What do communities value about their local school?

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Abstract

Numerous schools in New Zealand have suffered, in terms of roll numbers and unbalanced demographic composition, since the introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools* (1989) in 1990. Thirty years on schools serving low-income communities and with higher Māori and Pasifika students continue to suffer significant roll decline and a social, economic and even racial imbalance in the demographic of their students while students of more affluent neighbourhoods may be unable to attend their local schools due to full rolls (Wylie, 2012).

The purpose of this research was to study what factors influenced the communities of three schools that after experiencing plummeting rolls along with disproportionate social, economic, and racial representation, recently reversed these trends by becoming the centre of their communities with growing rolls. Since 2013 the three schools have experienced consistent roll growth and a change in their student milieu that now represents the demographics of their communities.

The findings of this research align with some of the literature around school choice, the action of parents choosing a school for their child/ren to attend, and the need for a culturally responsive curriculum. A curriculum that responds to the cultures of the students and their lived realities is set to address the marginalisation of students' cultural backgrounds that differ from the dominant. Positive relationships within the school context, the teaching of te reo Māori and the importance of school values were shared by the parent and staff group. However, there is subtle divergence in each of these areas identified between whānau and teacher voice which needs to be researched further in order to inform school leadership in the future.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

> "I sit on a man's back choking him and making him carry me, and yet assure myself and others that I am sorry for him and wish to lighten his load by all possible means – except by getting off his back."
>
> Leo Tolstoy in Anna Karenina

1.1 Background

Tolstoy's words describe how many of the schools serving financially disadvantaged neighbourhoods and communities with a high Māori population in Aotearoa continue to fare under the load of *Tomorrow's Schools* (1989). The introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools,* in 1990, completely decentralised our schooling system and created competition between schools to the extent that children were unable to enroll at their neighbourhood school while other schools struggled to attract local families (Wylie, 2012). The choice that New Zealand parents have had, regarding the schools to which they send their children, has resulted in schools competing for students. Schools serving low-income communities, and those with higher numbers of Māori and Pasifika students, have suffered significant roll decline resulting in a social, economic, and even racial divide in our schools (Wylie, 2012). The disparity that "school choice" has created in New Zealand schools has been exacerbated by the reality that choice, as an action, is accessible mainly to the middle and high classes of society (James, 2014). This trend also occurs in other countries where "school choice" is practiced and has resulted in a tension between freedom and equity being experienced by local schools (Reinoso, 2008). Yet in spite of the experiences of the 1990s and the international examples shared by the New Zealand Ministry of Education (MoE) have continued a twenty first century journey that has failed to address the flaws in *Tomorrow's Schools,* particularly the declining rolls of small rural schools and schools serving economically disadvantaged communities.

The three schools in this study – one a small rural school and the other two serving economically disadvantaged communities – have experienced a different phenomenon, in recent years, with local families returning to the schools and subsequently creating significant roll growth and building a sense of community around their local school. At the time of the 2013 census these schools had rolls of over ninety percent Māori in spite of serving neighbourhoods of around 30 per cent Māori. However, at the time of the 2018 census, while the demographic of the neighbourhoods had remained static (Statistics NZ, 2019), students of Māori heritage accounted for approximately 50 per cent of the school roll. With each school growing extensively, between the two census dates, this indicates that the greatest growth was in non-Māori students. Moreover, the growth of each school, between the 2013 and 2018 census, was proportionally considerably greater than that of the general population growth of each neighbourhood (Statistics NZ, 2019).

1.2 Rationale for the research

The influence of social factors on the education system, along with the educational inequalities created by economic status of the student milieu (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979), are still visible in today's schools. The research and literature about the impact of social and economic factors on schools and the divisions that school choice has created in our education system is largely from a middle-class perspective, with limited published research from the perspective of parents from society's more disadvantaged classes. The parent group of respondents in this research largely represent families from financially disadvantaged backgrounds, although some respondents identified as

‘middle-class’. As the schools in this study have recently experienced considerable roll growth, with local families choosing to attend their local school rather than other schools further away, the research will investigate the factors that have influenced these changes in school choice.

While each school has witnessed the return of local families to their school they also have experienced low levels of staff turnover. High rates of teacher turnover in schools creates disruption to the school culture and pedagogical practices which have been shown to have a negative influence on student achievement. Added to this is the reality that high teacher turnover rates are most prevalent in schools serving financially disadvantaged communities or those with a high Māori and Pasifika student base (Wylie, 2012). The improved stability and growth of the staff mirrors that of the students. For this reason staff voice has been included in the study to allow investigation of the factors that have induced staff to remain at the schools.

The attraction of those who have, in the past, chosen to avoid the local school suggests each school has implemented changes perceived by their local communities as improvements. A questionnaire was designed to focus on identification of these perceived improvements. Potential improvements may include changes in the cultural responsiveness of the curriculum delivery and the cultural competency of staff, as these factors have been promoted by the MoE and the Education Review Office (ERO). International research highlights ‘Partnership’ as a strategy to improve the education outcomes of indigenous peoples (Hohepa, Jenkins, Mane, Sherman-Godinet, & Toi, 2004). Other research within New Zealand also has identified educational programmes with characteristics that promote the inclusion of families,

require parental and whanau support and involvement, and support partnerships between school and community as successful for the educational achievements of Māori students (May & Hill, 2005). Responses to the questionnaire will reveal the value that the wider school community attribute to such changes and their perception of improvements.

1.3 Research Methodology

Case studies are conducted in order to investigate phenomenon in-depth from the perspectives of the participants, the results of which may inform decision making. By investigating individuals, groups or large-scale communities, case studies answer specific research questions seeking a range of different kinds of evidence from the case setting that can be abstracted and collated to get the best possible answers to the research questions (Gillham, 2000).

A case study was conducted in three New Zealand primary schools to investigate the values that parents and school staff held about their community school. By collecting views on the question "What do communities value about their local school?" the research sought to address two broad aims:

- To allow the focus schools to identify strengths in their practice that would, in turn, support their future strategic direction.
- To inform leadership, through community voice, in the wider educational context.

The questionnaire used collected both quantitative and qualitative data, with the quantitative data defining the group to which the respondent belonged and the qualitative data investigating respondents' experiences and their interpretations.

The case study sought respondents' views regarding what they valued about their local school and the leadership characteristics or actions that had resulted in roll growth.

1.4 Thesis Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction introduces the research question, the type of research that was conducted, and outlines the background context to the study, why it was done and the methodology involved.

Chapter 2: Literature Review reviews the current research literature about school choice, student learning, school improvements, and school leadership. The literature review identifies gaps in the research regarding the use of parent and whānau voice from those of economic disadvantage. There is a similar gap in the literature on curriculum and leading change for school improvement where the teacher-whānau relationship is not considered other than in areas pertaining to cultural responsiveness. This study seeks to address these gaps.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology describes and justifies the research methods used in this study and explains the reasons for their selection. The research questions are introduced, the data collection and quality methods are described, and ethical issues and possible limitations of the study are explored.

Chapter 4: Realities of the Research in the Field outlines the practical implementation of the research, how it was managed, and problems or issues that were encountered during the implementation period.

Chapter 5: Findings reports the responses to the questionnaire.

Chapter 6: Discussion Chapter explores the study's findings in greater depth and discusses these in relation to the research literature. The possible impact of this study and how it might add to the current research literature is discussed.

Chapter 7: Conclusion summarises the findings of the study, discusses the implications for practice, and explores the value added to current literature.

The following chapter, Chapter 2, introduces the broad scope of the literature reviewed for the study in order to contextualise the study in an international and national context related to parental school choice, culturally responsive pedagogies and curriculum, student centred relationships that enhance student achievement, and school leadership.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to contextualise the focus of this thesis in an international and national context related to parental school choice. Understanding the drivers of school choice made by parents is important and relevant to research in that it allows those in education to make informed decisions when leading change in schools that are perceived by parents as less desirable. Published research is reviewed to ascertain what is known and agreed about school choice and the areas of divergence, especially for communities with higher proportions of families from less dominant culture(s).The literature review has established three key theme – school choice, curriculum, teacher- student relationship, and school leadership. While these themes are interconnected, the dominant voice changes with parent and whānau voice prevailing in terms of school choice and teacher-student relationships and teacher voice in relation to curriculum and school leadership. This research will identify and explain the gaps in the literature where research has not captured the voice of low-socio economic families and the pedagogies, in the areas of the integration of indigenous cultural values and language into schooling, they value. The chapter begins with a description of the literature search processes and an examination of the construct of 'school choice'. The next topic searched and discussed is in the area of curriculum with a particular focus on pedagogical influences. This, in turn, leads on to the consideration of the teacher-student relationship. School leadership is the final theme discussed in this chapter as the literature reveals its impacts upon, and links all of the earlier topics.

Initial literature searches related to the question ‘What do communities’ value about their local school?’ revealed considerable published research on ‘School Choice’. Data bases searched were Discover, Eric via EBSCOhost, Google Scholar, and Scopus resulting in a huge range of literature to be refined. After the first search under ‘School Choice’ other keywords were used to narrow the search: ‘Culturally Responsive Schooling’, ‘Maori achievement’, ‘School Curriculum’, ‘School Relationships’ and ‘School Leadership’. There were parameters to the literature search being books or publications that were either peer reviewed or from professional journals. These articles and books were written in, or translated into, English. In order to gain insight into the international context literature from United States of America, Canada, United Kingdom, and Australia were considered as these countries have a state education system available to every child, regardless of their social status or familial income. In relation to school choice, other keywords were used: school values, te reo Māori in school’, ‘teaching te reo Māori’, ‘meaning of education’, ‘value of education’ and ‘school type’. While the literature was extensive there were certain authors who were especially helpful in understanding key issues for this study.

When considering the *Tomorrow’s Schools* context that is the reality for New Zealand schools Wylie’s (2012, 2018) reviews both before and after the introduction of *Tomorrow’s Schools* has been extremely helpful in demonstrating the many links in the big picture of education. Wylie’s research and arguments revealed the consequences of the decentralization of the New Zealand education system in each of the theme areas the literature review identified being ‘School Choice’, ‘Culturally

Responsive Schooling', 'School Curriculum', 'School Relationships', and 'School Leadership'.

When considering the theme of 'School Choice' I read Ball's (2002, 2007) who joined with others to unpack the social position of choice using Bourdieu's earlier work placing choice firmly in the middle-classes and inaccessible by those less privileged in our societies. Adding to this theme was Zimmerman and Vaughan (2013) whose research identified influences on school choice in relation to distance from home and education level of parents. Cahill and Hall (2013) also write extensively on the privilege of choice, how the type of school attended is seen as supporting ones social class, and the changes in perceptions of those who choose, for one reason or another, choose to return to their local school.

Consideration of why families choose to return to their local school raises the concept of school improvements. Here Robinson and Aronica (2015) address the transformation of curriculum and the importance of this process remaining relevant and culturally responsive for students. Hill and Hawke (2000) also address curriculum issues using a New Zealand lens and make links with the need for culturally responsive pedagogies to be developed and supported across the curriculum. Durie (2011) provides a strong and well-argued perspective on the important role played by whānau in the education of te tamaiti Māori. Durie calls not only for strong school-whānau links but also for curriculum content from a Māori worldview. However, a curriculum needs to be delivered and it is Milne (2016) who provides strong arguments supporting culturally sustainable pedagogy as the antithesis to the low Māori achievement levels experienced under the *Tomorrow's Schools* model.

The reviewed literature links the themes of a culturally responsive curriculum, school culture, and pedagogical practices with school leadership. Robinson (2011) argues that quality student-teacher relationships, relevant curriculum content, and student-centred leadership are essential to improving student achievement. Her work has provided useful insights into the themes of this study and how they interrelate. When considering 'School Leadership' Fullan (2014) has been helpful with his identification of leadership styles that build social capital in a school using the strengths of the entire school community including staff, families, and students. It would appear that Fullan's works extends that of Bottery (2004) who introduces the school leader as a 'Community Leader' – someone who includes the entire school community in educational decision making. Harris (2014) builds on Bottery's work and alongside Fullan establishes strong arguments for the effectiveness of distributed leadership that truly considers the school community and the many strengths within it.

2.2 School Choice

'School Choice', being parent choice of the school for their child/ren to attend, is seen by many New Zealand schools, who struggle to attract students from their local community, as being the most destructive aspect of *Tomorrow's Schools (*Wylie, 2012). The paradigm of choice is at play here as in reality choice is only accessible to certain sectors of society. Those sectors who can exercise choice do not include the lower classes, financially disadvantaged, or many ethnicities because they are less likely to have the cognitive understanding to form a choice or the financial means to carry out that choice. Other aspects of school choice include transportation costs and extra curricula expenses (Ball, Davies, David, & Reay, 2002).

Using ‘Parent Choice’ and ‘Schools’ under a refined search of the Education database Eric via EBSCOhost found a large number of articles and books. Authors such as Cahill and Hall (2014), Duckworth and Cochrane (2012), Johnson and Lindgren (2010), Reay (2007), Reinoso (2008), Wu (2012), and Zimmerman and Vaughan (2013) share a variety of international stories focused on the way parents choose schooling for their children. Most of the research was large scale covering whole cities, districts and, in the case of Reinoso (2008), a country. The exception is Duckworth and Cochrane (2012) whose research focused on just two education providers. The research data collected tended to be through qualitative methods with interviews being the most common. In the case of Zimmerman and Vaughan (2013) quantitative data was collected substantiating the qualitative findings of other researchers. Regardless of the size of the research base or the type of data collected the same themes were present. School choice is a privilege for middle and high class parents with very few parents in the lower (‘working’) classes having the confidence or financial means to consider any school for their child/ren other than the one in their immediate neighbourhood. These studies were collected from a variety of countries and while the voice in the research is predominantly that of parents from the middle classes, similar themes emerged. Parents were prepared to bypass their local school in favour of schools they believed provided a demographic reflecting the family’s social, educational, and financial class and also racial representation. However, none of the studies tell a New Zealand story and most focus on middle-class families who, they all argue, have choice.

2.2.1 Factors Influencing Parental Choice

Research by Ball, Davies, David and Reay, (2002) into choices made relating to higher education support the implication that there are social-class-related patterns associated to school choice. The process of choice-making reconstructs and reproduces the divisions and hierarchies of our social structures (Ball et al., 2002). This research draws on Bourdieu's concepts of 'classification' and 'judgement' giving support to the argument that the cognitive process involved in decision making is influenced by a practical knowledge of the social world and thereby less accessible to the lower classes of society. Indeed, the very idea of education choice is embedded in biographies and institutional habitus that are not easily accessible to the opportunity structures of the lower classes (Ball et al., 2002). Ball and Vincent (2007) conducted research into early childhood educational choices and found a similar trend in regard to the influence of social class on choice. This research considered distinctions related to pedagogical practices and social class, and found that the educational choices of middle-class families link closely with the belief that nurseries, schools, and neighbourhoods reproduce social class (Ball & Vincent, 2007).

While the proximity of the educational institution to the family home was likely to be important for the contributors in these research projects, there were other influences that could surpass location in their final choice. Lin (2012) used a database of an ethnographic and classroom discourse study across seven schools in Hong Kong to show that most students attend their local school. However, for middle- and high-class families this occurs only if the demographics of the local school reflect their own social class.

2.2.1a Social Class

Considering the literature that identifies parent choice as a middle and high social class prerogative leads to the opportunity to explore power relations, privilege, and cultural assumptions within our schools and system. James (2014) uses Bourdieu's argument, that the social field of school choice is related to the power of middle-class families to choose schools that will preserve their class structure, when analysing the relationship between social class and educational inequalities. Cahill and Hall (2013) endorse this argument when they observe that the higher the economic scale in society then the more likely the family is to have knowledge regarding school choice and understand the different educational trajectories. This raises the issue of 'cultural capital' and the reality that there is varying degrees of privilege associated with the 'cultural capital' of a family. The process itself aligns with Bourdieu and Passeron's (1979) work related to social factors in the student milieu. Social factors such as the family's economic, cultural, and social resources are used by middle-class parents to reproduce social class. This process of social class reproduction creates a cultivated milieu influencing education within the school system to either follow a traditional path training a select, well-born elite or a technocratic system involving the mass production of made-to-measure specialists (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1979). In additions Duckworth and Cochrane (2012), Cahill and Hall (2013), Johnson and Lindgren (2010), Reinoso (2008), and Zimmerman and Vaughan (2013) all identify the social field of school choice where affluent parents are not only more likely to have but also more likely to exercise, choice when deciding on schools for their children than financially disadvantaged parents. Research by Renzulli and Evans (2005) found that middle-class white parents were likely to choose a school for their children, regardless of the impact on their mobility, if the neighbourhood school did not reflect their class and

race. The consequences of this inequitable process are schools that are highly class differentiated along social lines (Reay, 2005).

2.2.1b Location

The resulting class differentiated schools created by school choice is further exacerbated by low-income parents who are more likely to consider transportation issues when choosing schools than middle-class parents (Zimmerman & Vaughan 2013). In their discussion on the reality of school choice for many parents Zimmerman and Vaughan (2013) argue that low-income parents are concerned with issues unrelated to school performance and that they are more likely to attend their local school. Middle-class parents also identify as more likely to pay attention to school location but with a bias that relates to race and social class, supporting earlier arguments that middle- class parents tend to avoid schools with an unbalanced mix of ethnicities and a high proportion of low social class. However, proximity to the local school is important, both geographically and psychologically, for parents and students. Teske, Fitzpatrick and Kaplin (2007) argue that ethnicity and education levels of parents influence their decisions about the importance of location when choosing schools. Their study on school choice by low-income families found that White parents were significantly less likely to choose a school based on its location compared to Black and Hispanic parents. Location is the basis of choice for almost 60 per cent of parents with a high school education or less, compared with less than 30 per cent of college-educated parents (Teske et al., 2007). Zimmerman and Vaughan (2013) conducted a study that measured the distance between homes and schools finding that most parents make trade-offs in relation to school quality and proximity. However,

convenience and transportation postion the closeness of the school to the family home near the top of the list in most studies (Zimmerman & Vaughan, 2013).

According to Cahill and Hall (2014) families that did not choose to attend their local school found a strong sense of detachment, disidentification, embarrassment, and escape towards the local school. Detachment occurs when families, with middleclass cultural preferences, disengage from a local school that is seen to be inhabited by the working-class. This disidentification occurs because they do not see alignment between the values of the school and the family. Furthermore, families perceive the world of school and their position within it as entwined with their class and identity and therefore, if they have access to transport and believe that other schools provide 'better' educational opportunities for their children, they escape the embarrassment of attending a local working-class school by travelling further afield (Cahill & Hall, 2014). When students return to these local schools, after initially choosing to attend schools outside of the community, the complexity of intersections between school choice, social class, and identity formation is revealed. Depending on their reasons for returning, excluding behaviour issues and school exclusions, parents and students tend to view the local school in a more positive light. These students and their families bring the social strata together, through the local school, and in doing so reduce barriers and allow opportunities for social mobility and cohesive communities that move away from segregated and classed school environments (Cahill & Hall, 2014).

2.2.1c Marketing

In their research into the marketing material that schools produce, Johnson and Lindgren (2010) argue that the relationship between school choice and socioeconomic

differences in population results in maintaining and, indeed, strengthening, inequity and difference between social groupings. However, they also found that the quality of education, school climate, order, discipline, and how much attention the school pays to each child were the most important motives in parent choice. In the context of marketing materials, quality education includes hard data, such as examination results, which are directly attributed to teaching style, and quality on offer at the school. School climate relates to shared values and beliefs while order and discipline are linked to good pupil behaviour. The old concept of 'Progressive Education', dating back to at least the 1920s, wherein each student is regarded as an individual with unique strengths, interests, and learning needs is used in marketing material as parents are attracted to schools that provide an avenue to unlocking student creativity and/or special interests directly relating such practices to student enjoyment of school (Johnson & Lindgren, 2010). Indeed a child's happiness is identified by Reinoso (2008) as the first indication, for parents, of the most appropriate choice of school. This suggests that academic results, initially, take second place to their child's happiness. Parents understand that a happy child is one disposed to learning and who is open to influences from teachers and peers. These middle-class families believe that a child who has found their place is more likely to achieve well at school (Reinoso, 2008).

2.3 Curriculum

Creating a sense of belonging for students is at the heart of work by Robinson and Aronica (2015), and Hill and Hawk (2000). Transformation of the curriculum and how it is delivered, the relevance of the curriculum to the students, and a curriculum that allows for links with students' lived realities are a shared feature in schools that lead

to positive changes for students' education. These views provide a New Zealand context for studies discussed earlier such as Cahill and Hill (2014).

