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**An Investigation into Senior Leaders' Perceptions
and Experiences of their Roles, Responsibilities and
Appraisal Processes in their Primary Schools**

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

Master of Educational Administration and Leadership

at Massey University, New Zealand.

Yolande Franke

2013

I certify that the thesis entitled **An Investigation into Senior Leaders' Perceptions and Experiences of their Roles, Responsibilities and Appraisal Processes in their Primary Schools** and submitted as part of the degree of Master of Educational Administration and Leadership is the result of my own work, except where otherwise acknowledged, and that this thesis (or any part of the same) has not been submitted for any other degree to any other university or institution.

Signed: _____

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Abstract

This study explored the current roles and responsibilities of senior leaders (DPs/APs) in some large New Zealand primary schools, and their experiences and perceptions of appraisal processes. An online survey (Survey Monkey) which forty-six senior leaders completed, representing 38% of the sample group, provided broad and rich understandings on this study's topic.

While all had heavy involvement in managerial responsibilities, DPs/APs reported that their key responsibilities were appraising others, supporting teachers to develop their practice and professional development - all aspects of 'leading learning' practices. Developing other leaders in the school was also a key component of their role. They perceived appraisal to be most beneficial for making links between their own leadership and student learning. The findings suggest that these leaders combined pedagogical/instructional and transformational approaches to leadership and used appraisal "to provide a positive framework for improving the quality of teaching (and therefore learning)" (MoE, 1997, p. 40). As such, DPs/APs in this study supported the primary purpose of appraisal in New Zealand schools.

The DPs/APs in this study adopted a professional approach to appraisal. While they defined appraisal as being about both accountability and development, they viewed the purpose of appraisal as being more about professional development and student learning than accountability. The study highlighted tensions around appraisal faced by these senior leaders who based their practice on legislation, theory, policies, regulations and guidelines that lack clarity and cohesion. Challenges faced by these senior leaders in meeting requirements for both attestation and appraisal also emerged.

Unsurprisingly, varying approaches to appraisal processes across schools were evident. That policy and regulations are aligned and one set of criteria for appraisal and attestation is developed is proposed.

The DPs/APs in this study expected their appraisal processes to support their professional development. They expected appraisers to be professional, skilled and able to provide constructive feedback to support their ongoing development. That a coordinated approach for the training for DPs/APs is lacking emerged as a concern. This study supports recommendations in previous studies that coordinated training for appraisers is provided and that tools and evaluative frameworks that support to appraisal processes are developed.

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