolm

Dated: 23.4.2013

Acknowledgements

Ehara taku toa i te toa takitahi. Engari taku toa he toa takatini

A warrior never stands alone, but stands with many.

Maori believe leadership is about sharing success, accepting responsibility and being visible. This study combines the stories of many school principals, their 'Te Kete Tuauri' (real world). I believe their knowledge interpreted through my researcher's lens provides a powerful voice. It was my responsibility to honestly reflect their thinking. I have learnt a great deal through their openness and candour. I have an unequivocal appreciation of the multitude of ways school leaders ensure they access learning. I am thankful to a good number of people for their support.

Firstly, to my supervisors Professor Wayne Edwards and Dr. Jenny Poskitt, I have appreciated their professional expertise, and most importantly their encouragement. At times, it would have been easy to give up and take back my weekends but these two people, along with Dr. Marian Court, supported the load.

My sincerest thanks go to the group of New Zealand principals who agreed to be part of this study. Their time, their love of learning and their life stories are the thesis. I hope their beliefs support future principals in their quest for effectiveness.

My staff and Board of Trustees saw the commitment it takes to carry a full time school leader's role and study. Their belief in me was a driving force. My deputy principals, Cindy Walsh, and my friend Belinda were always there for me. My family was never failing in their belief that one day I would finish. Finally, a huge thank you to my incredibly supportive husband Brian, for his sustained support.

What will we do with our weekends now?

Glossary of Acronyms

ACEL Australian Council for Educational Leaders

APAPDC Australian Principals' Associations Professional Development Council

APPA Auckland Primary Principals' Association

ERO Education Review Office (NZ)

FTPP First Time Principals' Programme (NZ)

HEADLAMP Headteacher Leadership and Management Programme (UK)

ISLLC Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium. (USA)

LPSH Leadership Programme for Serving Headteachers (UK)

MOE Ministry of Education (NZ)

MCEETYA Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs

NAHT National Association of Headteachers (UK)

NCLB No child left behind policy (USA)

NCSL National College for School Leadership (UK)

NPM New Public Management (UK)

NPQH National pre-qualification for Headship (UK)

NZ New Zealand

NZCER New Zealand Council of Education Research

NZPF New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZ)

OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

OFSTED Office for standards in education (UK)

OSI Official school improvement (Britain)

PDPC Principals' Development Planning Centre (NZ)

PQP Principal Qualification programme (Canada)

PPLC Primary Principals' Learning Centre (NZ)

SQH Scottish Qualification for Headship

TDA Training and Development Agency (Formerly the Teaching and Training Agency, UK)

UK United Kingdom

US United State of America

Glossary of New Zealand Terminology

Ako & Awhinatanga: Maori language terms that translate to learn, study, instruct, teach, advise; guide and support.

Contributing School: A primary school, catering for students from 5 years of age through to the end of year 6. Children start school on their birthday. A child starting after June is classified as year 0. This student begins year 1 the following year, moving to intermediate at year 7.

Decile: A socio-economic rating for funding schools. A school's Decile indicates the extent to which it draws its students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of these students.

Kura and Kura Kaupapa Māori: A state school where the teaching is in Te Reo Māori. Learning is based on Māori culture and values. Kura Kaupapa caters for students from years 1-8 or years 1-13. A key goal of Kura Kaupapa is to produce students who are equally skilled in both Māori and English.

Full Primary School: A school that begins at year 1 and includes years 7 and 8. Year 8 is the final primary school year before a child begins secondary school.

Independent School: Is governed by their own independent boards but must meet certain standards in order to be registered. They do not have to follow the New Zealand Curriculum but must follow a learning programme of at least the same quality. Independent schools may be either co-educational or single-sex. They charge fees, but also receive subsidy funding from the government.

Integrated School: These schools are part of the state system. They teach the New Zealand Curriculum but keep their own special character (usually a philosophical or religious belief) as part of their school programme, for example the Catholic schools. Integrated schools receive the same government funding for each student as other state schools but their buildings and land are privately owned so by law they can charge attendance dues to meet their property costs.

Intermediate School: A year 7 and 8 school set up in the depression as an alternative to 4 years middle schooling. The intermediate model is for students to attend a school for 2 years at ages 11 and 12. In June 2006, a middle school strategy was set up to consider the value of a school

transitioning students for two years. There has been no nationalised policy on this as at November 2009.

Manaakitanga and Pono: Maori language terms to express how a community cares for one another and ‘Principals work together, goodness, righteousness and all things moral.

U Rating: The school’s ‘Grading Roll’ as seen in this table determines the principal’s salary grade.