One of the greatest challenges facing schools in the twenty first century relates to the provision of curricula to a changing student population (Timperley & Parr, 2010). Timperley and Parr (2010) argue that yesterday's knowledge and pedagogical practices are insufficient to meet the needs of today's student milieu and that schools must rise to the challenge of tailoring the contents of the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) to best fit their own context. Indeed the NZC (2007) provides a framework to run alongside a localized curriculum and schools are encouraged by both MoE and ERO to establish content and ways of delivering the NZC concepts that meet the needs of their students. Waitere and Court (2009) discuss at length the reality of a schools localized curriculum being truly bicultural. By embedding Māori content and pedagogies into the colonial construct of our schooling system all students will benefit (Waitere & Court, 2009).

The creating of a localized curriculum, to sit alongside the NZC, reflects the partnership between Māori and Pākeha established with the signing of Te Tiriti o Waitangi and paves the way to the provision of a balanced education for all New Zealanders. Waitere and Court (2009) argue that such a mainstream curriculum will not only improve the educational experiences of Māori but also address the miseducation of Pākeha that has resulted from a curriculum that has given

> "dominant group students a false sense of superiority, provided them with misleading conceptions of their relationship with other racial and ethnic groups, denied them the opportunity to benefit from the knowledge, perspectives, and

> frames of reference that can be gained from studying and experiencing other cultures and groups and denied dominant students the opportunity to view their culture from the perspectives of other cultures and groups"
>
> (Waitere and Court, 2009, p. 163)

There is significant literature to argue and justify the need for New Zealand schools to adopt a localised curriculum through which to deliver the objectives of the NZC along with strong arguments from Māori academics claiming that "What is good for Māori is good for all students" (Waitere & Court, 2009). It is the gap in the literature pertaining to the absence of economically disadvantaged Māori voice that is set to be addressed in this study.

2.4 Cultural Responsiveness

Cultural responsiveness through curriculum content, pedagogical practices, values and relationships is what all schools, both nationally and internationally, should be offering students. Covering the importance of this in a New Zealand context are authors such as Durie (2011), Hohepa, Jenkins, Mane, Dherman-Godinet, and Toi (2004), May and Hill (2005), Milne (2016), Penetito (2010) and Wylie, McDowall, Ferral, Felgate and Visser (2018) who all discuss, in depth, the positive impact that schools that value a pedagogy responsive to the Māori culture are doing to close the academic achievement gap between Māori and non-Māori.

2.4.1 Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

There is also the strong likelihood that the focus on culturally responsive pedagogy is valued by the school whānau thereby indicating the importance of positive and ongoing school-community relationships. Robinson and Aronica (2015) argue that communities who celebrate their own cultures and other cultures are enriched. They identify three critical priorities for schools in the culturally responsive space – for students to understand their own cultures, to understand other cultures, and promote a cultural tolerance that supports coexistence. This ethos is shared by Milne (2016) whose writing adds a New Zealand lens to the Eurocentric nature of our schooling and the dominance of white privilege. She identifies the damage done to Māori and Pasifika students who are continually assessed in a Pākeha way and directly challenges New Zealand's "mainstream" schooling to address these assessment practices that have become normalised in our education system. This reality is supported by the data collected by the New Zealand Council for Educational Research (NZCER) and shared in the corresponding report by Wylie, McDowall, Ferral, Felgate and Visser (2018). This report identifies that many teachers find challenging the co-construction of a curriculum with Māori because they are uncertain about appropriate ways to obtain knowledge from the local community, hapū, and iwi. The data the report is based on shows that many teachers in New Zealand consider the curriculum they deliver to neither draw on or contain content relevant to the identities of Māori students.

2.4.2 School-Whānau Relationships

Whānau relationships are valued not only for social and family reasons but also for the potential whānau have in improving educational success. Quality feedback from parents or older whānau members can influence the needed persistence towards

study (Durie, 2011). Writers such as McDonald (1973) and Simon (1990) argue that educational achievement by Māori is directly related to how well their families have learned to deal with the system by assimilating their Māoriness with Pākeha educational priorities. Such arguments may explain why some parents value cultural responsiveness in schools. Parents who are no longer prepared to 'play the game' to ensure their children's success in a system that continues to follow the ideological development of 'race' and 'culture' concepts employed to justify educational policies invariably value schools that are providing opportunities to be immersed in te reo and tikanga Māori and providing teaching practices that support Māori interests (Simon, 1990).

D'Cunha (2017) argues the importance of an education based on a commitment to 'The Treaty of Waitangi' and corresponding partnerships with whānau and caregivers. She argues that Māori whānau and community need to be involved in the policy-making, planning and review of education. Collaborating, communicating, listening, and including the voice of whānau and tamariki in decision-making builds relationships of trust that lead to whānau involvement in education (D'Cunha, 2017). The third article of the Treaty is the protection of Māori people, their property, and culture. Therefore, educational institutions that respect and acknowledge their students' cultural identity reflect this protection (D'Cunha, 2017). There are implications that this study will investigate, from the perspective of whānau and staff and the presence and effectiveness of culturally sustainable pedagogies.

2.4.3 Teacher Capability

Hill and Hawk (2000) also identified the need for schools to have processes in place to ensure that all teachers have appropriate attitudes and qualities, as well as skills required, for teaching in low decile schools with high Māori rolls. Maintaining the processes that seek to increase the achievement levels of Māori students necessitates a reciprocal partnership of Māori adapting to the Pākeha system where Pākeha understand and are able to respond to the needs of Māori (Penetito, 2010). There is an associated need for the development of te reo Māori and its use as an instructional language in education. Such a call was made nearly 30 years ago by Durie (1994) and Bell (1994), along with the need for New Zealand to find creative solutions rather than copying and adapting ideas and policies from other countries like England and the United States of America.

2.5 School Relationships

2.5.1 Positive Teacher-Learner Relationships

Māori educational achievement benefits from positive teacher-learner relationships where aspirations overlap and teacher-learner engagement happens at a personal level (Hill & Hawk, 2000). Hill and Hawk (2000) identified, from their research data, positive teacher-student relationships in low decile, multicultural schools as being a crucial prerequisite for learning. There are numerous factors that influence such relationships, which in themselves support best practice in the teaching of Māori students. These factors include:

- reciprocal respect between teachers and students

- teachers who share their own lives, feelings, failings, and vulnerabilities with students
- time taken to teach relationship skills and create situations where it is safe for students to take risks
- use of positive and constructive behaviour management strategies
- classroom environments that reduce stress levels and make learning fun
- transparent and understandable learning processes
- time for students to construct their own meaning of new information and ideas
- teachers who do not let a student's lack of equipment create a barrier to getting on with learning
- a focus on student self-efficacy and helping students learn how to learn (Hill & Hawk, 2000).

2.5.2 Whānau-School Relationships

However, Durie (2011) makes it clear that the student-teacher relationship alone is not enough to impact positively on Māori student achievement. At the fourth Hui Taumata Mātauranga, September 2004, three panels of Māori learners, youth, young adults and kaumatua, discussed important factors associated with their school years. The ages of these panels spanned three generations but shared similar responses when questioned on factors for success, external factors that contribute to success, and advice that might be given to new generations of learners. All participants agreed that learning does not occur in a vacuum and relies on connections between people, specifically teachers, peers and whānau. The relationships identified were with teachers, peers, and whānau. All three require an environment where asking for help and raising questions is encouraged without the fear of isolation or ridicule (Durie,

2011). Combining the expectations of self, teachers, and those of whānau are crucial in shaping pathways to success.

2.6 School Leadership

2.6.1 School Leadership and Student Achievement

The School leadership literature indicates a strong relationship between effective leadership and student achievement (Bottery, (2004), Fullan, (2014), and Reeves (2006)). Robinson (2011) identified five broad dimensions to educational leadership. Her research established that while quality teaching had a moderate effect size of 0.42, leading teaching and learning development had double this effect size with (0.84). It is apparent that leading learning in a way that grows and develops teacher capability has a measurable impact on student outcomes. However, Reeves (2006) argues that adult variables within the teaching team are more important, in relation to student achievement, than any demographic variables of the student milieu. The highest influential 'adult variable' is teaching quality, because it has the most significant impact on student achievement, regardless of the socio-economic status of students and their families(Reeve, 2006). Timperley and Parr (2010) claim that knowledge and instructional practices need to be flexible and able to change in relation to the reality of current times and the students' world. The learning needs of a changing student population has created a challenging reality for school leaders and teachers with yesterday's knowledge and instructional practices that are insufficient to meet the learning needs of today's students (Timperley & Parr, 2010). Today's schools need educational leadership that is a team effort based on shared trust and knowledge (Reeve, 2006).

2.6.2 Leadership Styles

Fullan (2014) refers to a leadership style that builds on the strengths of those on the school staff as being the way of the future for educational leaders. Individual expertise works in conjunction with interpersonal trust, resulting in strong social capital that supports collaboration among school staff. Furthermore, social capital increases individual knowledge through accessing the human capital of others and in this way schools that share their social capital and see parents and the community as part of the solution experience growth (Fullan, 2014). Harris (2014) also identifies the need to generate social capital for schools focused on raising educational performance. Social capital is about connections between people based on a combination of trust, mutual understanding, and shared values and behaviours. These bind the members of human collectives together and make joint action possible. It is the effective action for mutual benefits that is the essence of social capital and schools that focus on developing productive relationships within their community can shift attitudes and change behaviours in ways that realise higher performance (Harris, 2014) The collective improvement of all staff members, where teachers are deeply engaged in collaborative professional learning, is an investment in a school's social capital (Harris, 2014). Harris (2014) argues it is the quality of relationships within a school that is the distinguishing feature of high performing schools. Leaders of such schools build effective teams who engage in collective problem-solving that results in substantial sustainable improvement. Harris (2014) argues that one of the deepest human desires is to be understood and this can only be achieved through connecting and interacting with others. Therefore, it is through social connections that the best and most effective learning takes place amongst students, teachers, and families. Harris (2014) further

argues that deprivation should not, and cannot be, an excuse for educational underperformance and that schools that share strong social capital with their communities will overcome societal inequalities. The challenge here is the fact that (economic and/or social) deprivation results in families being inadequately resourced and therefore unable to forge the social capital that Harris argues is so important. There are implications here for further research into the practical ways in which schools can build and share social capital. By exploring such concepts from the perspective of New Zealand whānau in provincial cities a model for schools struggling to build strong social capital could be formed to benefit all school communities.

2.6.3 School Leader – Community Leader

Positive and strong leadership that occurs despite the 'socio-cultural context' or location of the school can be a daunting challenge. Bottery (2004) argues that educational leadership is faced with challenges for passionate leaders who are committed to empowering their students within the educational context – leaders who are able to transmit their enthusiasm to those around them resulting in schools that are alive, buzzing, positive learning environments and places where people, students, staff and families want to be. Such leaders, he claims, do not sacrifice their ideals or values but rather lead their schools and provide good education based on their strong moral visions. This 'Moral Community Leader' is one who views the school as a community that embraces and reflects both the educational and moral values of the wider community (Bottery 2004). Wylie (2012) also argues that schools need a deep sense of community in order to successfully overcome the economic, ecological, and social challenges that dominate our complex and ever-changing world. According to Wylie (2012) a community is comprised of many different people, all of whom are

secure in their own identity and respect and understand the diversity of the student milieu and the needs they bring to school (Wylie, 2012). There is a need to critique these ideas, through the lens of whānau and staff in a school community, to further establish the impact that such theory has on the everyday reality of schooling.

The place of community in the school, as a workplace, is also a consideration for school leaders. Rock (2006) argues that the organisation's community is at the heart of any transformational change and that it is deep connections from the inside out that are more powerful than single personalities. Engagement in the workplace, the development of new generations of leaders, and remaining innovative result in effective, sustainable change at a organizational and community level (Rock, 2006). At the heart of this is the need to develop strong relationships not only with the students but also with their family.

2.7 Conclusion

It would appear, from the literature, that there are a number of aspects communities are likely to value about their local school including proximity of the school to the family home, the localized curriculum, cultural responsiveness of pedagogical practices, positive relationships within the school community ,and strong leadership of the school. However, the literature around 'School Choice' reveals a gap in research that includes families from low socio-economic groups. Therefore, this current research investigation may offer a different perspective on school choice from that of the middle-class who currently dominate the literature around school choice. Other gaps occur in the areas of curriculum and school leadership where the literature is school-centric with little, or no apparent, parent voice. This research investigates these aspects by

posing the question “What do communities value about their local school?” The following chapter introduces the case study used and describe the design process.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The value of educational research is the progressive way it seeks to improve both policy and professional practice in education. 'Educational research has either educational or educative purpose in that it is a means of informing action, proving theory and contributing to the development of knowledge in a field or study (Bourke & Loveridge, 2017). Equity issues, political and social agendas along with exploration for positive change are addressed by educational researchers who seek to enable the voice of participants to be heard, bring culture to the foreground and question the status quo. Bourke and Loveridge (2017) argue that in this way being educational through research is a critical part of having impact.

Educational research is no longer predominated by quantitative research data collected through measurement, operationalized variables, hypothesis testing and statistics. Qualitative data collection, in the educational setting, has allowed researchers ways of collecting data that highlight description, induction, grounded theory and the study of peoples understanding (Geert Ten Dam & Monique Volman, 2001).

It is the way individuals describe and understand their choice that makes qualitative data the focus of this research. Discovering answers to questions that define the way participants describe meanings, concepts, definitions and characteristics of choice is why qualitive research is used (Berg, 2009). Data around experiences that cannot be

expressed by numbers, seeking answers to questions positioned in social settings and unpacking the way individuals inhabit these settings is what qualitative research achieves (Berg, 2009). The rest of this chapter establishes an overarching question and describes the chosen case study research method. An introduction to the case along with participant background, recruitment and invitations is followed by how the questionnaire and future analysis has been planned. This includes ethical considerations taken and future plans to report and share the research outcomes.

3.2 Research Question

The study is researching the question:

What do communities value about their local school?

By collecting parent and staff voice on:

- why they chose the school for their child/ren or to work at
- what they value about the school and student learning at the school
- what they value about school leadership
- what they want leaders to keep doing and do differently
- suggestions for school improvements

the study will be able to draw conclusions from the data to provide answers to the main research question. In addition, the reasoning and human context of the two different perspectives of the participants will evoke further questions and thinking to allow work to evolve around understanding why families chose the local school for their child/ren to attend.

3.3 Case Study Research Design

Case-study has been selected as the preferred methodology for this research because it provides a way to understand important contextual conditions in natural settings (Yin, 2014). Case study research investigates connections, patterns and context using both quantitative and qualitative data (Stake, 1995) – in other words, phenomenon in-depth from the perspectives of the participants. By investigating individuals, groups or large-scale communities, case-studies answer specific research questions that may serve various purposes such as exploratory, descriptive, or evaluative. Case studies draw on a range of different kinds of evidence from the case setting in order to understand phenomenon in depth (Gillham, 2000). For participants, the value of case study research is the gathering and analysis of data to inform their strategic direction. Other schools may also gain insights into the importance of whānau and community voice on the education setting, although the limited generalisability of case study design is acknowledged (Stake, 1995).

In case study design, the researcher is interested in the topic, but maintains a stance of detachment and objectivity, striving to have minimal impact on the setting so as to research the phenomenon in its natural setting (Poskitt, 2019). The researcher for this study, while an educational leader, has no attachment to any of the participating schools.

3.4 Selection of the Case

Case study is bounded by place, people, topic and time. In the current research the place is the city where the schools are located, the people are the communities of each school, the topic or theme is the roll growth that has occurred over the past five years and the changes that may have influenced this. It is possible that the research could have been conducted as a single case study in any one of these schools, however, by collecting data across three schools, who have experienced a similar phenomenon, makes this a multiple, or collective case study. Each school could be an individual case study, but the research covers three schools so in this way uses a multiple-case design (Yin, 2014). Multiple case studies are considered stronger methodologically, since they cover a range of variables, have greater opportunity for validity and reliability for results, and thereby have greater potential for generalisability (Yin 2014).

The collective focus across the three schools in the study is to explore what has attracted local families, who had previously chosen to drive past the gates, back to their local school.

3.5 Background Information on Participant Schools

This research sets out to examine what communities' value about their local school. It is based in three schools that, while geographically different, share similarities. These schools are located in low socio-economic communities, two are urban and one rural, all with decile ratings of 1. In New Zealand school funding is determined by a school's decile rating. The decile ratings are based on the average household income of the school's neighbouring community. Decile ratings range from 1-10 with one being

the schools who serve the most financially disadvantaged communities through to 10 for schools who serve our most financially secure communities. Government funding per student is calculated using the decile system, with low decile schools receiving more funding per student than high decile schools. Two schools are 'Contributing Primary', catering for Year 0-6 students, and one is a 'Full Primary', catering for Year 0-8 students. Five years ago all were experiencing declining rolls and had been identified by the MoE for their rationalisation scheme. The MoE rationalisation scheme's objective is to rationalise MoE property in relation to use. In other words, schools with more buildings than they need to cater for their student numbers are identified for building removal or demolition. All are mainstream, fully state funded, schools. Since 2013 all schools have made new principal appointments and have experienced significant roll growth due to the re-engagement of local families. It is the sharing of this phenomenon that identified them as prospective participants for this research.

3.6 Participant Recruitment and Invitations

Participants to be invited to take part in this research will include members of the school communities:

- Parents and Caregivers of students currently enrolled
- Staff currently working at the schools
- Board of Trustee members

It is considered important to collect data from the current community members in order to get a clear idea of what they value about each school. In this way the researcher is more likely to establish changes or new initiatives that have impacted positively on

school choice. Likewise, the researcher is looking to identify climates that have attracted or maintained staff.

With three distinct participant groups, care has to be taken to ensure the questions are relevant to each group. However, the differences are only needed in the quantitative questions which will allow for respondents to be grouped for effective analysis. The open ended questions will remain the same for each group, to enable comparison of results across the three participant groups (Gillham, 2000). There is also a desire to hear from as many participants as are willing to share their views. Taking all schools and their respective populations into account this totals around 500 potential participants.

Respondent anonymity is further respected by the planned use of each school's 'Student Management System' (SMS) to distribute invitations and information about participation in the research. Links to the appropriate questionnaire will be embedded in each invitation.

3.7 Data Collection

The questionnaire will be developed using the online 'SurveyMonkey' resource. SurveyMonkey provides a platform for the collection of data via questionnaire. SurveyMonkey includes enterprise-grade features in privacy, security, collaboration and compliance. Use of this platform ensures that all responses to each question will be collected and recorded, thereby generating statistics about the representative nature of responses.

The advantages of the survey research via the Internet include the low costs and reduced burdens in comparison to mailed and in-person questionnaires along with the ability to target defined groups (Remillard, Mazor, Cutrona, Gurwitz & Tjia, 2014). Participants will be able to respond at a time that was convenient to them and take as much time as they need to consider and record their answers. In addition their anonymity is guaranteed and so their responses can be shared without fear of reprisal or judgement.

However, limitations will be considered, such as Internet provider service access. Remillard, Mazor, Cutrona, Gurwitz and Tjia (2014) reviewed a number of studies that had used Internet surveys. Common problems across the studies reviewed related to sampling and limited generalisability, with the rigor of findings constrained because not all participants had Internet access. Members of the school communities will be encouraged to utilize the free wi-fi environments in New Zealand schools and, where applicable, to access desktop computers in the school libraries. The library or school administration staff will be available, if participants need assistance with operating the online survey.

3.8 Questionnaire

There are advantages in using a questionnaire to collect research data. Efficiently organised, even large-scale, questionnaires can collect responses in a matter of weeks. Questionnaires enable participants to respond when it suits them, consider their response, rather than the immediacy of face-to-face interviews, retain anonymity, and reduce potential researcher bias, compared with interviews (Gillham 2000). Questionnaires can quickly gather quantitative data and allow for the sharing of ideas

relating to qualitative data. By balancing the use of closed and open questions the risk of frustrating the participant, who wishes to elaborate their answers, is overcome. In line with what Gillham (2000) cautions answers will not be predetermined by the researcher. The questionnaire will open with three closed questions to collect demographic information followed by seven open questions for the collection of qualitative data. Open ended questions are important to this study as they will provide the opportunity for respondents to give answers freely and as they wish with the aim to achieve a greater level of discovery into the research question (Gillham, 2000).

3.9 Data Analysis

The analysis of qualitative data is a process involving a systematic search for meaning that can then be shared with others. The organisation and interrogation of data will allow the researcher to see patterns, identify themes and relationships, make interpretations, and generate theories that either support the literature or address the gaps in research literature as discussed in chapter 2, Literature Review (Haste (2002) in Poskitt (2019)). As the data from this study will be collected via a questionnaire, content analysis will be used.

Content analysis can focus on quantitative and qualitative aspects of data through careful, detailed, systematic examination of data that supports interpretation to identify patterns, themes, biases, and meaning (Berg, 2009). The qualitative aspects of content analysis include conceptual and relational analysis where the responses of open-ended questions are coded according to descriptive attributes, reoccurring themes, relationships, and interpretation of meaning (Richards, 2009). This will see the coding of the data move from the descriptive, to open topic, axial and analytic

coding. With the data coded analytically the researcher will be able to use her knowledge and understanding to make meaning of what the respondents have said. By using qualitative coding there will be the opportunity to interrogate and learn from the data by discerning patterns and explanations before affirming grounded theory or establishing emerging theory (Richards, 2009).

Furthermore, there will be a combination of inductive and deductive approaches used to build grounded theory from the final analysis. The initial inductive approach will see the researcher immersed in the raw data with the sole intention of coding the data into categories using similar attributes within the responses. To move the coding on from this descriptive stage the researcher will view the data through a deductive lens to identify patterns and relationships. The verification processes of deduction will see the researcher making comparisons of emerging themes from the study with themes arising from the literature review analysis. The researcher's experience and interest in educational leadership will realise insights and questions about the data being derived from previous experience with the study phenomena (Berg, 2009). This will also allow for comparisons of data by the categories which will be created in coding and lead to the creation of various deductions (Berg, 2009).

3.10 Coding

To accomplish an analysis of data content coding frames will be used to organize the data and classify findings. This will enable 'Pattern-matching' to occur – one of the most desirable techniques used in case study analysis providing a logic to compare empirically based patterns with prior predictions (Yin 2014). The coding process will move from descriptive, to open topic, axial and analytic coding (Richards, 2009).

Firstly, coding will be conducted on the quantitative data before being repeated on the qualitative data collected through the open-ended question responses. Data will be analysed using – date reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying a conclusion.

The coding process will reduce the data by grouping responses under similar themes to support the attachment of meaning. This first step involves descriptive coding which will see the data sorted into categories using common words, phrases, and attributes identified in relation to the question. Next open topic coding will occur to label the responses according to their subject. With both descriptive and open topic phases completed the data will then be interrogated to discover relationships. This phase is known as Axial coding and will precede analytic coding where the data will be interpreted and reflected on to either affirm data analysed in the literature review or lead to emergence theory. Using all these coding phases each abstraction of potential interest will be identifiable giving guidance to the grounded theory the case study is based on (Yin 2014).

3.11 Ethical Considerations

Research can be unethical when the wrong questions are asked, or the method does not fit the questions. Educational research is worth doing if it has practical value for the participants and can potentially make a contribution to the research literature and/or educational policy. An important ethical consideration is the integrity of the partnership created by Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Protocol is needed to be considered when research involves Māori participants and is relevant to Māori with careful attention paid to the embedded concepts of protection, participation and partnership of the Treaty of Waitangi. The researcher is committed to respecting the integrity of all responses and

ensuring the core values and ideals of all respondents are valued. The selection of participant schools supports the partnership ethos. All schools have a Māori student roll of between 50 and 60 per cent. Two of the three schools offer Māori immersion education, one at level three Māori immersion and the other at level two. The choice of these schools shows the researchers desire to bring together two bodies of knowledge in order to gain better insights (Durie, 2011) into the educational leadership valued by these school communities. The researcher will endeavour to collect data from parents, low socio economic and Māori, who are not well represented in the literature regarding school choice. There is an ethos that indigenous knowledge systems provide a formula for exploring future, understanding the nature, origin, connections, relationships, and trends that occur between and with phenomena (Durie, 2011).

This project has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz HEC: Northern Application 18/54.

3.12 Benefits and/or Risk of Harm to Participants

To clearly understand the risk of harm faced by participants it is essential to first understand the lived reality of the participants in the context of the research. Parents from our predominantly low socio-economic families often find the school setting intimidating and stressful due to their own unsatisfactory school experiences and may therefore feel uncomfortable responding to a questionnaire set in a school context. Furthermore, consideration will be given to the long-term imbalances of power that have resulted in the systematic marginalization of Māori students (Bishop, 2010) as discussed earlier in this chapter. The minimisation of harm to participants, the

researcher, institutions and groups will be achieved through the anonymity of the survey and every participants' right to decline to respond to some or all of the questions. Taking part in this research is voluntary with the avoidance of unnecessary deception addressed via the detailed information sheet (see appendix 1) and researcher contact details to be attached to each invitation to participate.

3.13 Confidentiality

Confidentiality will be assured with only authorised persons having access to information gathered in this research. The research information gathered will be kept secure in the researcher's private 'SurveyMonkey' account and in line with data governance any access will be restricted to authorised users (MUCHEC, 2017). The data will not constitute personal information in the sense of the Privacy Act and does not challenge individual or community expectations about privacy.

3.14 Reporting Back to Participants

The purpose and prosed use of the research findings will be shared via the 'Research Information Sheet' that will accompany the invitations to participants. (see appendix 1) This will indicate that a summary of the research will be available either in the school office or via a link in a school newsletter by the end of the year. If there is enough interest and it is deemed appropriate the researcher will offer a presentation to the community and/or school staff.

While the school communities are seen as the main audience for the report on findings from this research it is likely other schools may be interested. The potential for an audience outside the case schools will necessitate the need for careful handling of any negative findings. The report will address these in accordance with the regularity of pattern they reveal in the coding stage. In addition analysis will include links to literature to ensure that adequate explanation is given and context is considered. In addition to understanding the relevance of these points the researcher must also be prepared for new, surprising and challenging findings to protect the worth and validity of the research (Alderson & Morrow, 2011).

3.15 Validity and Reliability

Consideration will be given to the trustworthiness, credibility and robustness of the qualitative data. With the use of web surveys and in particular open-ended questions results may be been found to not always be consistent. Furthermore, while responses to open-ended questions provide researchers with valuable additional information in their research the nonresponse rate is much higher because of the need for more cognitive resources or processing from the respondent (Zhou, Wang, Zhang, & Guo, 2017). To mitigate this trend the questionnaire will be kept short, only 10 questions, with seven open-ended questions on a similar theme.

Triangulation requires varieties of data, investigators, theories, and methods to be used ensuring that multiple lines of sight are combined to obtain a clearer picture of reality (Berg, 2009). There was is a limitation on the ability to triangulate the data as the questionnaire is the only data collecting tool used. However, data across the three

schools will be triangulated – that is, the emerging themes will be validated across the three sites.

There may also a concern with the adequacy of the notion discussed earlier that our Māori parents may be merely 'playing the game' of Pākeha education. Simon (1990) argues that schools are sites for continual Māori-Pākeha struggle as relations of dominance and subordination have powered the historic and wide-spread underachievement of Māori within education. Her research revealed that generally schools, in a variety of ways, control and limit Maori access to knowledge-power thereby helping to maintain asymmetry in Māori-Pākeha relations. From this she reasoned that Māori children who succeed within education do so primarily because their families have learned to deal with the system. Opinions such as this could impact on the validity of the data – are our Māori participating as Māori and sharing their answers from their Māori perspective reflecting the values of Māori? The researcher will keep checks on these potential threats to validity via cultural advisors both on the research support team and in local iwi.

3.16 Conclusion

This chapter discussed the value of educational research in informing action, providing theory and contributing to the development of knowledge. Based on the research question and the type of data the questionnaire is aiming to capture a qualitative approach using case study has been determined to be the most appropriate methodology and limitations case study may have on the research have been discussed. A questionnaire using both closed and open-ended questions has been recognised as the most appropriate data collection method with the open-ended

questions designed to enable participants to describe their meaning. The researcher has been identified as working through an educational lens to ensure participant voice is heard thereby, addressing equity issues as well as political and social agendas. (Bourke & Loveridge, 2017). Methods to analyse and code the data for theory emergence and affirmation of grounded theory have been outlined. The importance of the validity and integrity along with confidentiality was discussed and potential ethical issues and the means of mitigating these were addressed. The following chapter will report the reality of data collection in this study and compare the planned approach with the actual.

Chapter 4: Practical Application of the Research

4.1 Introduction

This chapter deals with the realities experienced in the research field. Once agreement had been confirmed by the selected school BoTs parents, staff and BoT members were invited to participate by following a link to the 'SurveyMonkey' questionnaire. The researcher conducted a number of field visits to qualify any concerns that arose, keep schools informed on engagement levels, and address the identified ethical issues. Once the data was collected the analysis process began by using a clear pathway starting with descriptive coding followed by topic coding before relationships were able to be explored through axial coding and the final step of analytic coding enabling the data to undergo interpretation and reflection. The limitations that the research experienced along with an extended timeframe have also been discussed and considered using the literature reviewed during the design phase to identify and explain these occurrences.

4.2 Background About Participants

It was identified in the design phase of this study that the number of participants needed to be enough to give sufficient data while allowing for possible non-engagement of invited participants. The study endeavoured to collect voice from economically disadvantaged communities and address a gap in the literature on school choice. However, research literature identified this sector of society as the least likely to engage in questionnaires or surveys (Zhou, Wang, Zhang and Gho. 2017).

The demographics of the three invited schools, were similarly economically disadvantaged and they shared recent experience of the phenomenon related to roll growth. Each school principal was approached about potential participation of their community in the research and all were positive, and indicated that their respective Board of Trustees (BoT) would also be agreeable.

The sampling of the participants was carried out using the following process:

1. Ethics approval for the study was gained from Massey University Human Ethics – HEC: Northern Application 18/54
2. Approval from School Boards of Trustees was requested to invite the voluntary participation of school families and staff. This was completed by 28 February 2019. (see Appendix 2)
3. Letters of invitation to participate, (see Appendices 3) and the associated 'Research Information Sheets' (see Appendix 1) were delivered to each school principal for distribution to their school families, staff, and Board of Trustee members
4. The questionnaire was made live through the 'SurveyMonkey' platform with a close off date of 12 April 2019 (see Appendix 4 & 5).

4.3 Realities of Data Collection in the Field

4.3.1 Initial field visits

The researcher visited the principals of each school on 5 February 2019. During these visits, the study was explained verbally. The principals were given the 'Research Information Sheet' (see Appendix 1) and the letter to their respective BoT seeking

approval to invite the school community to participate (see Appendix 2). There was also the opportunity to discuss the study further with the researcher and ask any questions. Each principal indicated that they would enter both the 'Research Information Sheet' and the 'Letter seeking BoT approval' into the BoT correspondence for their next meeting. They agreed to reply to the researcher immediately after their respective meeting dates:

School A – Thursday 14 February

School B – Thursday 28 February

School C – Thursday 28 February

Once the researcher had received BoT approval to invite participants from their schools, the researcher visited the three school principals, on 5 May 2019, to deliver 'Participant Invitation Letters' (see Appendices 3) and 'Research Information Sheets' (see Appendix 1). All three principals agreed to put the invitation out to their communities on the following Monday 11 March 2019. This would give a four-week window for responses before the end of term (12 April 2019).

4.3.2 Additional field visits

By the close off date, 12 April 2019, there were responses from the parent and staff groups for two of the three schools. Responses had from school B and C had been received totalling – eight parent responses, twelve staff responses, and no BoT responses. The researcher visited the school principals again during the week beginning the 8 April and, in consultation with the thesis supervisors, agreed to extend closing date of survey to 31 May 2019.

At the 31 May close off date there were still responses from only the parent and staff groups from school B and C totalling – thirteen parent responses, twenty-two staff responses, with still no BoT responses.

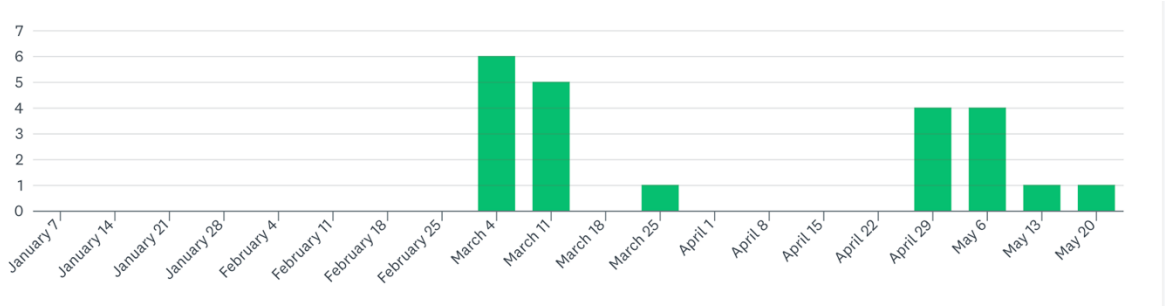

Table 1: Staff response submissions

Seeking further guidance from the research supervisors and a meeting with principals meant that the parent and BoT surveys had to be extended until 31 July 2019. In addition, a number of questionnaires were provided in printed format for parents who preferred these which were collected via a labelled box in each school foyer. These responses were to be collected by the researcher for manual input. It was at this stage that it became apparent that school A was not going to participate.

By 31 July 2019 there were six hardcopy responses to be manually recorded by the researcher and a further five online responses. All additional responses were from the parent group, with closing total – twenty four parent responses and no BoT responses.

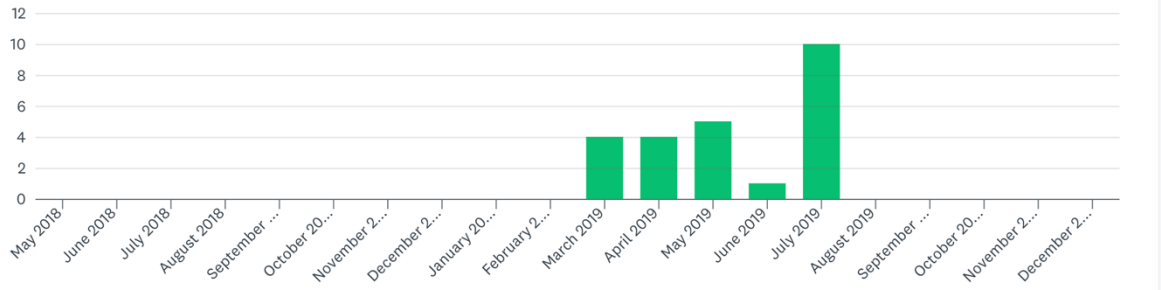

Table 2: Parent response submissions

Discussions with each principal early in August revealed that the BoT members had indicated that they had responded to either the parent or staff questionnaire. Each BoT had at least one member who did not fit into either the parent or staff group who did not participate.

4.4 Ethical issues

This research was reviewed and approved as a low-risk study by Massey University. There were no major ethical issues identified in the design of the study and the thesis supervisors provided approval to continue.

The only issue that was identified as a possible concern was that of the professional relationship between the researcher and the principals of the participating schools. All were fellow members of the local branch of the New Zealand Principals' Federation (NZPF) on which the researcher was an executive member. However, membership of the NZPF is voluntary and does not impact upon a school's status with the MoE or within the community. There was no pressure put on the principals to have their schools participate. They were fully informed of the aims and details of the study, and that they could withdraw at any point, with no adverse consequences. Furthermore, the 'SurveyMonkey' platform allowed participants to remain anonymous, thereby protecting them from being identified by the researcher.

However, one ethical issue did arise during the researcher's final visit to principals. The principal of 'School A' shared with the researcher that he had not sent the invitations and information sheets out via the schools' SMS as agreed. He had instead put the 'SurveyMonkey' link onto the school Facebook page. When the researcher

explained the impact that this action would have on the validity and reliability of the data along with the ethical implications to the research, he was unconcerned. As the researcher left his office he gave assurance that his actions were done with good intent. He also informed the researcher that he was moving out of town and would be finishing at the end of the year or sooner. The researcher discussed this with the thesis supervisors and made the decision to remove any responses that came from school A. Thankfully none did. The researcher was left wondering if the Facebook post really happened.

4.5 Data Analysis

4.5.1 Quantitative data analysis

The initial design of this study included the collection of quantitative data to allow statistical analysis to occur. The closed questions at the beginning of each questionnaire aimed at establishing which school context was being used and whether there was a bias relating to experiences at a particular school level. (Appendix 4 & 5). However, the reality was that there were an insufficient number of responses to warrant analysing the potential for bias in detail.

4.5.2 Qualitative data analysis

Participant responses were collected via the 'SurveyMonkey' platform. Following a descriptive coding process qualitative data was transcribed into an 'Excel' spreadsheet and colour coded to enable themes to be established. These themes established open topics that could be compared across the groups for differences and convergence. Analysis of the proportionate (percentage) representation of each group

in these theme areas supported the deductive data analysis needed to tie the research data to the literature review themes.

4.5.3 Coding

The coding process saw the reduction of the data by grouping responses under similar themes to support the attachment of meaning. To accomplish an analysis of data, content coding frames were used to organise the data to classify the findings. This enabled 'Pattern-matching' to occur that provided a means to match the data with the literature (Yin 2014). This inductive coding process allowed for the combination of quantitative and qualitative data.

Initially open coding was used because the research aim was to gather data for identified gaps in the literature. Codes used to identify Parent/Caregiver and Staff participants show the number of respondents for each question. See the example in the following section 4.4.4 Analysis. These were then coded descriptively into categories using common words, phrases and features of the answers. Topic coding was then used to label the responses according to their theme at which stage the data was Axial coded according to the relationships discovered. Finally, analytic coding was used so the data was able to be interpreted and reflected on to either affirm the research discussed in the literature review or address the gaps identified in the literature (Richards, 2009).

4.5.4 Analysis

The researcher followed Berg's (2009) six steps to analyse the qualitative data.

1. Participant responses to the questionnaire were transcribed from the 'SurveyMonkey' platform and entered into an 'Excel' spreadsheet.
2. Codes were analytically inductively identified in the data that were collated into colour coded bands on the 'Excel' spreadsheet.
3. These coloured codes were transformed into labelled categories (topic coding).
4. Axial coding established relationships within the data.
5. The data were sorted using the established categories to identify similar words or phrases, response patterns, relationships across categories, and areas of disparity and convergence (analytic coding).
6. Identified patterns were then considered alongside the findings of the literature review to establish discussion points.

The process of analytic coding produced discrete themes that, in turn, initiated the process of interpreting and reflecting on meaning, established emerging theory and affirmed grounded theory (Richards, 2009). By presenting these themes graphically the researcher was able to take a broadly holistic view of the interrelationships between codes, categories, and themes as shown in Figure 1: Example of coding process (see the following page). Such tables are comprehensively used and analysed in the following chapter, Chapter 5: Findings.

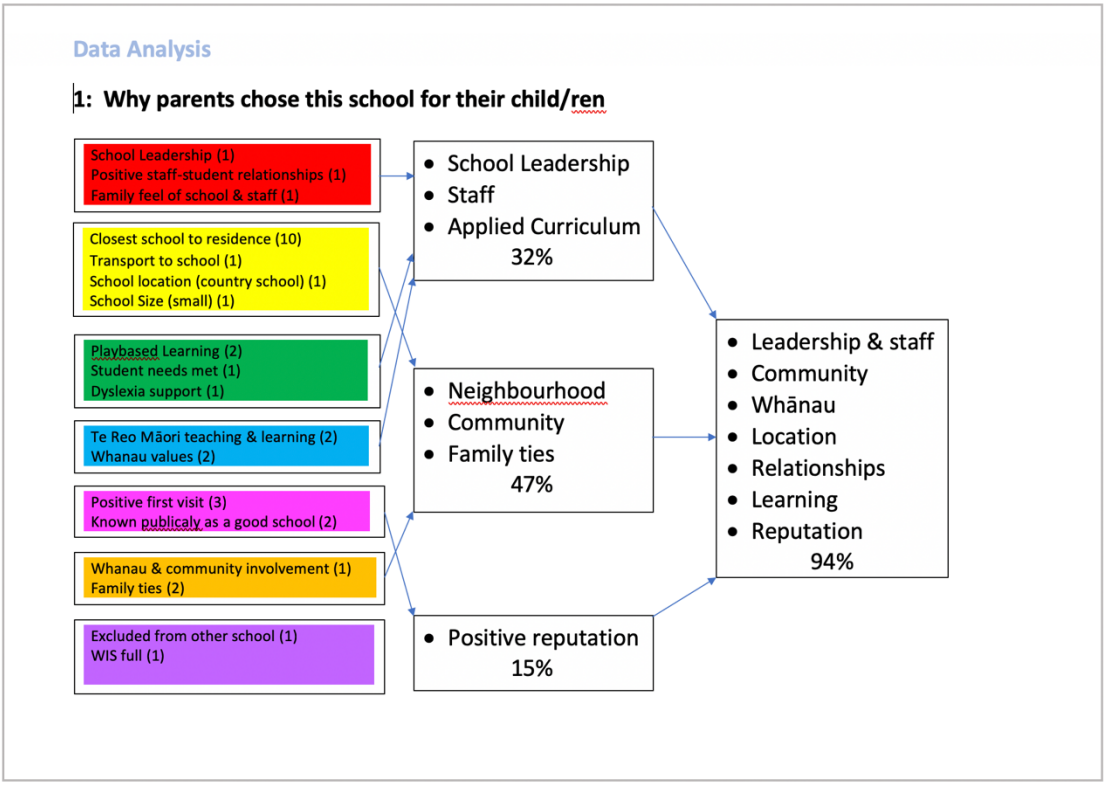

Figure 1: Example of data coding chart

4.6 Limitations of the Study

While this study was initially planned to be conducted in three New Zealand primary schools only two schools participated resulting in a smaller than expected sample. Upon reflection, the researcher believes the inclusion of three closed questions to collect quantitative data might have detracted potential participants from School A from participating in the research study. The opening question asked respondents to identify the school that they were associated with. As discussed in the Introduction (Chapter 1) New Zealand schools operate in a competitive climate created by *Tomorrow's Schools.* Of the three schools in the study, School A was the one that most recently experienced roll growth and the principal may have decided there was risk 'School A' was identifiable and therefore chose not to participate. Furthermore, the researcher planned and invited parent, staff, and BoT, thereby establishing three

groups, to participate. However, there were only responses for the parent and staff groups with no responses received for the BoT group. Again, upon reflection, the researcher considers that the participants might have been dissuaded from responding as a member of the BoT group due to the small size of the group a risk they associated with being identified.