This salary data relates to July 2009 Principals in decile 1-4 schools a

Principals in decile 1-4 schools are paid an amount in addition to base salary (NZEI Collective agreement)

| Roll | Grade | Salary |
|------------------|--------|-----------|
| 50 students | U1 | \$76,288 |
| 51–100 students | U2 | \$82,260 |
| 101–150 students | U3 | \$89,090 |
| 151–300 students | U4 | \$96,071 |
| 301–500 students | U5 | \$103,052 |
| 501–675 students | U6 675 | \$107,042 |

Figures

| | Title | Page |
|----|--|-------------|
| 1 | Comparable leadership dimensions (Day & Robinson, 2009). | 19 |
| 2 | A Model for Educational Leadership (MoE, 2008a, p.12). | 50 |
| 3 | A continuum of leadership (Kagan, 1994). | 108 |
| 4 | Identified sampling variables. | 136 |
| 5 | Data collection model. | 137 |
| 6 | Findings data - Years' service as a principal. | 156 |
| 7 | Findings data - Positions held as a principal. | 157 |
| 8 | Findings data- Deciles of respondents' schools. | 158 |
| 9 | Findings data - Roll sizes of respondents' schools. | 158 |
| 10 | Findings data – Types of respondents' schools. | 159 |
| 11 | Principals' assimilation. | 160 |
| 12 | Codes to concepts. | 166 |
| 13 | Best learning at four identified experience levels of principalship. | 234 |
| 14 | External and internal drivers. | 240 |
| 15 | Handy's (1994) Sigmoid Curve. | 244 |
| 16 | Diagrammatic representation of principals' learning. | 245 |

Tables

| | Title | Page |
|----|---|-------------|
| 1 | Profile of primary school applicants and applicants appointed to principals' positions. | 46 |
| 2 | Macpherson's preliminary career based learning framework. | 60 |
| 3 | Contradictions in the literature and potential solutions. | 106 |
| 4 | The research protocol. | 130 |
| 5 | Modified coding protocol (Saldana,2009; Webber, 1990) | 131 |
| 6 | Sample of coding links to the literature | 134 |
| 7 | Meaningful learning determined by early career principals. | 161 |
| 8 | Meaningful learning determined by experienced principals. | 163 |
| 9 | Introducing the early career focus group. | 167 |
| 10 | An overview of the experienced career group's diversity. | 177 |
| 11 | Summary of most favoured informal learning. | 222 |
| 12 | Progressive learning - A possible future. | 247 |

Table of Contents

| | Page |
|---|------|
| Abstract | 2 |
| Statement of originality | 3 |
| Acknowledgements | 4 |
| Glossary of acronyms | 5 |
| Glossary of New Zealand educational descriptors | 6 |
| List of figures | 8 |
| List of tables | 9 |
| Table of Contents | 10 |