However, with responses form only two groups of participants from two schools, the number of responses meant that it was not necessary to use the quantitative data to sort or collate the respondents into groups. This data had been designed to aid analysis were there to have been a large number of responses. However, this data was analysed to ensure that there was a proportionate number of responses from each school.

4.7 Time Period of the Study

The time period of the study was considerably longer than originally intended. At the design stage it was intended that the responses to the questionnaires would be completed by the end of the first term of the school year. In practice this timeframe was extended to the end of the second term – three months longer than anticipated. The decision to finish data collection, even though the response number was relatively small, was made due to time restraints on the researcher for the completion of this thesis and the richness of the data provided by the participants.

4.8 Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the realities experienced in collecting, analysing and coding the research data. The selected schools gave agreement for the researcher to invite members of three different groups, being parents, staff and BoT members, within their communities to participate in the research. The sharing of the questionnaire via a shared link to the 'SurveyMonkey' began the data collection proper. However, the researcher had to make an additional two field visits to address concerns relating to low participant response and to establish new timeframes for the data collection. The BoT group gave no responses and clarification with the selected school principals established that this group had chosen to respond as part of either the parent or staff groups. Participants from School A did not submit any responses seeing the participant base reduced to two schools, being School B and School C. Collected data was analysed using a coding pathway that moved from descriptive coding to topic coding through axial coding, for relationship discovery and finally analytic coding where data underwent interpretation, to consider the literature gaps, and reflection, to affirm the literature reviewed. The following chapter, Chapter 5, presents the findings using the graphic coding approach described in this chapter.

Chapter 5: Findings

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results from the questionnaire conducted with parents and teachers from the two participating schools. It examines the factors that each group, parents and teachers, value about their local school. Completed questionnaires were collated, and analysed to find convergent and divergent themes, as outlined earlier in the previous chapter (see Figure 1: Example of coding process – p. 58). The main categories that emerged in relation to school choice and continued support of their local school, included: staffing, applied curriculum, bicultural practices, inclusive practices, and maintaining the positive atmosphere of the schools. This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire that provided the data collected for this research.

5.2 Why This School?

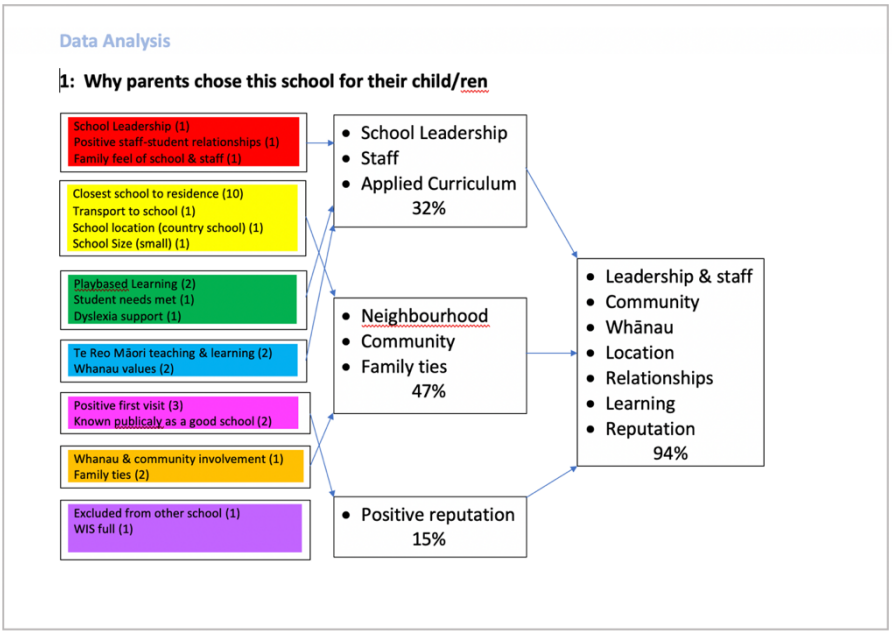

Figure 2: Coding of parent responses to school choice

Leadership, staff, community, whānau, location, relationships, learning and reputation were the common themes for parents choosing these schools for their children. Specifically, 47 per cent of respondents identified location within the neighbourhood along with community and family ties as being important factors influencing their choice of school. Both schools had respondents who referred to generations of their family attending the schools. The other area of considerable agreement was in school leadership, staff, and the applied curriculum with 32 per cent of respondents identifying these as having a significant influence over their choice of school. The school's reputation was also identified but only in 15 per cent of cases.

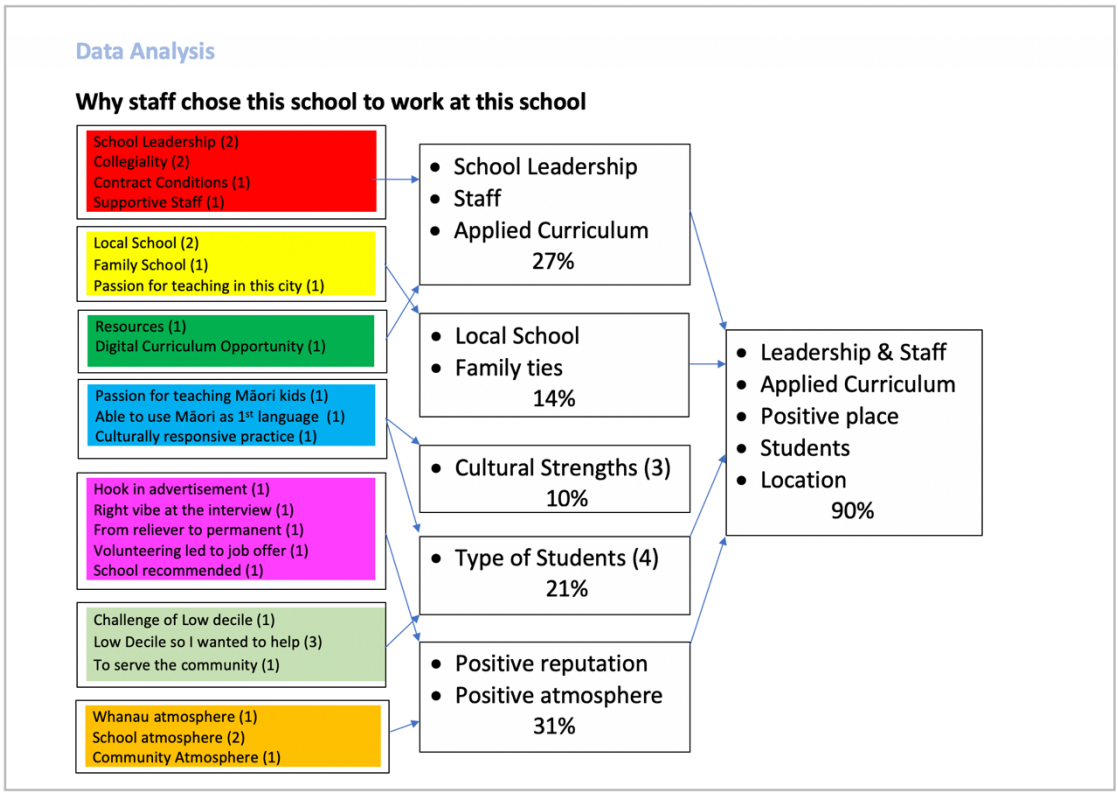

Figure 3: Coding of staff responses to school choice

Staff also identified leadership, staff, and location as reasons they chose to teach at the schools along with the applied curriculum, students, and positivity of the place. Comments from staff relating to 'hook in' advertisements and 'positive vibes' at

interviews indicate that positivity is an early influence on their decision to work at the school. Thirty one per cent of staff responses emphasised both a positive reputation and positive atmosphere. Three othr areas that staff identified as reasons they chose to teach at the schools were the school leadership (27%), staff (27%), and applied curriculum (27%) and the type of students (21%).

Converging reasons each group, parents and staff, chose the school to either send their child/ren to or work at were school leadership, staff, and location.

5.3 School Features Valued

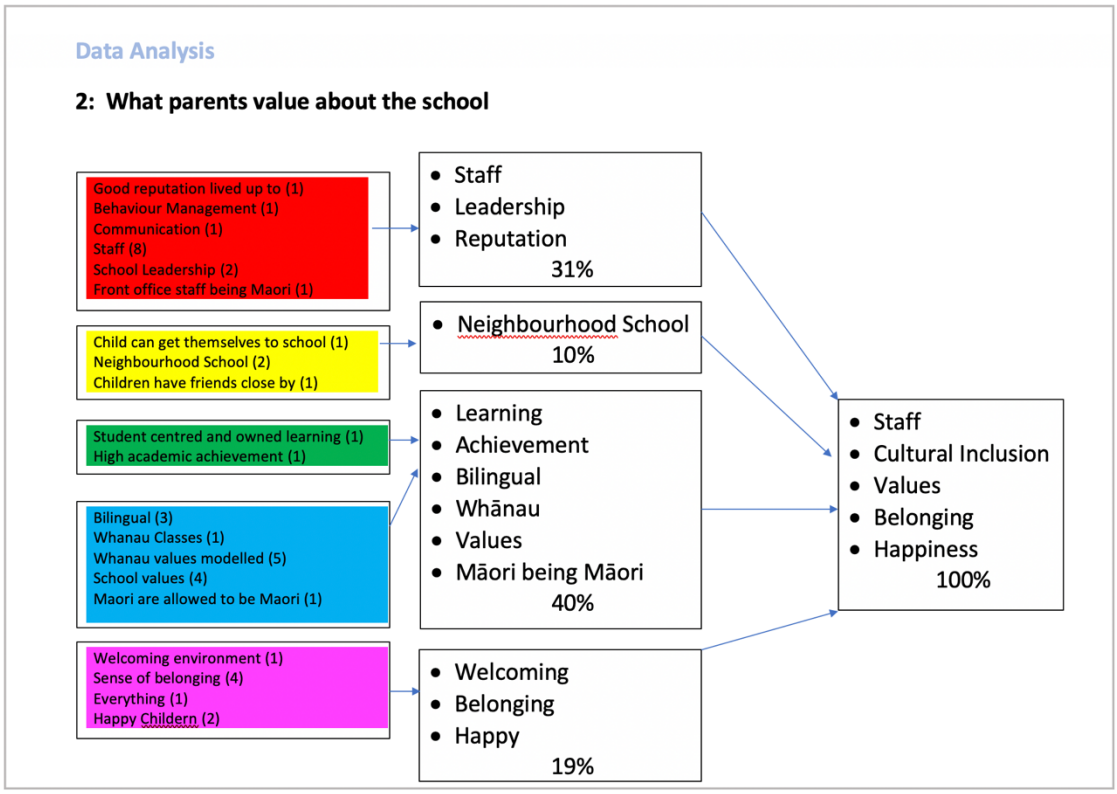

Figure 4: Coding of parent responses to school features valued

Parents identified staff, cultural inclusion, values, location, belonging, and happiness as features of the school they value. Almost one-half of parents valued aspects of curriculum with the more implicit areas being the modelling of whanau values, school values, and Māori being Māori ranking above the explicit curriculum namely learning, achievement, and bilingual. School leadership, staff, and reputation were valued by 31 per cent while welcoming, belonging and happy were valued by 19 per cent of parent respondents. The location of the school in the neighbourhood was valued by 10 per cent of respondents. The staff, curriculum, and emotional categories all had responses that overlapped with the cultural category. The front office staff being Māori, the bilingual teaching and whānau classes along with a sense of belonging were identified as valued features of the school.

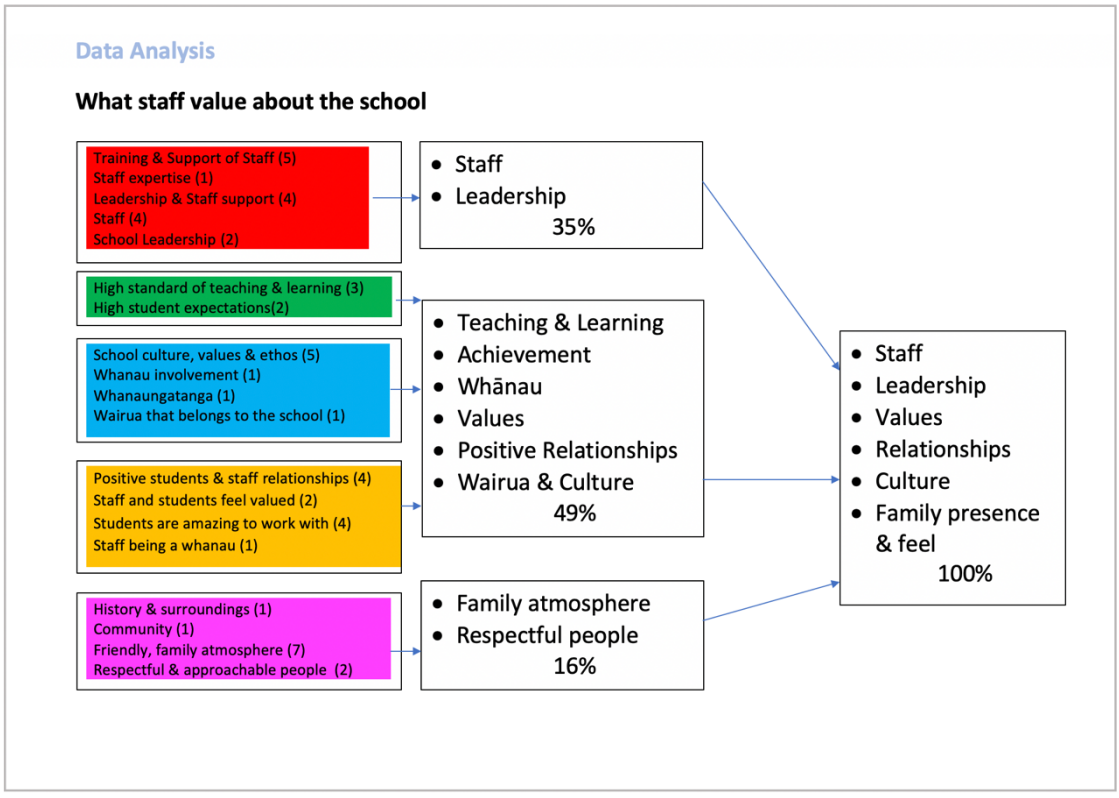

Figure 5: Coding of staff responses to school features valued

School leadership, staff, and values were likewise identified by staff as valued. In contrast to the parents the staff identified the explicit curriculum, such as teaching and learning along with achievement, as being valued. While the school values are mentioned by staff they do not identify the cultural aspect of these. A breakdown of the staff responses shows high value on the business of school – school leadership, staff, teaching and learning and achievement with the valued relationships being between staff-student and staff-staff. Although the friendly, family atmosphere is valued there are no specific references made to whānau values as in the parents' survey.

Converging values occurred, for parents and staff, in school leadership, staff and school values. However, the value parents place on the cultural aspects of the school, values in particular, are not shared by the staff respondents.

5.4 Student Learning

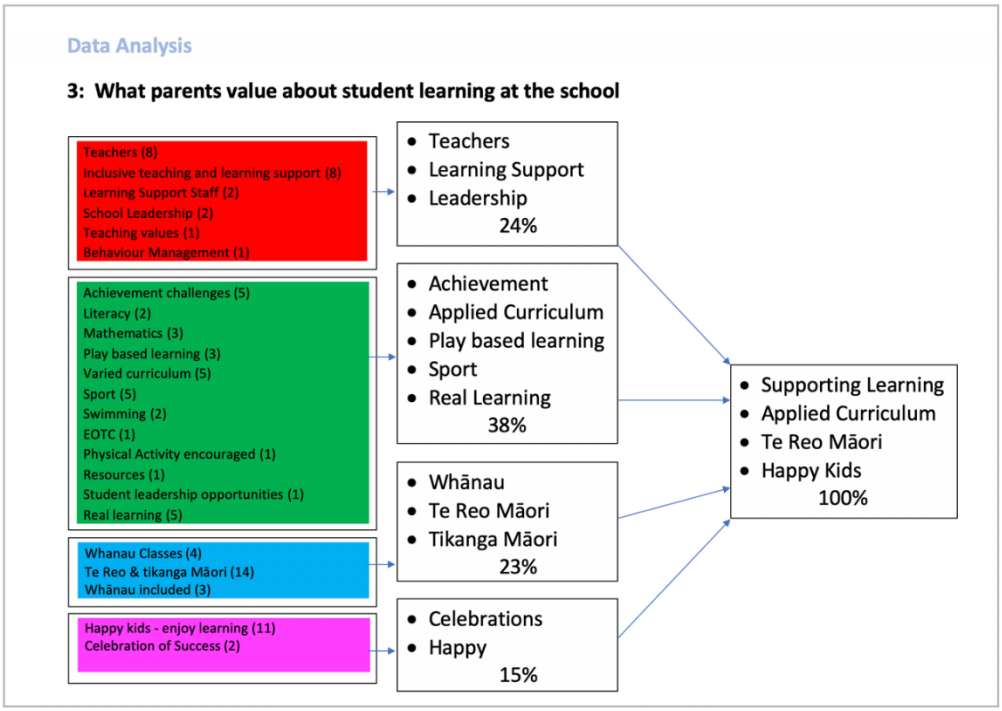

Figure 6: Coding of parent responses to student learning

Supporting learning, applied curriculum, te reo Māori, and happy students were seen as having value in student learning by parent respondents. Specifically, teachers, inclusive practices, learning support, and learning support staff were identified by 24 per cent of parents as valued in relation to student learning. Areas of the applied curriculum featured with reference to subjects and programmes. The value on cultural features of the school continued to feature for parents with the whānau classes, teaching of te reo Māori, and whānau inclusion identified by 23 per cent of respondents. Another area of significance for parents was 'Happy kids – enjoying learning'.