| Chapter 1. The Nature and Scope of the Research | |
|--|----|
| 1.1 Introduction | 16 |
| 1.2 Determinants of quality leadership | 18 |
| 1.3 Appointing a New Zealand principal | 21 |
| 1.4 Professional accountability | 22 |
| 1.5 Strengthening New Zealand's leaders | 23 |
| 1.6 Building capacity | 25 |
| 1.7 Differentiating learning | 26 |
| 1.8 Moral leadership | 27 |
| 1.9 The tensions | 28 |
| 1.10 Personal interest | 29 |
| 1.11 Future options | 30 |
| 1.12 What does this mean for New Zealand? | 33 |
| 1.13 The thesis outline | 35 |
| 1.14 Conclusion | 36 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 2. New Zealand’s Leadership learning Development | |
| 2.1 Introduction | 38 |
| 2.2 Tomorrow’s School’s reform | 39 |
| 2.3 Managerialism and beyond | 40 |
| 2.4 Decentralised control | 41 |
| 2.5 The effect of change on what principals need to know | 43 |
| 2.6 Leadership learning on a continuum | 44 |
| 2.7 Informing the principal learning context | 45 |
| 2.8 Current New Zealand options | 49 |
| 2.9 The First Time Principals’ Programme (FTPP) | 52 |
| 2.10 The Principals Development Planning Centre (PDPC) and its replacement | 54 |
| 2.11 Professional learning groups | 55 |
| 2.12 Other Ministry of Education opportunities for learning | 56 |
| 2.13 Other provider, other options | 57 |
| 2.14 Building capacity | 59 |
| 2.15 Conclusion | 62 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 3 Effectiveness, learning and needs: the “International Perspective.” | |
| 3.1 Introduction | 63 |
| 3.2 Theme One: Understanding educational leadership | 67 |
| 3.2.1 Principals as leaders and managers | 67 |
| 3.2.2 Building principals’ capacity | 69 |
| 3.2.3 Twenty- first skill and knowledge requirements for principals | 70 |
| 3.2.4 Principals as influencers of people and change | 72 |
| 3.2.5 Principals’ leadership behaviours | 74 |
| 3.2.6 The influence of leadership theory | 76 |
| 3.3 Theme Two: Professional learning focussed on principals’ learning | 77 |
| 3.3.1 Professional learning | 78 |
| 3.3.2 Principal’s professional learning | 80 |
| 3.3.3 Time to learn | 84 |
| 3.3.4 Principals as adult learners | 86 |
| 3.3.5 Traits of motivation and persistence relevant to principals’ learning | 89 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 3.3.6 Determining meaningfulness | 91 |
| 3.3.7 Informal learning | 92 |
| 3.3.8 Formal learning | 95 |
| 3.4 Theme Three: Optimising learning, a focus on early and experienced principalship phases | 97 |
| 3.4.1 The importance of context | 97 |
| 3.4.2 Learning maturation | 99 |
| 3.4.3 Phases of learning | 99 |
| 3.4.4 Pre- principalship | 101 |
| 3.4.5 Early principalship | 102 |
| 3.4.6 Experienced principalship | 104 |
| 3.5 Theme Four: Principals' learning challenges and tensions | 105 |
| 3.5.1 Tensions | 105 |
| 3.5.2 The challenge to focus on people | 107 |
| 3.5.3 Distributed leadership | 108 |
| 3.5.4 Supplier diversity an increasing challenge | 110 |
| 3.5.5 Considering the future | 112 |
| 3.6 Conclusion | 112 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 4 Methodology | |
| 4.1 Introduction | 116 |
| 4.2 Philosophical perspective | 117 |
| 4.3 The qualitative vs. quantitative approach | 119 |
| 4.4 Interpretivism connected to qualitative design | 121 |
| 4.5 The overarching research question | 122 |
| 4.6 Justification for case study design | 123 |
| 4.7 The case | 124 |
| 4.8 Situating the research in a metropolitan city | 127 |
| 4.9 Role of the researcher | 127 |
| 4.10 The research protocol | 129 |
| 4.11 Sampling | 135 |
| 4.12 Data gathering | 137 |
| 4.12.1 Email surveys | 138 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| 4.12.2 Focus groups | 139 |
| 4.12.3 Individual interviews | 142 |
| 4.12.4 Taping and transcribing | 144 |
| 4.13 Data analysis | 145 |
| 4.14 Use of computer assisted analysis tools | 146 |
| 4.15 The trustworthiness of the research | 148 |
| 4.16 Ethics | 149 |
| 4.17 Conclusion | 151 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| Chapter 5 Findings- Principals talk about their learning | |
| 5.1 Introduction | 153 |
| 5.2 The email survey | 154 |
| 5.2.1 Time served as a principal | 155 |
| 5.2.2 Number of positions held over time | 156 |
| 5.2.3 School deciles | 157 |
| 5.2.4 U-Ratings representing roll size | 158 |
| 5.2.5 School types | 159 |
| 5.2.6 Experience levels of principals | 160 |
| 5.2.7 Types of learning | 161 |
| 5.2.8 Principals' learning shifts | 163 |
| 5.3 Interview data | 164 |
| 5.4 Coding | 165 |
| 5.5 Early career focus group | 167 |
| 5.5.1 Preparing for the job | 168 |
| 5.5.2 Appointing early career principals | 170 |
| 5.5.3 Early career learning needs and the FTPP | 171 |
| 5.5.4 Issues and challenges to learning and doing the job | 172 |
| 5.5.5 Formal & informal learning | 173 |
| 5.5.6 Meaningful learning | 174 |
| 5.5.7 Triangulating the email survey data | 175 |
| 5.6 Experienced principal's focus group | 176 |
| 5.7 Experienced career dialogue coding | 177 |
| 5.7.1 Nurture or nature in your early career | 178 |

| | |
|---|-----|
| 5.7.2 Networking | 181 |
| 5.7.3 Formal learning | 182 |
| 5.7.4 Barriers to formal learning | 183 |
| 5.7.5 Learning to support greater effectiveness | 185 |
| 5.7.6 The importance of challenge | 186 |
| 5.7.7 Defining a person's principalship | 187 |
| 5.7.8 How, why and what stops leaders learning | 188 |
| 5.7.9 Pathways for learning | 190 |
| 5.8 Individual case studies | 191 |
| 5.8.1 Karena | 192 |
| 5.8.2 Larry | 194 |
| 5.8.3 Ewen | 197 |
| 5.8.4 Jenny | 200 |
| 5.9 Individual interview summary | 202 |
| 5.10 Conclusion | 204 |

| | |
|--|-----|
| Chapter 6 Discussion | |
| 6.1 Introduction | 205 |
| 6.2 Motivation to learn | 207 |
| 6.3 Optimal timing for formal learning | 213 |
| 6.4 Most favourable learning conditions | 220 |
| 6.4.1 Networking/Learning groups/Principal associations | 223 |
| 6.4.2 Mentoring | 226 |
| 6.4.3 New Zealand's Ministry of Education programmes | 229 |
| 6.4.4 Formal and informal learning aligned to qualifications | 231 |
| 6.5 Phased meaningfulness | 232 |
| 6.6 Factors beyond principals' influence | 235 |
| 6.7 Future direction | 241 |
| 6.8 Conclusion | 248 |

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----|
| Chapter 7 Concluding Chapter | |
| 7.1 Introduction | 250 |
| 7.2 The research questions | 251 |

| | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|
| 7.3 Limitations of the research | 257 |
| 7.4 Forward thinking for N.Z. | 259 |
| 7.5 Implications for future practice | 262 |
| 7.6 Possible future research | 265 |
| 7.7 Conclusion | 267 |

| | |
|-------------------------|-----|
| References | 268 |
| Appendices Index | 302 |