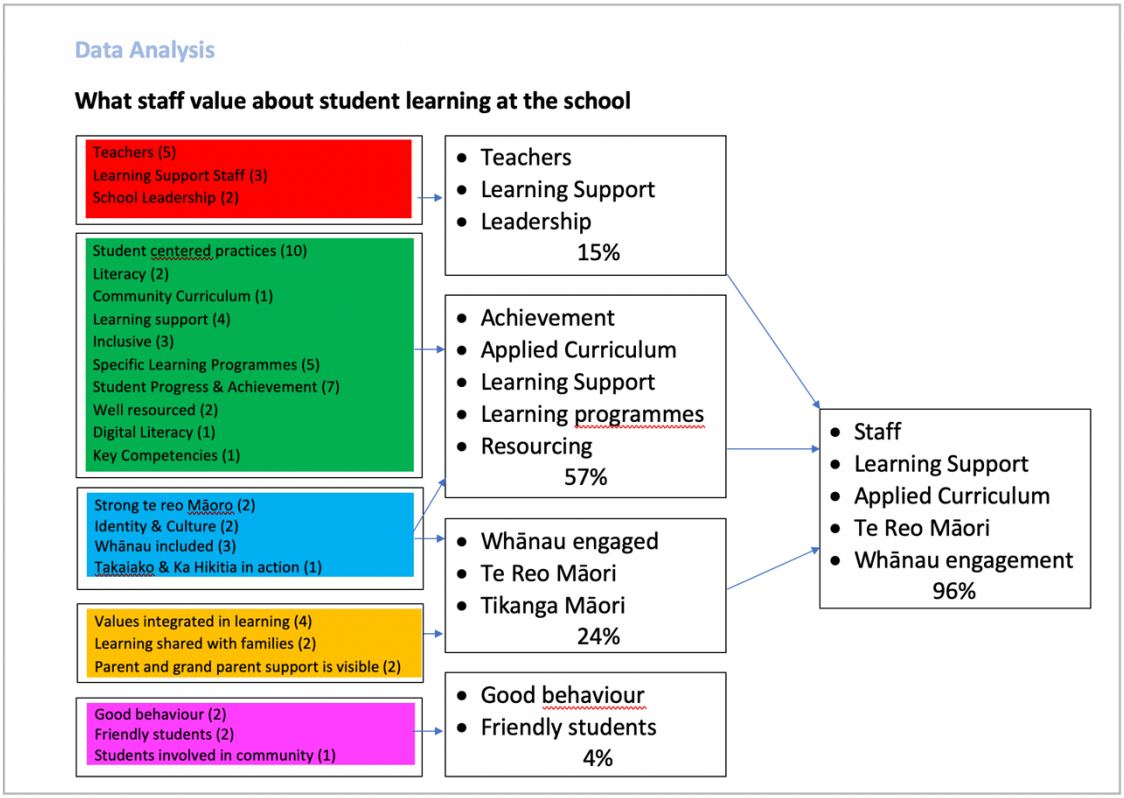

Figure 7: Coding of staff responses to student learning

Staff also valued learning support, applied curriculum and te reo Māori. The main difference is the weighting that these areas are given by staff in comparison to parents. The school leadership, teacher, and learning support category was identified by just 15 per cent of respondent staff as opposed to 24 per cent of parents while the

achievement, applied curriculum, learning programmes, and resourcing category is valued by 57 per cent of staff and 38 per cent of parents. Staff have also identified whānau engagement in student learning as something they value. However, this was not mentioned by parents themselves.

Learning support, applied curriculum, and te reo Māori were converging areas of value in relation to student learning that were identified by both parents and staff. However, each group gives significantly different weighting to these. Interestingly, parents placed importance on happy children who enjoy learning of value whereas staff made no mention of this.

5.5 School Leadership

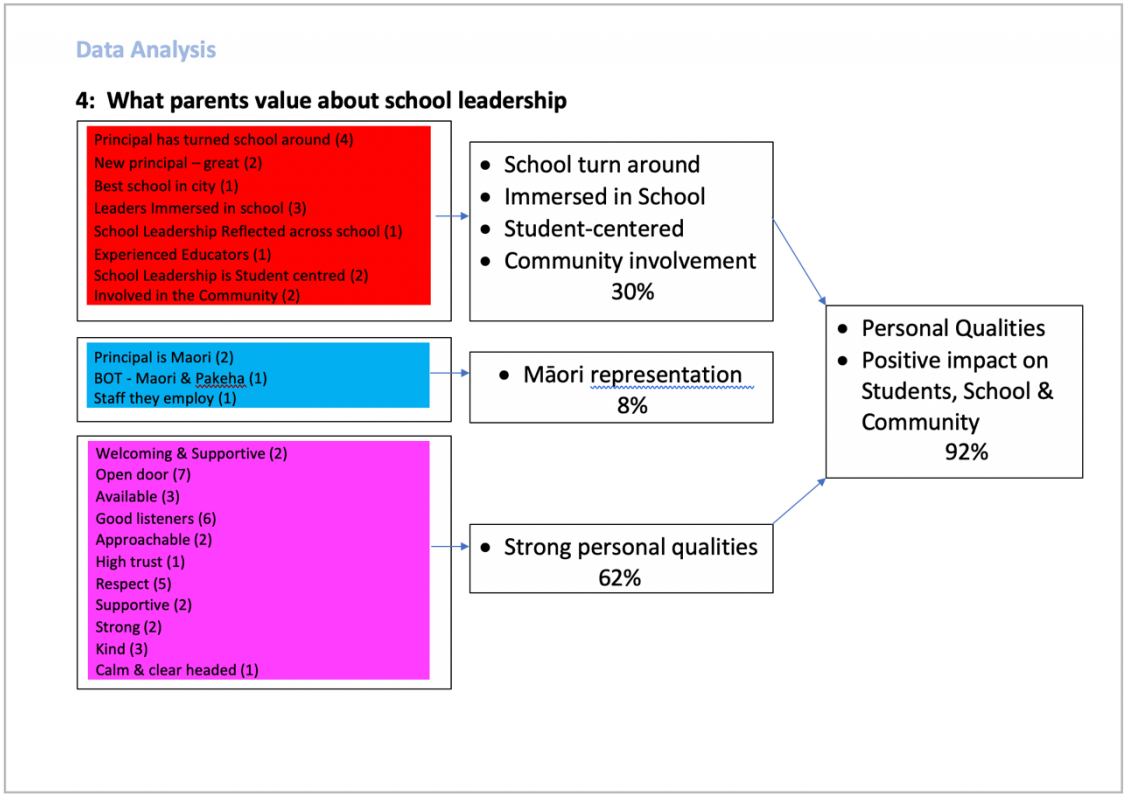

Figure 8: Coding of parent responses to school leadership

Strong personal qualities of the school leaders are valued by 62 per cent of parent respondents. Qualities around having an 'open door' and being 'good listeners' are valued by a significant number of parent respondents. Thirty per cent of this group value the way the school leaders lead and the impact this has had on the school. Comments such as 'Principal has turned the school around' and 'Leaders immersed in the school' indicate the high value parents place on school leadership. It is worth noting that Māori representation, the school principal and Board of Trustees was identified by eight per cent of parent respondents. This feature was not mentioned at all by the staff.

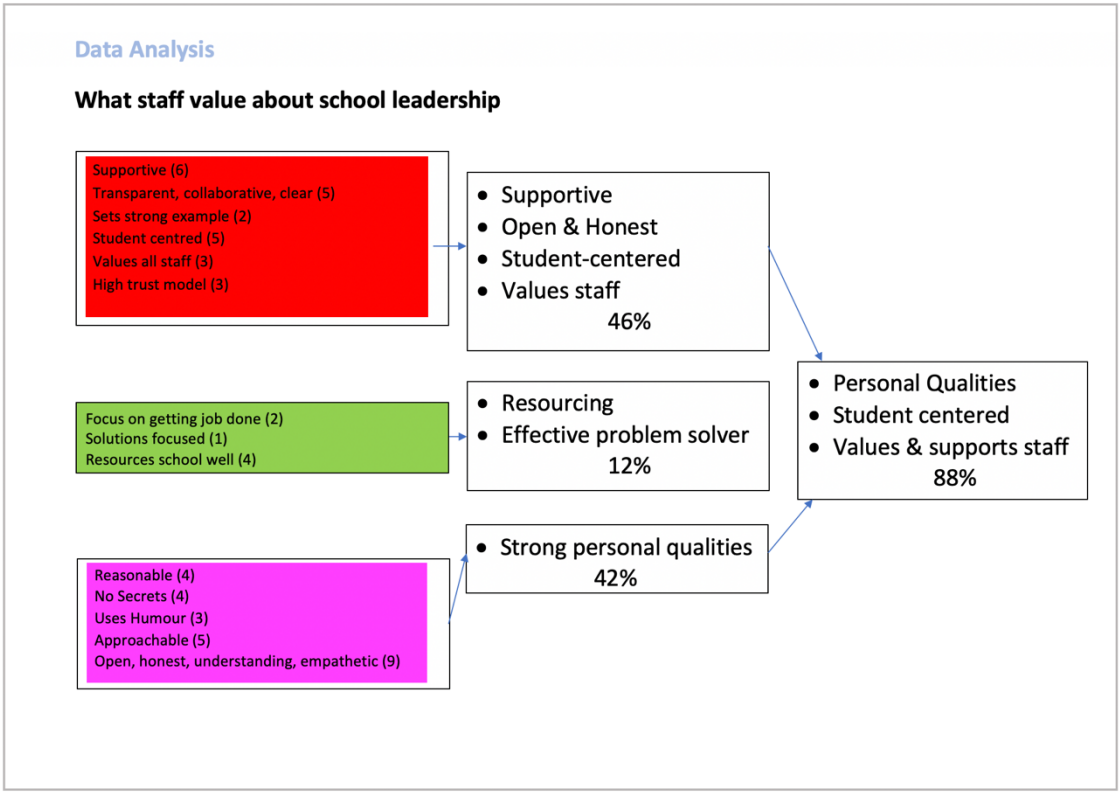

Figure 9: Coding of staff responses to school leadership

Staff responses also identified in terms of school leadership with strong personal qualities valued. However, their rating was 42 per cent with 46 per cent being given to the supportive, student-centred, and valuing of staff categories. Staff also identified resourcing and problem solving as important qualities of school leadership.

There was convergence of views between parents and staff in relation to personal qualities of school leaders are valued. What is different is how each group views how these qualities have an impact upon the school. Parents perceive these qualities as a reasons for school choice and increasing roll numbers while staff see them in relation to supportive leaders who value their staff. It could, quite rightly, be argued that what the staff value is part of the school turn around that also are valued by the parents.

5.6 What School Leaders Should Continue To Do

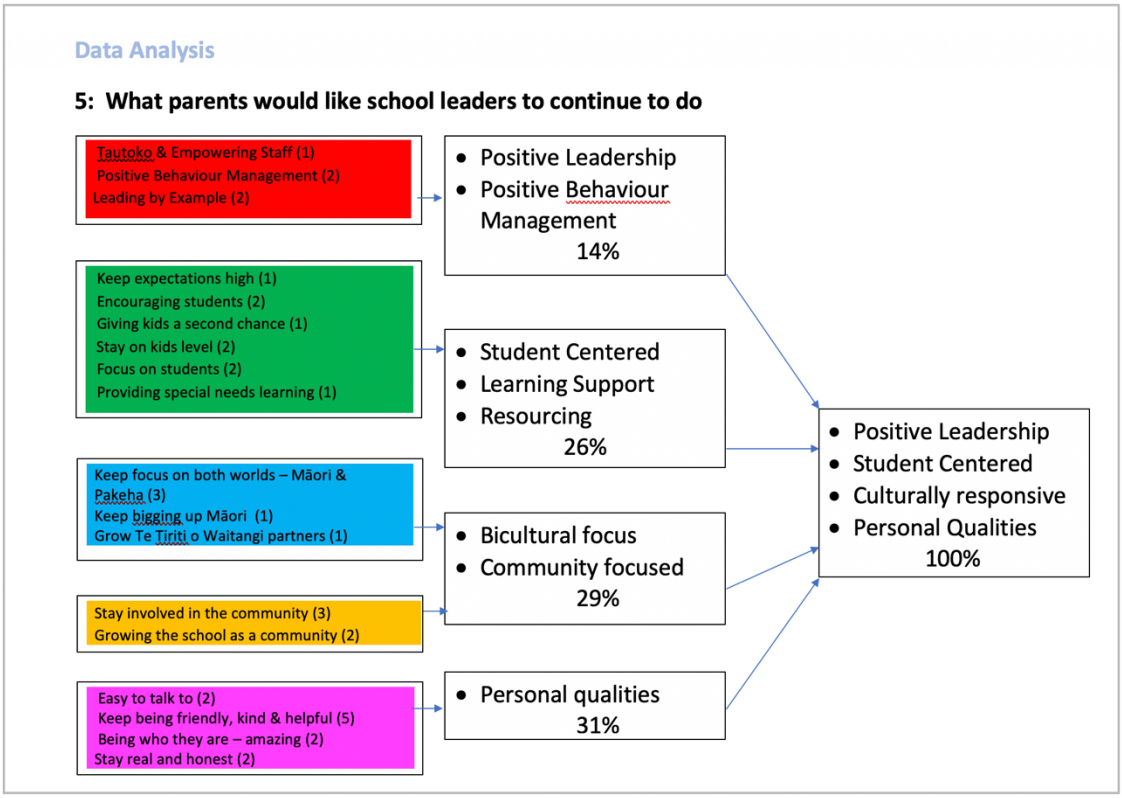

Figure 10: Coding of what parents want school leaders to continue to do

Maintaining the personal qualities of leaders, acknowledged in the previous question, were identified again by parents in response to this question. Thirty one per cent of responses referred to personal qualities, 29 per cent to bicultural and community focus, 26 per cent to student-centred learning, support and resourcing and 14 per cent to positive leadership style and behaviour management. Responses in relation to student centred practices includes 'giving kids a second chance' and 'stay on kids level'. In the bicultural focus area parents referred to 'keeping focus on both worlds – Māori and Pākeha', 'keep bigging up Māori', and 'growing Te Tiriti o Waitangi'.

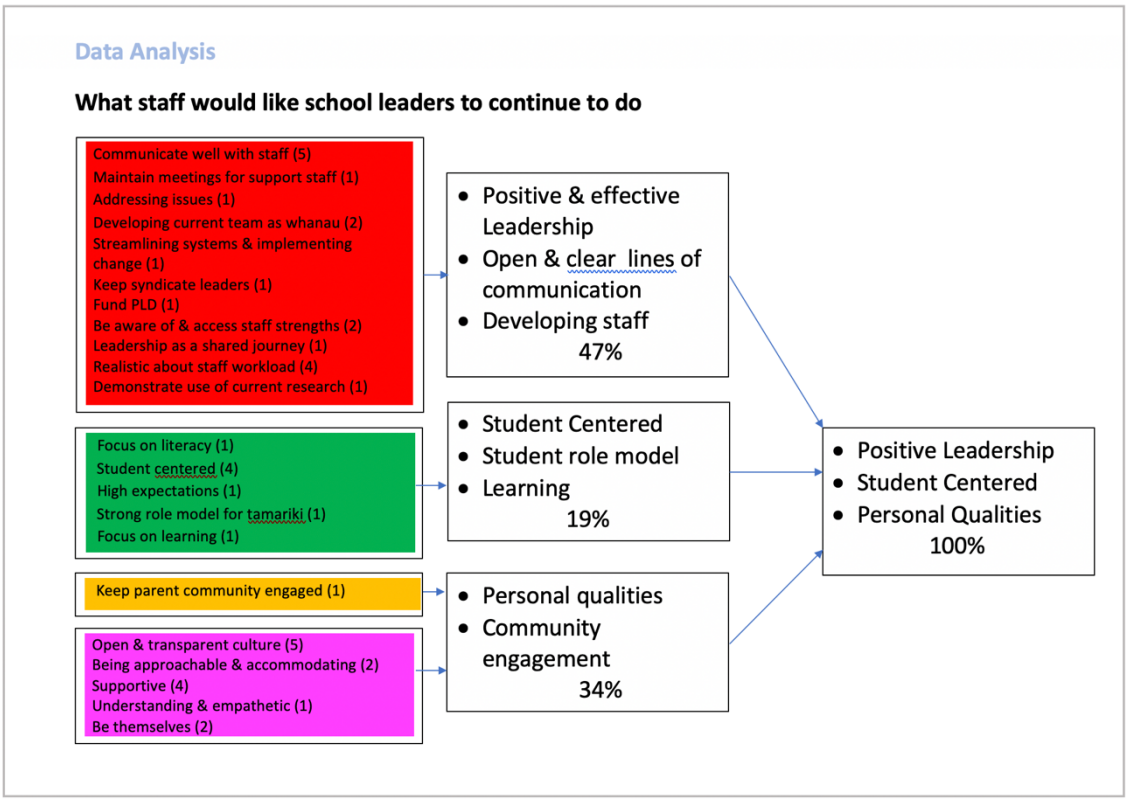

Figure 11: Coding of what staff want school leaders to continue to do

Staff identified the same actions as parents in this section with the exception of culturally responsiveness. This was an area that only the parents felt should continue. This section also sees a breakdown of each thematic area by staff. The area featuring positive leadership included open and clear lines of communication and developing staff represented 47 per cent of staff responses. The other area of significance was personal qualities and community engagement at 34 per cent.

Responses from parents and staff converged around positive leadership, student centred practices, and personal qualities as being what they want leaders to continue to do. However, parents also considered cultural responsiveness to be important whereas this area was not mentioned by staff respondents.

5.7 What School Leaders Should Do Differently

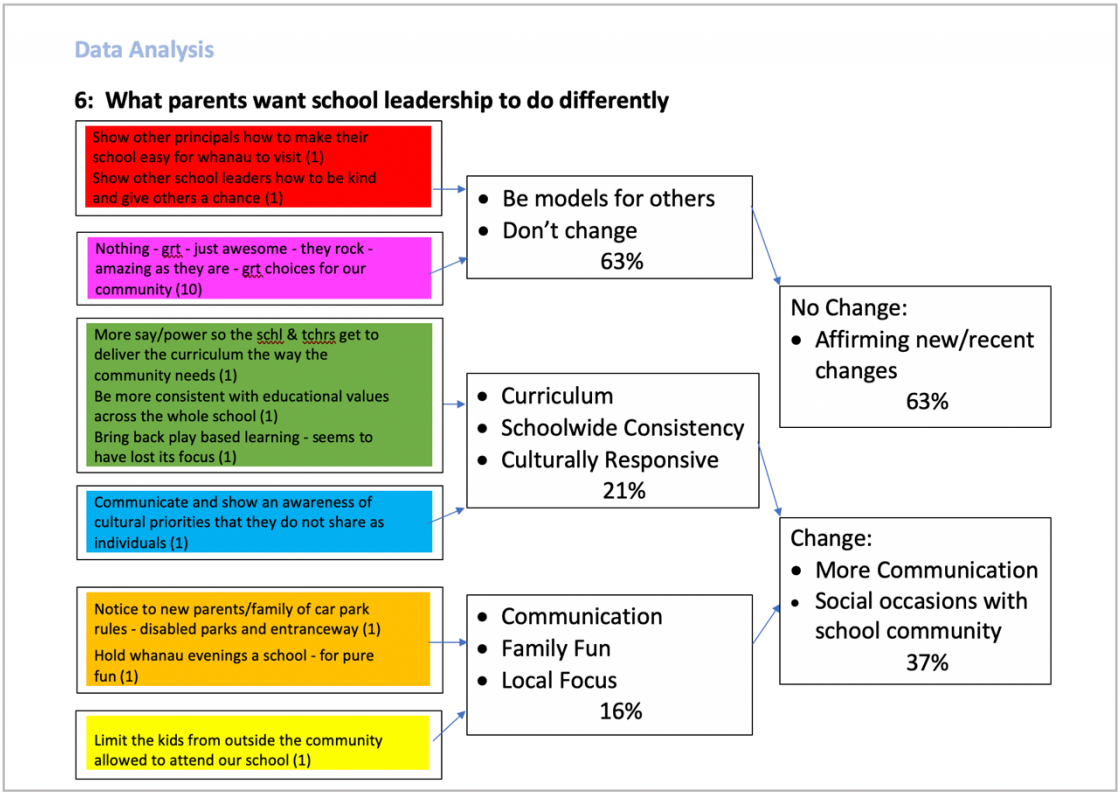

Figure 12: Coding of what parents want school leaders to do differently

Sixty three per cent of parent responses indicated that no change was needed. They shared a belief that the current leadership of the schools was at such a level that they should be exploring ways to share their practice with other schools. This is supported by comments such as "Show other principals how to make their school easy for whānau to visit" and "Show other school leaders how to be kind and give others a chance".

Areas that parents felt there could be change included the curriculum, school wide consistency with educational values, cultural responsiveness, and fun, social occasions with the whole school community. There was also a hint that the schools surveyed might consider limiting the number of students they accepted from outside

the community. As one of the schools is in a rural setting and buses students from the city this would align with local parental sentiment.

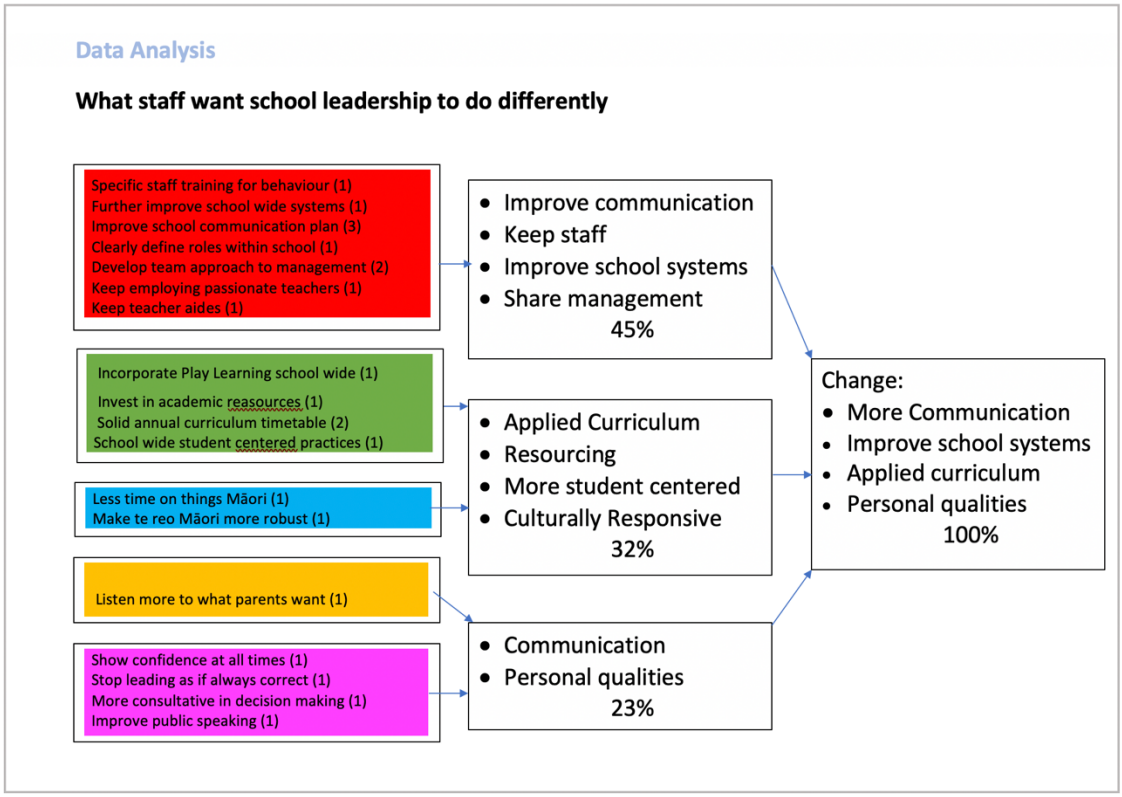

Figure 13: Coding of what staff want school leaders to do differently

The staff responses included only areas of change. There were no responses from this group that suggested, like the parents, that no change was needed. Areas that the staff identified for change included more communication, improvement of school systems, adaptions to the applied curriculum, and personal qualities. This shows there are staff who believe that their leaders need more confidence, as identified in comments 'leading from a stance of always being right', 'needing to be more consultative in decision making', and 'lacking in their current public speaking skills'.

The area of what leaders could do differently saw the most notable differences in the opinions of the two groups, parents and staff, could be seen. Significantly, there was

no convergence of responses with most parent indicating that no change was needed whereas all the staff responses identified areas for change.

5.8 Other Comments About the School

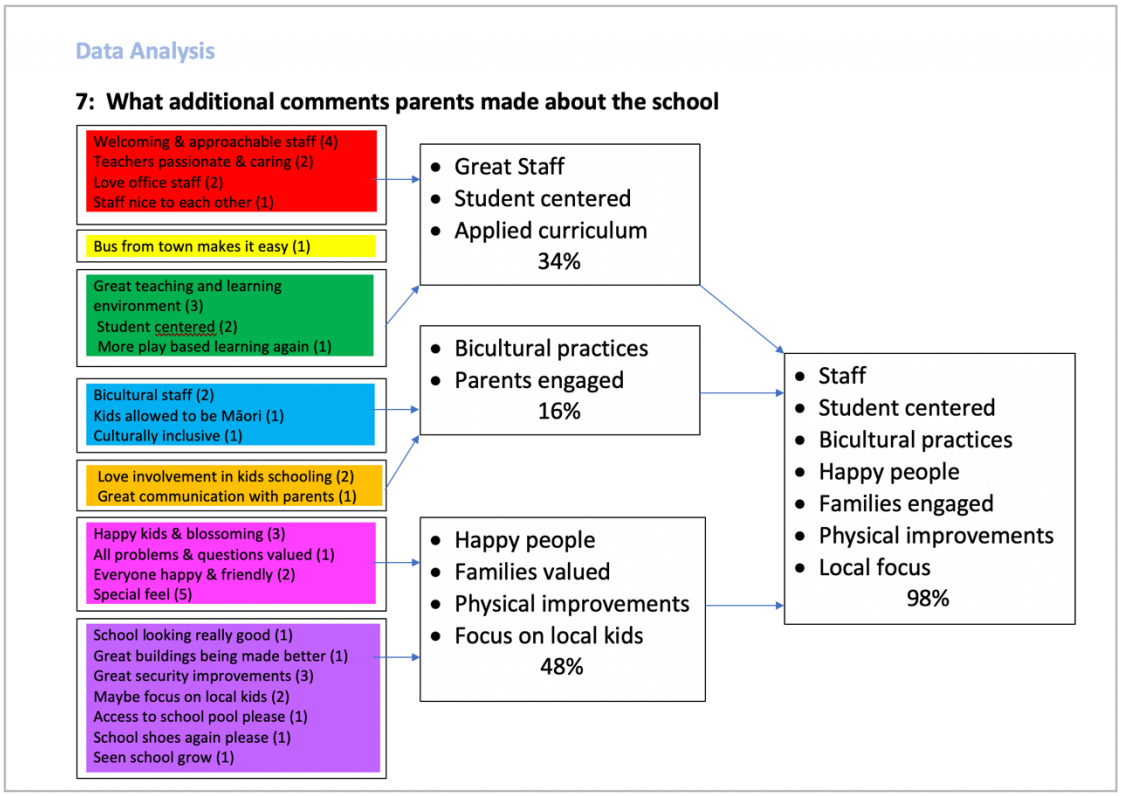

Figure 14: Coding of parents' additional comments about the school

Additional parent comments about the school focussed on staff, student centred practices, bicultural practices, happiness, family engagement, physical improvements, and local focus. It is also significant that it is only the areas of physical improvements and local focus that attracted negative comments from this group. Access to the school pool, the supply of shoes, and a suggestion to focus on local students – reminiscent of suggestions made in section 5.6 – were the only areas that were mentioned in a way that suggested parents would like to see change. All other areas were positive with “Welcoming and approachable staff”, “Great teaching and learning environment”,

"Happy kids and blossoming", and "Great security improvements" getting multiple mentions.

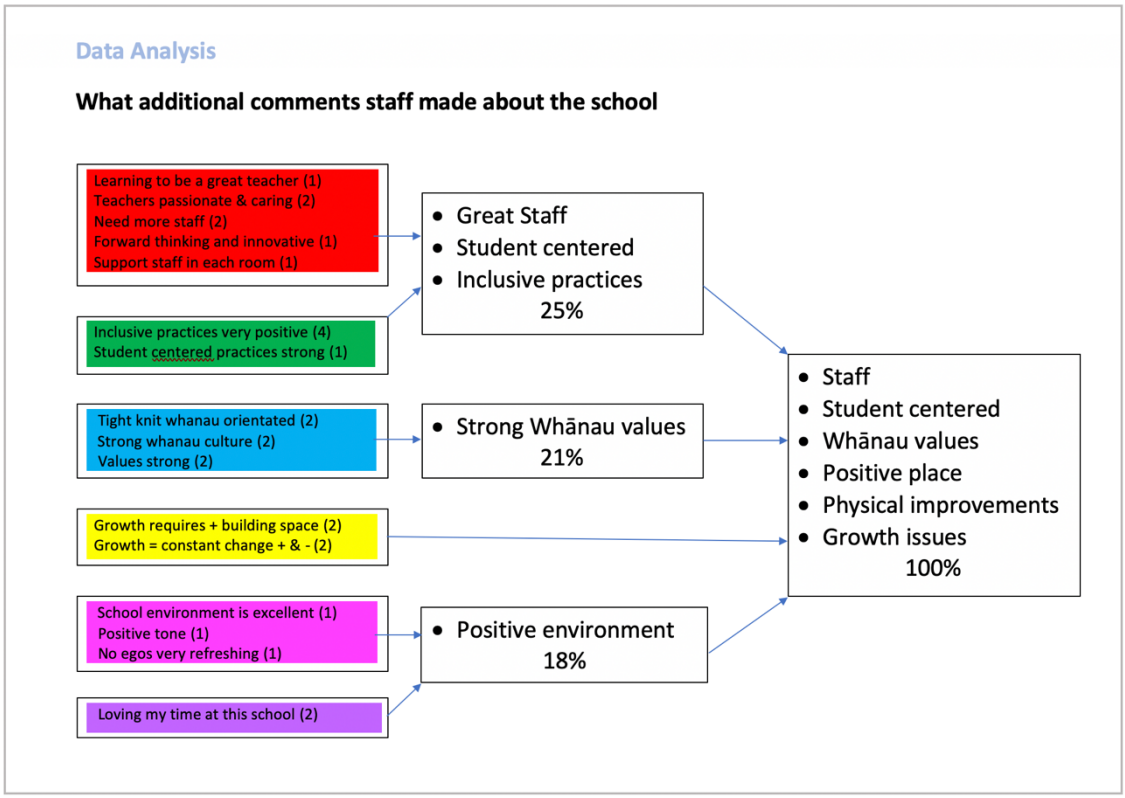

Figure 15: Coding of staff additional comments about the school

Staff listed staff, student-centred practices, whānau values, positive place, and the physical environment of the school in a positive light with the only negative comments in relation to growth of the school. Here it is obvious that the growth, both schools have experienced over the past few years, placed considerable strain on staff in terms of staff numbers, constant change attached to growth, and the lack of classroom space and school facilities.

5.9 Suggestions for School Improvement

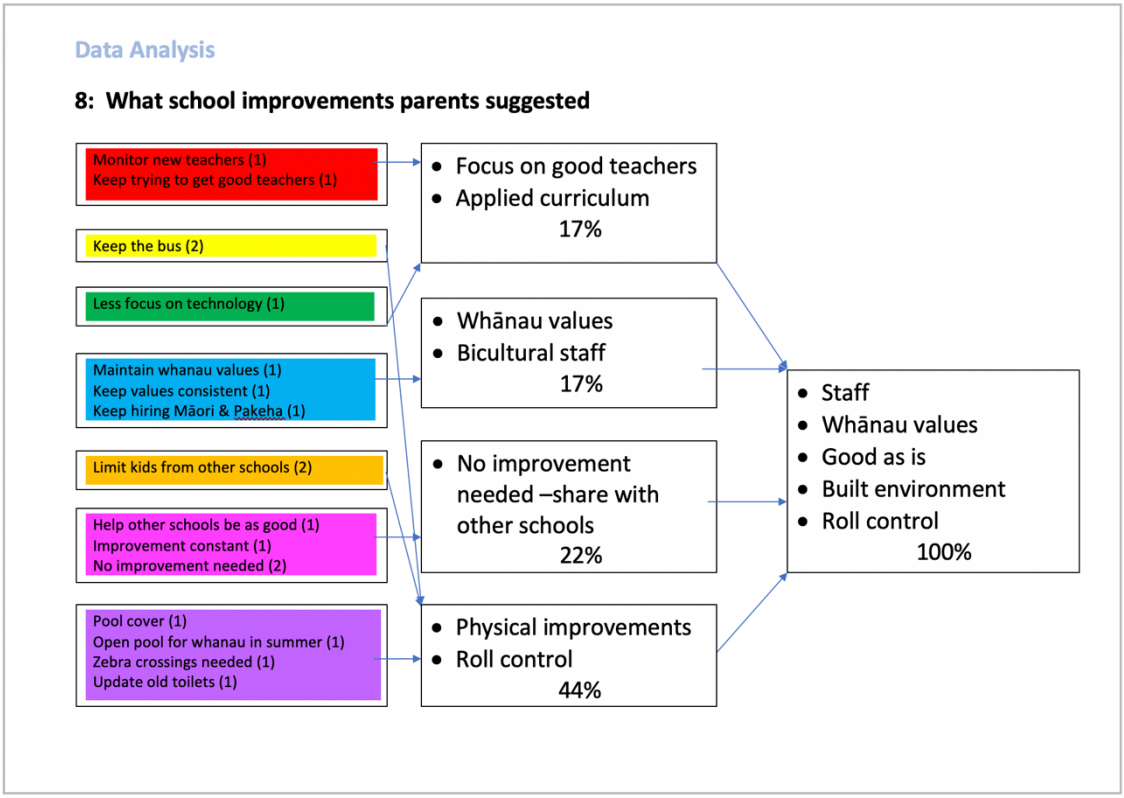

Figure 16: Coding of parent responses to school improvements

Suggestions for school improvement was another area where parent responses were positive. Even in a section that asked for improvement suggestions 22 per cent of responses indicated that no improvement was needed. The other areas predominantly involved suggestions to continue such as “Keep the bus”, “Maintain whānau values”, and “Keep hiring Māori and Pakeha staff”. The main area for improvement in the eyes of the parent group were in the physical built environments such as the pool, zebra crossings on the road, and updated toilets as mentioned in 44 per cent of the responses with a call for focus on good teachers, the applied curriculum, whānau values and bicultural staff attracting 17 per cent each.

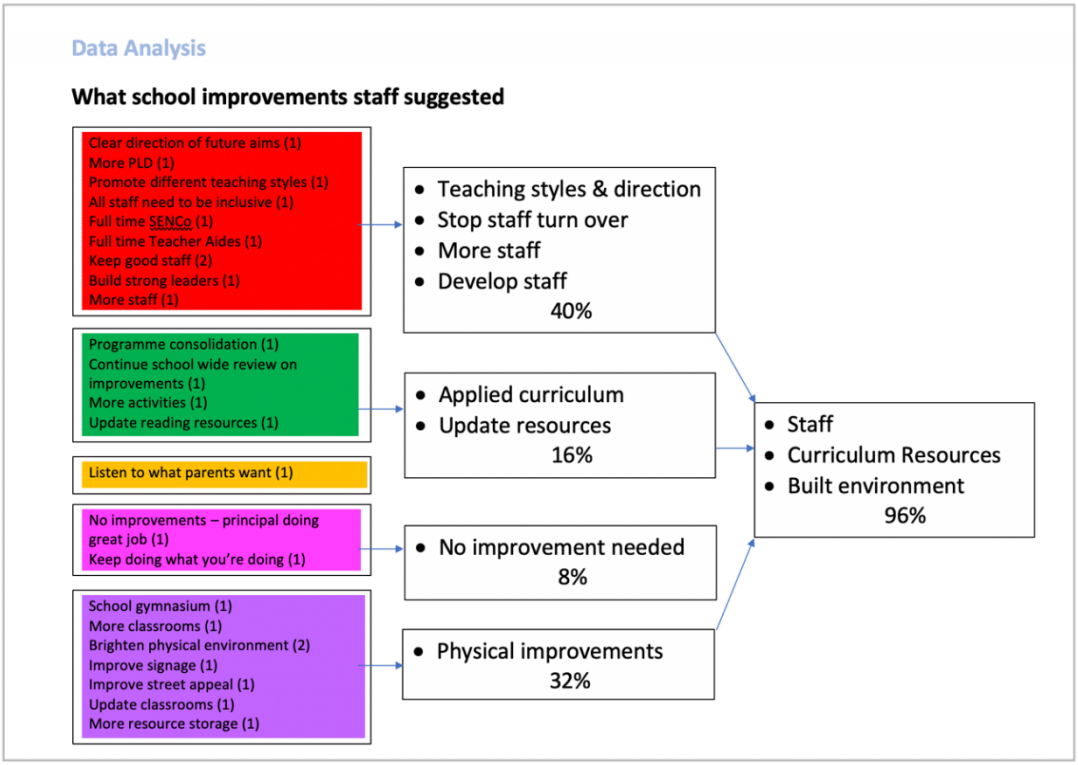

Figure 17: Coding of staff responses to school improvements

Staff have recorded school improvements as being necessary for school's day-to-day functions. Improvements in teaching styles, school direction, staff turnover, increased staffing, and staff development attracted 40 per cent of the responses from staff. The next largest response area for this group called for improvements in the built environment with a focus on school buildings and overall aesthetics. There were also 16 per cent of responses calling for improvement in the applied curriculum and resourcing. In all 92 per cent of staff considered there was need for improvements whereas parents were less inclined to want improvements.

While both groups converged on similar areas for improvement the difference in priority was significant. Twenty two per cent of the parent group did not see any need for improvement compared with eight per cent of staff. The built environment featured for both groups as did responses concerning staffing.

5.10 Conclusion

Analysing the responses from the questionnaire has been the main focus of this chapter. With themes identified for each group, parent group and staff group, along with discussion around areas of convergence and divergence. The themes that emerged in relation to school choice and continued support of their local school, included: staffing, applied curriculum, bicultural practices, inclusive practices, and maintaining the positive atmosphere of the schools. The following chapter will take these findings and discuss them in relation to the literature reviewed in chapter 2 and consider interpretations that may address the identified gaps in the literature.

Chapter 6: Discussion

6.1 Introduction

This study examined the differing perceptions that parents and teachers at two New Zealand primary schools had about 'what is valued by a community in their local school'. Although this was a small research study the results align many of the issues identified in current research and produce further questions and possible areas for future study. This chapter examines the study themes in relation to the literature, and discusses the implications for future research, policy, and curriculum development. The themes to be discussed include: school choice, school features valued by community, student learning, school leadership, and desired improvements. There are many areas within these themes that have been identified as being valued by both parents and staff. However, there is a noticeable difference in the weighting given by parents to themes in comparison to staff and vice versa. Parents placed considerable value on whānau relationships with the school and staff, the presence of school values that were shared by whānau, culturally inclusive and responsive practices, and the happiness of the students – their tamaiti. Staff responses reveal a very different emphasis on collegial relationships and the delivery and resourcing of the applied curriculum. These differences between participant groups have implications for school leadership and educational change.

6.2 School Choice

The New Zealand education system typically expects children to attend a school close to where they live (Education Counts, 2020), unless they live in an area with no designated zoning, or there is a school in another zone with space available, or the family wishes the child to attend a special character or private school. Analysis of questionnaire data revealed several sub-themes related to school choice – for example, location, the positive impact of community and whānau engagement in learning environments, the presence of positive relationships and the applied curriculum. Each of these sub-themes is examined in relation to research literature.

6.2.1 Location

Analysis of the data indicated that location is a major influential reason for both parents and staff choosing a particular school. The proximity of the school to their residence was important 47 per cent of parents. This finding supports Cahill and Hall's (2013) observations regarding he geographical and psychological importance of school proximity on school choice. When a school is attended by a cross-section of the community it serves the resulting mix of social strata breaks down barriers and provides opportunities for social mobility and cohesive communities (Cahill & Hall, 2013). Both the schools serve financially disadvantaged neighbourhoods where children attend their local school largely due to financial constraints on the family (Zimmerman & Vaughan, 2013).

However, staff survey interview comments revealed that terms such as 'local school' and physical location were interpreted more broadly, with comments such as "a school that serves the local community", "This is our family school where grandchildren,

children, my late husband and his family attended", and "I have a passion for teaching in this city". Their responses signalled a deeper value intertwined with physical location – a sense of belonging especially to past and current whānau and the wider community.

6.2.2 Community and Whānau

Community and whānau were also noted as influencing parent choice, supporting the importance of home-school-community partnerships. The concept of a strong partnership between home and school has been highlighted in international research as a strategy to improve education outcome for indigenous peoples (Hohepa, Jenkins, Mane, Dherman-Godinet, & Toi, 2004). Research within New Zealand has, likewise, identified the promotion of strong parental and whanau partnership as a characteristic of educational programmes that increase success for Maori (May & Hill, 2005). Durie (2011) took this concept further by arguing that such success influences not only student's current achievement but also persistence to study into the future.

The data gathered in this survey supports arguments that strong school-whānau connections have a positive impact upon the school experience for Māori. Staff refer to "whānau engagement" as something they value about learning in the school. Durie (2011) argues that learning for Māori relies on connections between people – teachers, peers, and whānau. This balance between expectations of self and others, teachers, and whānau is a crucial combination to shape pathways to success. Learners who do not have whānau encouragement are less inclined to aim high and are more likely to leave school when they reach school leaving age (Durie, 2011). Therefore, this finding reveals that valuing school proximity has deeper significance

for parents in this community than is implicit in the research literature in that school proximity is related to values of whānau and community connection (relationships) and a sense of belonging.

6.2.3 Relationships

Relationships was another characteristic shared by parents and staff as a valued feature of each school. Parent respondents identified relationships between staff and students; school and whānau; and whānau and whānau while staff respondents identified relationships between personnel and staff and students. The type of relationship identified by respondents also varied between parents and staff – for example, teaching, learning and social relationships, with social relationships mentioned more frequently by parents and teaching and learning more by staff respondents (refer to 5.3).

Parent voice was strong when it came to the relationship between the child and the school staff – teachers, principal, and support staff. This trend is supported by Johnson and Lindgren (2010) who argue that the attention the school staff pays to each child is important to parents when considering school choice. At a deeper level Durie (2011) mounts a strong argument about the impact that relationships between people have on learning – in particular, relationships the student has with teachers, peers and whānau. A school where students experience strong and positive relationships provides an environment where students take risks in their learning without fear (Durie, 2011).

Strong positive relationships between whānau and the school were viewed equally, by parents, as essential in the school that they chose for their child. Many parent responses, throughout the survey, indicated that they view these relationships between the school and whānau as essential in creating a school context for their child. Furthermore, comments such as “Whānau and community involvement”, “Māori allowed to be Māori”, ‘Front office staff being Māori”, “Te reo and tikanga Māori”, “Principal is Māori”, “BOT both Māori and Pākeha”, “Focus on both Māori and Pākeha worlds”, “Keep bigging up Māori” indicate a strong Māori voice valuing the cultural responsiveness of these schools. This is a significant message when considering McDonald’s (1973) and Simon’s (1990) argument that Māori educational achievement is directly related to how well Māori families have learned to deal with the system by assimilating their Māoriness with Pākeha priorities in education. Once again we can see the influence of ‘cultural capital’ at play here. The data here align with the views of Penetito (2010), regarding the need for positive environments that support the reciprocal acts of Māori adapting to the Pākeha system while the Pākeha system responds through an understanding of the needs of Māori .

Indeed, staff comments mirror parent voice. “Whanaungatanga”, “Whānau involvement”, “Identity and culture”, “Takaiako and Ka Hikitia in action”, “Learning shared with families”, and “Parent and grandparent support is visible” indicate a reciprocal level of respect in the relationship between whānau and the school. The data illustrate what Durie (2011) has discussed in relation to the teaching practices that have an impact upon Māori achievement. He argued that learning relies on connections and the need for more than a positive student-teacher relationship, identifying relationships with peers and whānau as also being important.

The importance of the connections represented in teacher-student and school-whānau relationships is supported in the literature with positive teacher-learner engagement identified as benefiting Māori achievement (Hill & Hawk, 2000). Hill and Hawk (2000) discuss several characteristics present in teacher-student relationships in low decile, multicultural schools that support best practice in teaching Māori students – for example, mutual respect between teachers and students; the creation of a learning environment with transparent and understandable learning processes that reduce stress levels; enjoyable learning that allows students time to construct their own meaning of learning and to feel safe when taking risks; and a positive and constructive approach to behaviour management in which barriers are overcome to enhance learning and to retain committed staff.

6.2.4 Learning

Thirty two per cent of parents identified learning as influencing choice of school for their tamariki. Parent respondents who mentioned learning referred specifically to "Play Based" and "Te Reo Māori". 'Play Based' pedagogy is practical, hands-on learning and 'Te Reo Māori' is culturally based. Te reo Māori appears in a number of responses throughout the questionnaire with the greatest number being in relation to what is valued about student learning. For this reason discussion on te reo Māori occurs later in this chapter in 6.4 Learning.

6.2.5 Supportive Teaching and Learning Environment

The data reveal that parents and staff value a supportive teaching and learning environment. There are a number of influences involved in creating and maintaining a supportive teaching and learning environment, and in which relationships are critical.

Indeed, positive student-teacher, student-student, and whanau-school relationships are an essential part of the teaching and learning environment. Hill and Hawke (2000), Durie (2011), and Milne (2016), argue that the teaching and learning environment relies on the establishment and maintenance of all these relationships, with them being critically important for Māori learners. For Māori to achieve as Māori the environment in which they learn must have a climate of connectedness that is free of isolation, fear of ridicule, and insular thinking. One of the most critical relationships in such an environment is that between the student and teacher. This relationship depends on clear communication, mutual trust, a sense of equality, and mutual aspirations (Durie 2011).

The frequent references made by both parent and staff respondents to teachers and school staff support the importance that Durie (2011) places on the student-teacher relationship. Staff responses regarding school choice identified that they value learning and leadership (refer to sections 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4). Staff themselves were a significant part of the supportive teaching and learning environment valued by parents. Robinson (2011) identified quality teaching as having an effect size of 0.42 on student learning, with effective leadership of teacher learning and development being much greater (0.84). The data collected here align well with the literature in that the parents understood the importance of school staff in creating and maintaining a supportive teaching and learning environment. Robinson and Aronica (2015) argued that those from the lower social classes were less likely than those in the middle-to-high social classes to value the typically formal education historically related to schooling. While both of the schools involved in this research served lower socio-

economic communities the frequency of learning related responses indicated that parents at each school, nevertheless, placed high value on teaching and learning.

The parent data indicated that the teaching and learning environment that teachers created was noticed and valued by parents. Douglas Reeves (2006) in his book *The Learning Leader* argued that teaching quality matters in all schools, regardless of their demographic. Of all the variables that influence student learning it is quality teaching that is the most important. Included in quality teaching are school support staff (learning assistants in the classroom) who contribute expertise to learning intervention programmes, build relationships with learners and their families, and support teachers to be more effective (Dibben, 2018). Similarly in this study, the questionnaire responses in relation to school staff indicated a high level of shared respect for support staff from parents, teachers, and other colleagues – for example, parents of teachers, support staff or teachers, and teachers of support staff.

6.2.6 Applied Curriculum

Both parents and staff referred to the applied curriculum in their responses pertaining to school choice, what is valued about learning, and school improvement (refer to section 5.1, 5.3 and 5.7). Parents tended to identify specific curriculum subject areas and learning programmes such as ‘Literacy’, ‘Mathematics’, ‘Swimming’,‘ Play Based Learning’, and ‘Dyslexia Support’ whereas staff referred more to pedagogical support such as Learning Support’, ‘Key Competencies’, ‘Resources’, and ‘Digital Curriculum Opportunities’. The differences here are similar to Robinson and Aronica’s (2015) findings in relation to education versus learning. These authors argue that the parent responses indicate a belief in education where students learn what they need to know

through the delivery of organized programmes whereas the staff responses align more closely with the philosophy of learning as the process of acquiring knowledge and skills. Such differences can be understood by further analysis of the literature. Cahill and Hall (2013) identify a comfort on the part of those in the lower social classes about the familiar aspects of schools such as the specific curriculum areas. Combined with such security in an identifiable school curriculum is the belief that students who succeed in gaining the required knowledge can improve their social position in society. However, staff responses indicate a high value on pedagogy in relation to the wider curriculum rather than specific curriculum areas. Robinson (2011) identifies quality teaching as having the single biggest effect on student achievement. In doing so she also discusses multiple dimensions of quality teaching including the quality of its delivery, assessment, and evaluation, all of which are important for increased student achievement. Moreover, Timperley and Parr (2010) argue that knowledge and instructional practices need to be flexible and able to change in relation to the reality of current times and the students' world. According to Hargreaves and Goodson (1995), educators must use their knowledge of teaching and learning, along with insights into their pupils' needs in a postmodern age, to ensure meaningful delivery of the curriculum. Such responsiveness to change and the iterative nature of learning might need to be better communicated with whānau and the wider community if shared understandings about learning are to eventuate.

6.3 School Features

The data collected and analysed in relation to the question, "What do you value about the school?" included many of the themes and sub-themes discussed earlier in section 4.1. Further themes that arise included 'School Values', 'Cultural Inclusion',

‘Belonging’, ‘Happiness’, ‘School Culture, and ‘Family Feel and Presence’, each of which is discussed below.

6.3.1 School Values

Both the parent and staff responses acknowledged ‘School Values’ as important features of each school. Both schools participated in the ‘Positive Behaviour for Learning School-Wide’ (PB4L-SW) initiative for a number of years. PB4L-SW supports school communities as they work towards the New Zealand Curriculum (NZC) vision for students to be confident, connected, and actively involved, and who will go on to become lifelong learners (MoE, 2007). PB4L-SW provides an opportunity for school communities to develop a core set of values collaboratively from which more specific behaviour expectations are identified in relation to the context and routines of the individual school (MoE, 2015). The presence of ‘School Values’ in both parent and staff responses indicated familiarity with the PB4L-SW aim for school values to reflect the values of the wider school community (MoE, 2015).

6.3.2 Cultural Inclusion and Belonging

Parents identified ‘Cultural Inclusion’ as a principle that they valued in their local schools. Parent responses included comments related to ‘Whānau classes’, ‘Modelling of whānau values’, and ‘Māori allowed to be Māori’. These responses support the literature relating to culturally inclusive education, especially that by Penetito (2010). Penetito urged the New Zealand education system to include Māori knowledge, values, practices, and philosophies – a system that includes iwi and hapū institutions in schooling to ensure that education becomes actively responsive to whānau demands and addresses subsequent questions about purpose, relevance,

and value. The Strategic Plans of both schools in this research showed their commitment to partnership in 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi' and their deliberate inclusion of Māori culture in terms of the education experiences that they provided. Building an understanding of belonging through place-based learning experience and celebrations of cultures comprise the core strategies needed in order to realise culturally responsive goals.

A sense of belonging was evident in the parent responses, as was appreciation for the depth of cultural inclusion practiced at each school. Both Covey (2008) and Milne (2017) discuss the importance of students and families being able to picture themselves in the school. Both authors encourage school leaders to conduct an audit using families that represent the various cultures at the school to walk from the front gate through the entire school and to identify particular places where they see themselves and their culture belonging. Milne (2017) argues that addressing the gaps that such a process uncovers is an important first step for reclaiming cultural identity in "Whitestream" schools and creating a school environment where everyone has a sense of belonging. The link between belonging and cultural inclusion has been made globally by those researchers who have examined low socio-economic and indigenous educational achievement. For example, Reay (2005) argues that understandings of locality and place can counter the hegemony of middle-class education settings and enable schools to become sites of cultural dignity, thereby closing the gaps generated through social distance. The interconnectedness of belonging and cultural inclusion is not a new idea, nor is the argument that schools need to become sites where students can achieve without compromising their cultural identity. Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) sought to link students' culture and their social origin in order to address

inequality in education systems worldwide where too much power and control is held by others.

The others that Bourdieu and Passeron (1979) referred to are the middle-class dominant culture that western education systems are designed to benefit from and therefore to maintain. Interestingly, when examining the staff data related to what they valued about the school, ‘Cultural Inclusion’ and ‘Belonging’ were absent. Is this because school staff tend to belong predominantly to the middle-class, dominant culture? Each school identified explicitly, through their strategic planning documents, the inclusion of culture and the importance of developing a sense of belonging. The parent responses indicated that these practices in fact were happening and that parents valued them. However, despite the staff incorporating these values into their pedagogy, it would appear that they do not place the same value on culturally inclusive practices that build a sense of belonging for their students. Whitinui (2011) argues that shifts in thinking do not happen due solely to good intentions or policy direction. To develop strategies that help lift expectations for Māori there is a need to understand the factors that influence Māori educational success and therefore create a new picture of Māori learners in the minds of teachers (Whitinui, 2011). The absence of ‘Cultural Inclusion’ and ‘Belonging’ in the staff responses could also be an indication that ensuring a curriculum that draws upon and adds to content relevant to the identities of Māori students and actively seeks the expertise of local community, hapū, and iwi is a challenge for teachers (Wylie, et.al., 2018).

6.3.4 Happiness

Happiness is another value identified by parents. Johnson and Lindgren (2010) argue that when a school pays attention to each child it has an influence on parents in the area of school choice because they relate positive and individual attention to their child's happiness. For parents their child's happiness is the first indication that they have chosen the right school because a happy child is more likely to be open to future influences from teachers and peers (Reinoso, 2008). Interestingly, Reinoso (2008) draws attention to the close relationship between a sense of belonging and student happiness, arguing that when students find 'their place' they will happily take on the challenge to become responsible for their development.

6.3.5 School Culture, Family Feel and Presence

School Culture appeared in the staff responses, with comments such as "School culture, values and ethos', 'Whanaungatanga', 'Staff being a whānau', 'Wairua that belongs to the school' and 'Staff and students feel valued' being voiced. There is a wealth of literature around developing school culture, particularly for those involved in school leadership. These will be addressed later in this chapter under the heading 'Leadership' ,in light of the data collected about school leadership. Therefore, in this section, the focus is on the concept of 'Whanaungatanga', 'Staff being a whānau' and the 'Wairua that belongs to the school'. These responses are identified by writers such as Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) who claim that high achieving schools have a cultural and structural coherence that bind them together and create a collective professional energy. Likewise, Harris (2014) refers to relationships found in high performing schools being forged around effective teams that engage in collective problem solving and collaborative work. The practice of generating social capital rather

than securing human capital (Harris, 2014) is essentially an example of 'Whanaungatanga' in practice which the data indicates is valued by staff in both schools. It is the presence of whanaungatanga that supports the concept that staff are a whānau – that is, an extended family wherein people are linked by blood to a common ancestor (Bishop, 2005), in Milne, 2017). However, the manner in which whānau is used in the responses relates to a metaphoric concept of whānau as a collective of people working for a common end rather than related by kinship or descent (Metge, 1990, in Milne, 2017).

The metaphoric concept of whānau also explains the presence of 'Family feel and presence' in the staff responses. At first, I wondered if these responses indicated that staff, in fact, did value 'cultural inclusion' and 'belonging'. After all one could argue that what makes a family presence in a school would indicate the existence of culturally inclusive whānau and whanaungatanga concepts. However, closer analysis revealed that staff responses related to their collegial and student relationships and did not include the whānau of students and the wider community. It becomes apparent that the staff responses show that they are not as far along the journey of 'Cultural Inclusion' and understanding 'Belonging' as are the parent group. The data show that staff have embraced a 'Whānau concept of knowledge' where knowledge is seen as belonging to the whole group and not to individuals. In this way the knowledge benefits everyone in the group (Milne, 2017). However, the staff responses show a gap in the culturally inclusive 'Whānau concept of pedagogy' where Māori values are taken-for-granted with tuakana-teina part of the pedagogical framework along with a mix of local and global knowledge – not just retreating to the past (Milne, 2017). The responses also suggest there may be a gap in relation to 'Whānau concepts of discipline' where

every adult is regarded as a parent to all children, and learning and behaviour difficulties become a shared responsibility with an emphasis on the need for different types of discipline depending on the child and the circumstances (Milne, 2017). Finally, there appears to be a gap in the staff 'Whānau concept of curriculum' where the Māori community is involved in deciding what counts as being important and worthy of including in the curriculum (Milne, 2017). Such a concept would affirm connections between the curriculum and the interests and backgrounds of Māori learners, and reflect and reproduce the Māori worldview in the schools (Smith, 1997, in Milne, 2017). It is interesting that the data reveals such a gap between parents and staff in the 'Culturally Responsive' space. Identification of what one values might differ from actual implementation in the teaching and learning space, yet the respondents indicated incidences of culturally responsive practices. It appears that either culturally responsive practices are not yet valued by the staff or that they were so well embedded that teachers 'took them for granted'. Future research might provide further insights.

6.4 Student Learning

Analysis of parents and staff responses revealed three themes - 'Learning Support', 'Applied Curriculum', and 'Te Reo Māori' as being valuable for student learning. Parents also identified 'Happy Kids' as being valued while staff responses revealed the importance of their colleagues and 'Whanau Engagement' as valuable components of student learning. As 'Learning Support' and 'Applied Curriculum' have been discussed earlier in this chapter section 6.4.1 below addresses the theme of 'Te Reo Māori'.

6.4.1 Te Reo Māori

In relation to learning both parents and staff valued te reo Māori. The responses indicated that the inclusion of te reo Māori in students' learning was valued and closely linked to tikangā Māori (refer to section 5.2). Surveys have revealed that Māori parents want their children to learn, and expect schools to offer, te reo Māori (D'Cunha, 2017). D'Cunha argues that all children should have access to learning te reo and tikanga Māori in their educational settings. She cites 'Te Tiriti o Waitangi', the founding document of Aotearoa, where three principles of partnership, protection, and participation are relevant to education, including te reo and tikanga Māori. Durie (2001) includes learning te reo Māori in his "Framework for Considering Māori Educational Advancement" arguing that it is not enough to just learn about Māori and that without te reo and tikanga Māori education is incomplete for Māori youth. While schools play a major role in the revitalization of te reo and tikanga Māori for children, many iwi give support by placing emphasis on marae hui and creating accessible learning opportunities for whānau (Durie, 2006). Iwi for the rohe of these schools have a strong and active Iwi education strategy – Nga Kai o te Puku Tupuna (Te Puna Mātauranga o Whanganui, 2010) - that sits alongside the NZC in the school that is operating at level 2 te reo Māori immersion. One of the main aims of Nga Kai o te Puku Tupuna is the 'normalising' of te reo Māori in mainstream schools. Furthermore, both parent and staff voice converge in valuing te reo Māori supports Milne's (2016) challenge for schools to move from a position of cultural responsiveness to one of critically, culturally sustainable.

6.5 School Leadership

Parent survey respondents identified the positive impact that the school leadership had on both the school and community while staff responses referred to student-centred style of leadership, and the value and support of leadership for their teaching role. The list of personal qualities in the school leaders converged across the two participant groups and are discussed below.

6.5.1 Personal Qualities

The responses in the section of the questionnaire that identified personal qualities made up a significant number of each participant group's response – 62 per cent of the parent group and 42 per cent of the staff group. The survey responses indicate that both the parent and staff respondents considered the personal qualities of school leadership to have contributed to recent positive changes in the direction of each school. Qualities such as 'Open Door', 'Good Listener', 'Respect', 'Approachable', 'Reasonable', 'No Secrets', 'Available', 'Kind', and 'Sense of Humour' were identified by 62 per cent of parents and 42 per cent of staff. However, Fullan (2014) sounds a note of caution when he warns that principals can find themselves on a pedestal and then expected to perform miracles that few 'mere mortals' can pull off successfully. Similarly, Bottery (2004) discussed the fact that school leaders are expected to resolve any number of problems faced by schools and refers to the 'miracle worker' status that is frequently portrayed. However, Reeves (2006) warned of the burden that exemplary performance placed on school leaders who are viewed as being 'all things to all people' and that this can result in counter-productive behaviour and exhaustion. Although Robinson (2011) identified leading with personality and character as a form

of positive leadership she warns of the unreasonable and unrealistic energy required to sustain this leadership style. Future research is needed to identify the sustainability of the leadership qualities that have been identified in this study.

6.5.2 Values and Supports Staff

In identifying what staff valued about school leadership staff comments such as "Transparent, collaborative, clear", "Sets strong example", "Values all staff", "Acknowledges others strengths", and "High trust model" were forthcoming. These comments signal leadership styles that David Rock (2006) examines at length in his book *Quiet Leadership*. Rock argues that leaders who take the time to find each employee's strengths and establish processes that make the most of such talents are certain to transform performance for the better, not just on an individual basis but also across the organisation.

Leadership and the way staff work together are acknowledged in this data. 'Collegiality', 'contract conditions', and 'supportive staff' were identified as reasons why staff chose to work at these schools. Simon Sinek (2009), in his book *Start with the Why: How Great Leaders Inspire Everyone to take Action,* discusses the characteristics of inspirational leadership as giving people a sense of purpose or belonging, leading to action that is not related to external incentives or benefits but embedded for the benefit of the whole. The changes that each school in this study has embraced and the growth that has eventuated supports Sinek's argument that those who lead inspire others to act, not because they *have* to but because they *want* to. One positive side effect of inspirational leadership is employees who enjoy their work

and subsequently are happier, more productive, creative, and treat their colleagues more respectfully (Sinek, 2009).

6.5.3 Student-centred

Alongside Sinek's 'Inspirational Leadership' the data provide evidence that student-centred leadership is present in each participant school. Robinson (2011) summarises the concept as requiring knowledge about how best to align administrative procedures with learning outcomes and having the skills to use such knowledge to problem solve whilst building relational trust in the school community. Further support for Robinson's student-led leadership is the number of references that staff made about the resourcing of the schools. To become a student-led leader Robinson argues that resources need to be allocated strategically. The responses that identify 'Learning Support' as valued in the school indicate that school resourcing is both strategic and effective. Furthermore, the long list of personal qualities, identified by both parent and staff groups as discussed earlier, provides further evidence of student-led school leadership.

6.5.4 Positive Impact on Students, School, and Community

Parent responses about what they valued about school leadership indicated that the leaders in these schools were considered important influences on the whole school community. Comments such as 'Best school in city', 'Leaders immersed in the school', 'School leadership reflected across the school', and 'involved in the community' all suggest that parents did value the presence of school leadership in the school and community. These responses indicate that both schools are viewed as meeting the needs of their community. Linking this idea with the discussion earlier in this chapter

suggest that the schools were using resources efficiently and effectively, were aware of and respect the needs of the community, had developed processes and systems to meet these needs, and were constantly seeking improvement to meet the needs of their respective communities (Paine, Turner & Pryke, 1992).

The requirement for schools to take this community focused path was set in motion by the *Tomorrow's Schools* reform (MOE, 1990). Schools that were communicative, open, and welcoming to parents who they treated as equal partners to achieve quality education, were seen as actively constructing their own community by partnering and finding common ground with professionals and parents as they focused on what was important locally to ensuring children's progress (Wylie, 2012). The analysed data indicate that schools' leadership shares similar educational and moral values to those advocated by Bottery (2004) – that is, being a moral community and servant leader. There is a convergence of respondent views on leadership qualities that include strong morals positively support education. This makes the school a good place in which to work and likely empowers those in the community to remain committed to the good of the school (Bottery, 2004). The value that the respondents have placed on these leadership qualities reflects tikanga Māori – that is, the group is seen as being paramount as opposed to the individual – thereby suggesting that school leadership is regarded as shared. Leaders who promote the building of community, encouraging the generation of 'social capital' that binds individuals together to form communities, put the personal aside in order to foster value and support between people (Bottery, 2004). A genuine act of showing value and support for the community occurs when leaders can listen to, discuss and, if necessary, accept suggestions from others, within the community, for changes or improvements.

6.6 School Improvements

Responses to the sections, of the questionnaire, that called for additional comments and suggested school improvements have similar themes across both parent and staff groups. Themes identified for further discussion include 'Whānau values', 'Communication', 'Power Sharing' and the 'Built environment'. Both parents and staff responses also identified staff as a key area for school improvement. However, the comments such as such as "Keep getting good staff" and "Keep employing Māori and Pākeha" do not reveal discord with the present staff but rather a concern that the schools remain focused on ensuring future staff are as good as the present. Earlier discussions in this chapter have linked the data relating to staff to the literature. In particular sections 6.2.3 and 6.2.5 which also cover the call for professional learning and development to improve inclusive and culturally responsive pedagogy as called for in staff responses. Analysing these staff responses alongside parent comments such as "Maintain whānau values" and "Keep values consistent" suggest there could be concerns that there may be a need for extra care in the area of culturally sustainable practices and for whānau this starts with values.

6.6.1 Whānau Values

The existence of authentic whānau values in mainstream schools is argued by Milne (2016) as an essential ingredient to raising Māori achievement levels. Whānau values are present in responses across this survey demonstrating the high value they have for the school community. A resounding message here, from the school communities, is the need for schools to give consideration to the presence of values that are shared

across whānau-school-community and that these values are embedded and therefore sustainable. The importance of, not only developing but also maintaining, a school culture with whānau values is discussed in depth by Cavanagh (2011) in Whitinui (ed). Schools with strong and consistent whānau values address the cultural gap not only between teachers' and students' but also between school and home. Students whose home and community values differ from those of the school are at a distinct disadvantage as they have to learn to live in two cultures with their educational success being assessed in the school culture (Cavanagh in Whitinui (ed), 2011). This leads one to consider Durie's (2003) argument that assessing Māori against non-Māori criteria "presupposes that Māori are aiming to be as good as Pākeha when they might well aspire to be better, or different, or even markedly superior" (p.202). The presence of whānau in so many responses in this survey shows whānau values as central to cultural responsiveness. It would be advantageous to conduct further research around developing a full understanding of the regular appearance of whānau values in relation to the school setting.

6.6.2 Communication

Communication is another theme that has appeared in the responses regarding 'School improvements'. Again the comments made suggest that the feeling is mainly positive in the area of communication but as something valued, by the school community, it is important that leaders continue to develop and strengthen channels and opportunities for reciprocal communication. Effective communication is a two-way action that forms a relationship between each side so, yet again, the responses to the survey have a identified an action of value that includes relationships. Milne (2016) suggests that effective communication between school and whānau is compromised

when there is an imbalance in the school-whānau relationship. This occurs when the 'one-size-fits-all' school culture dominates educational conversation and takes a deficit approach to the needs of Māori students and the aspirations of whānau (Durie, 2011). The challenge on the communication front is closely related to the ability to share the distribution of power. Durie (2011) argues that schools need listen when whānau ask the hard questions and be prepared to respond with genuine regard especially if the curriculum is at stake.

6.6.3 Power sharing

The concept of sharing power in education settings is also argued as necessary by both Milne (2016) and Cavanagh (in Whitinui (ed), 2011). Analysis of the specific comments supporting the themes established in the coding of the survey responses reveals the curriculum and its relevance to students as something valued by both staff and parents. Earlier discussions in this chapter (specifically 6.2.6, 6.3.2 & 6.4) have addressed curriculum content identifying te reo and tikanga Māori along with place based curriculum as valued in building a sense of belonging in students. However, the other main player in curriculum is assessment the results of which are at the heart of the majority of communication between school and whānau. Introducing assessment to the power sharing concept is likely to be a challenge for all mainstream schools even those who, like the ones in this study, have addressed the content of their curriculum. After all, if Māori knowledge is used to create and deliver the curriculum but Māori learners continue to be assessed using Pākeha terms then success 'as Māori' is not being realised (Durie 2011). There is a need to broaden the narrow mainstream, limited and technical definitions attached to academic achievement by authentically valuing other knowledge (Milne 2016). Cavanagh (in Whitinui (ed), 2011)

takes approaches these challenges from a student centred perspective arguing that if students are not included in decisions about their learning then they are less likely to take responsibility when learning related problems arise. Understanding and confronting the challenges associated with authentic power sharing in schooling is an area that further research is needed. This study has shown that whānau have strong aspirations for schools they engage with that go far beyond the physical appearance of the school buildings.

6.6.4 Built environment

The physical appearance and built environment of the school did appear in the survey responses of both parents and staff. However, the parent responses centre on facilities and services that could be classes as social. The school pools are mentioned in a way that suggests that access to the school pool is a social experience. Alongside this is the mention of school shoes. These are provided to decile one and two schools by the charity 'Kids Can' and are distributed to the students each year. Such a feature easily fits into a social category due to the easing of pressure on family finances. Wylie (2012) identifies schools using projects such as playgrounds, gymnasiums, school camps, and extra curricula programmes as a means of attracting students.

6.7 Conclusion

Analysing the responses collected in this study the built environment and the facilities offered are not of a high value for the parents and staff of the participant schools. Rather they have identified features that include location within the neighbourhood, inclusive school culture for community and whānau along with positive relationships

between all persons, the curriculum including the content, teaching and learning that happens as a result and the sharing of values. The essence of what can be taken from the discussions in this chapter is the underlying existence of relationships in facet of schooling. Importantly this small study has shown that parents and whānau hold all the relationships in a school context as important and value the ability to be part of the teaching and learning environment. Not just as a third party to be reported to but as partners in the teaching and learning of te tamaiti. There is the room for considerably more research in this area especially around the difference in staff voice on relationships and why whānau did not feature as strongly in their responses. The following chapter brings all these points together in a summary of the thesis proper.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

This study undertook to examine the values parents and staff held in two New Zealand primary schools. While the research was undertaken to unpack the phenomenon three schools experienced in recent years related to roll growth, only groups from two schools contributed. The non-participation of the third school led the researcher to consider the realities of leading a competitive education system. It appears that schools can be strong but changeable in New Zealand's decentralised education. The introduction of *Tomorrow's School's* in 1990 enabled parents to choose where their child/ren would be educated, that resulted in the evolution of a competitive school model. Many schools, serving financially disadvantaged communities, lost out as parents chose to bypass their local school for, what they perceived to be, 'better' schools in more affluent neighbourhoods. Thirty years later, schools serving low-income communities and with higher Māori and Pasifika students, such as those at the centre of this study, continue to suffer significant roll decline and consequent social, economic, and/or racial imbalance in the demographic of their students (Wylie, 2012).

7.2 Research Design and Emergent Themes

A case-study research approach was employed which utilised an online questionnaire to gain parent and staff views on what they valued in these community schools. Although this was a small research study, with limited generalisability, the results align

with some of the issues in current research literature, and highlight possible areas for future study.

The case-study conducted sought respondents' views on what they valued about their local school and school leadership. The research involved a questionnaire to collect parent and staff voice on the question:

"What do communities' value about their local school?"

Analysis of the data revealed themes related to what communities value in their local school. These themes were:

- School Choice, sub-themes related to location; community and whānau presence; school relationships; learning; supportive teaching and learning environments; and the applied curriculum.
- School Features highlighted sub-themes related to school values; cultural inclusion and belonging; happiness, school culture, family and presence; and student learning
- School Leadership sub-themes related to personal qualities; valuing and supporting staff; being student-centred; and having a positive impact on students, school and community.

7.3 Professional Implications of the Research

The study generated two key outcomes for consideration in the school (professional) setting:

1. The literature around school choice, relationships, curriculum content, cultural inclusion, values and culture, teaching and learning, te reo and tikanga Māori,

student centred practices and leadership has been validated as applicable in provincial New Zealand.

2. While parents and staff views converge on many school-related themes there are notable differences in the features valued by the two participant groups. Areas of divergence relate to school relationships, whānau presence in the school setting, culturally inclusive practices (including the use of te reo and tikanga Māori) and school improvements. Further research may be required on these aspects, and critical reflection by the professional educators as to why these differences occurred.

7.4 Policy and Research Implications of this Study

One of the key challenges faced by leaders of schools struggling against roll decline is how to attract students from their local community. The downward spiral is difficult to reverse, and, the cumulative effect of reduced funding and rationalisation of surplus property has further widened the gap between what schools can offer. This study has focussed on using community voice to guide leaders of struggling schools and, refreshingly, the responses are not ones that come with a need for excessive financial investment.

Further use of whānau voice is the key to creating schools that serve the local community by reflecting their values, respecting their opinions and celebrating their success. Schools have been at the heart of their communities for decades so it goes without saying that a healthy school supports a healthy community. However, when the heart is unhealthy then the body it serves needs help to bring it back to full strength.

In this way the community surrounding a local school struggling to exist is where the help lies. Not in trying to reciprocate programmes or experiences offered in other schools. This one-size-fits-all approach has not served schools in financially disadvantaged neighbourhoods well.

New Zealand statistics show that Māori families are over-represented in financially disadvantaged neighbourhoods. However, this study has produced some evidence that whānau appreciate schools who value their presence and apply culturally responsive practices that include te reo (language) and tikanga Māori (cultural values and actions). The challenge for school leaders is how to address the gap between whānau values and those of the teaching staff. One means of doing so, is to reach out and invite community voice and input, as shown in this research study. Whānau voice is informing educationalists that it is not about the resource or the facility, it is about the ethos with which the resource is used and the whānau presence within the facility.

7.5 Future Research

The findings of this research are specific to schools serving financially disadvantaged communities. It is likely that the differences in what parents' value and what staff value in schools are present in other primary schools in New Zealand. However, the research was conducted in one provincial city, so there the findings may not be generalisable in schools outside this context.

However, it is not generalisability outside of this context that is needed but more within it. Future research focusing on the voice of those from financially disadvantaged,

especially the Māori whānau in this group, identifying what it is they value in terms of educational experiences for their tamariki (children) will add to these findings. Furthermore, continued research in this area will add to building understanding in the role the local community has in their local school. For schools to create teaching and learning environments that authentically address whānau aspirations, they will also experience genuine support from their communities.

7.6 Recommendations

Three recommendations arise from the findings:

1. For leaders to continually achieve culturally sustaining, critical pedagogy in their schools they are advised to develop a framework that incorporates community and whānau aspirations and understandings across all areas of the school. The data from this study show there is divergence in views between whānau and teaching staff about the importance of whānau-school relationships. Furthermore, whānau expressed a more holistic view of learning than 'school education' and teachers' views about formal education pedagogies. The researcher recommends that school leaders consider these differences as the core of struggles they may encounter in engagement with their local community.
2. For leaders to understand that while both parents and staff value similar personal qualities in leaders, staff require extra leadership in pedagogical practices. This is a key recommendation for those leading schools using a high level of bicultural practices with a staff whose cultural representation differs from the school community. It could be beneficial for such leaders to track and

share their experiences (barriers and successes), for collaborative leadership learning.

3. For leaders to consider ways that the school resources and facilities can be used to support and grow the community. Community and whānau have shown in this study that it is not about how big and flash an amenity is but how it is shared for the good of the community. Again, there is a difference between whānau and staff in the value placed on school resources and facilities. Whānau are less concerned about quality and size, of a facility, than with the enhancement of the community through shared use of facilities. Staff focus on more up-to-date resources and facilities. This further supports the first recommendation for staff to be challenged to widen their view of schooling to include more than formal pedagogical practices.

These challenges will continue to be a focus for many schools serving financially disadvantaged communities with high Māori and Pasifika representation.

7.7 Value of the Research

A review of the New Zealand education system in 2018 and 2019 by The Tomorrow's Schools Independent Taskforce (2018) saw a significant investigation into the impacts of *the Tomorrow's Schools* model on New Zealand schools. Unfortunately, the resulting reform of the *Tomorrow's Schools* system – Supporting all schools to succeed (2019) – has not lightened the load on the back of Tolstoy's man. This study has contributed to the limited literature on school choice for financially disadvantaged families, and highlighted a need for a greater understanding of the effects school choice has on schools serving financially disadvantaged communities. In the New

Zealand context, the reality of school choice has created schools with socially distorted demographics exacerbating challenges related to student achievement for many students. Research, such as this study, that focuses on aligning the educational aspirations and expectations that the community hold for their tamariki will provide valuable guidance for schools looking to serve their local community.

It is hoped that more research in this area will contribute to policy, practice and research literature related to school-community relationships, and particularly to culturally responsive practices which enable schools to listen and respond to the interests of their communities. Schools, like those in this study, that seek the views and input of their parent community, are not only valued by them, but contribute to their success as learners and as people respected for who they are and want to be in culturally appropriate ways.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Research Information Sheet

"What do school communities value about their local School?"

INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction
My name is Katherine Ellery. I am a school principal who is currently completing my Masters of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership). This information sheet is to let you know about the research I am conducting at your school. The study aims to gather information from school whānau, staff and Board of Trustees members on what they value about their school.

Why am I doing the project?
This research is being conducted in three schools. I am discovering any patterns or similarities these schools share that may further inform school leadership in the wider community.

Your views could contribute to our understanding of why whānau have chosen these schools for their tamariki.

What will you have to do if you agree to take part?
- Please click on the link shared in the email which will take you directly to the survey. Alternatively, copy and paste https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F573XNN directly into your internet browser.
- If you would like to contribute your ideas please complete the survey and submit by the 31 March 2019.

If you do not want to participate then ignore the link.

How much of your time will participation involve?
- The survey is likely to take 10-15 minutes.

What are the advantages of taking part?
- You might enjoy sharing your thoughts about what you value about the school.
- Once the study is finished it could provide helpful information to schools and school leadership.

What might worry you about taking this survey?
- Getting into the survey - Click on the link to access the survey. Alternatively, copy and paste https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F573XNN into your internet browser.
- Can I be identified – No. Your name cannot be linked to your responses.
- Are my views important – Yes. All points of view are valued in this research.

Do you have to take part in this study?

- You do not have to take part in this survey.
- Completion and return of the survey implies consent.
- You have the right to decline to answer any particular question.

Will your participation in the project remain confidential?

- Your participation in this study is confidential and all of your responses to the questions will only be used for the purpose of this study.
- I will take all possible steps to ensure your privacy and remove any identifying information.
- The data from this research will be processed and stored securely.
- Access will be password protected and restricted to myself and my thesis supervisors.
- A summary sheet will be available from the school office for all who wish to read it at the end of the study.

What happens now?

If you are interested in being involved you can:

- Complete the online survey via the link or copy and paste https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F573XNN into your browser. This will take you to the survey.

This project has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee. If you have any concerns about the conduct of this research, please contact Massey University Human Ethics Committee via email: humanethicsnorth@massey.ac.nz or contact any of the research supervisors listed below.

Project Contacts

- Katherine Ellery, Master of Education student at Massey University kathiellery@icloud.com ph: 0273338239
- Supervisors:
  - Karen Anderson K.F.Anderson@massey.ac.nz
  - Associate Professor Jenny Poskitt j.m.poskitt@massey.ac.nz
  - Professor Huia Jahnke. H.T.Jahnke@massey.ac.nz

Appendix 2: Letter to Boards of Trustees

(requesting permission to invite school community groups to participate in research study)

School
Address

1 March 2019

Dear Principal and Board of Trustees,

I am writing to request your permission to carry out a research project centered on community schools. This case study research, involving three school communities, seeks views about what people value in their local primary school. The research study is being conducted by myself, Katherine Ellery, and makes up the thesis component of my Masters in Education (Administration and Leadership). My research question is:

"What do school communities value about their local School?"

Establishing this could be used to guide future strategic direction for your school. It could also give current and future school leadership useful insights into keeping schools responsive to community needs and aspirations.

Taking part in research is always voluntary. I am inviting yourselves, the school staff and people who have a child enrolled at your school to take part in this research study.

I am requesting that an invitation to take part in an online survey and the accompanying documentation be sent out via your School Management System (SMS) to school families. The same invitation and documentation will be given to staff and Board of Trustee (BOT) members.

If you agree to allow this research to be undertaken by me then I will:

- Review the study with you, at the school. This could be at a BOT meeting or any other time that is convenient
- Answer the question "What do school communities value about their local school"?" through a survey delivered via 'Survey Monkey'
- Make it clear to participants that they can choose to take part or not

I have included an information sheet, for you to read.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions as you read over this material. My email address is kathiellery@icloud.com or if you would like to speak with me my mobile number is 027 3338239. Alternatively, you can contact the main research supervisor, Karen Anderson: K.F.Anderson@massey.ac.nz or phone: (06) 3569099 ext 84451.

Thank you for your time in considering my request.

Kind Regards,

Katherine Ellery
Researcher

Appendix 3: Letter of Invitation to Participate in Research Study

School
Address

2 April 2019

Kia Ora Parent/Caregiver

You are being invited to participate in a research study being undertaken by Katherine Ellery. Katherine is currently completing her Master of Education (Educational Administration & Leadership) with Massey University.

This study wants to find out:

"What school communities value about their local school?"

Establishing this could help inform the school's future strategic direction. A summary of research findings will be available to all participants and may be shared with other school communities. In this way your views can inform the work of other schools and school leaders.

You are being invited to take part in this research if you:

- Are part of the school community
- Currently have a child/ren enrolled at the school
- Are prepared to complete a survey

If you would like to participate you will find an information sheet attached to this email further explaining your rights as a participant.

The survey is likely to take you about 15 minutes to complete. Please visit https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/F5S89TL to complete the survey.

If you would like to contribute your ideas please complete and submit the survey by 12 April 2019.

If you don't wish to participate please ignore this letter.

Thank you for your time

Katherine Ellery
Researcher

Appendix 4: Parent/Caregiver Survey

What do school communities value about their local school?

This case study research, involving three school communities, seeks views about what is valued in their local primary school. The research is contributing towards a Master of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership) and has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

You are invited to respond, anonymously, to the survey questions below, because you are a currently have child/ren enrolled at the school. Please think of this school while responding to the questions below.

Click on one of the options for Yes/No questions and write your thoughts where an open-ended question is asked in the space provided.

Please complete the survey by 31 March 2019.
Question 1: What school sent you this survey link?

Question 2: In which year level do you have child/ren enrolled?
Years 1-3
Years 4-6
Years 7-8

Question 3: Why did you choose this School for your child/ren?

Question 4: What do you value about this school?

Question 5: What things about student learning do you value at this school?
1:
2:
3:
4:

Question 6: What do you value about the leadership at this school?

Question 7: What would you like school leaders to continue to do?

Question 8: What would you like school leaders to do differently?

Question 9: What other comments would you like to make about the school?

Question 10: Do you have any suggestions for improvement at the school?

Appendix 5: Staff Survey

What do school communities value about their local school?

This case study research, involving three school communities, seeks views about what is valued in their local primary school. The research is contributing towards a Master of Education (Educational Administration and Leadership) and has been approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee.

You are invited to respond, anonymously, to the survey questions below, because you are employed at the school. Please think of this school while responding to the questions below.

Click on one of the options for Yes/No questions and write your thoughts where an open-ended question is asked in the space provided.

Please complete the survey by 31 March 2019.

Question 1: What school sent you this survey link?

Question 2: Do you have children enrolled at this school?
Yes
No

Question 3: Why did you choose to work at this school?

Question 4: What do you value about this school?

Question 5: What things about student learning do you value at this school?
1:
2:
3:
4:

Question 6: What do you value about the leadership at this school?

Question 7: What would you like school leaders to continue to do?

Question 8: What would you like school leaders to do differently?

Question 9: What other comments would you like to make about the school?

Question 10: Do you have any suggestions for improvement at the school?