

**Exploring New Zealand's Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs):  
Social capital in a lifelong learning and community development context**

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## **Abstract**

This research explored the extent to which social capital is an approach used by New Zealand's Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs) to contribute to rural education. Social capital was defined for the purposes of this study as the resource residing in networks of individuals, based on mutual trust and shared social norms, which can be brokered and mobilised to achieve social benefits, particularly in the application of knowledge and skills. A conceptual framework lays out four key elements from this definition which were investigated: networks, trust, social norms, and brokerage.

Given the lack of published material on REAPs and their work, a primarily qualitative design was utilised. Set within a constructivist epistemology and interpretive phenomenological methodology, in-depth interviews with REAP managers and questionnaires for REAP learners were used to collect data. The aim was to explore the lived experiences of these two REAP groups to identify their views on how REAPs operate so that those views could be considered within the social capital framework above. An inductive-deductive-inductive analysis approach was used to maximise the extent to which findings reflected participant language.

Findings from both REAP managers and learners supported the strong presence of the four social capital elements in REAP activity. In many cases the qualitative themes were closely related, both within and across the four social capital elements. Both strong (social) and weak (institutional) forms of trust were described as influencing learner participation in networks, where REAPs played a role in brokering that participation within similar (bonded) and differing (bridged) networks. REAPs made use of trusted relationships and valued-based decision making to gain local community and cultural knowledge to ensure the relevance of responsive learning activities. The result was enhanced confidence and identity of learners to take part in other social activities, including further learning and collective action.

Lived examples of these elements supported a social capital approach that fit well with the lifelong learning and community development processes outlined by the REAP mandate. These processes were defined holistically to consider the integration of individuals' beliefs, viewpoints, and behaviours as much as skills and knowledge. The explored social capital approach within lifelong learning and community development contexts, yields clear recommendations for Government, REAPs, and partner organisations. Flexibility, values/identity-based education, and closing network gaps to facilitate innovation come through as REAP social capital practices that could inform policy and partnerships across the whole of the education sector. Further research is needed to more closely consider the complex relationships of the identified social capital themes. In terms of emergent themes, a deeper exploration of innovation produced through brokerage within REAP activity is highlighted as a key area of research for future.

## Acknowledgements

Any piece of research that spans five years has to be driven by passion. I have to acknowledge that my passion for REAPs is born out of the dedication and caring I have experienced within these unique and funky organisations over the past decade. To all of those who put learners first, and who work tirelessly to better their rural communities through lifelong learning – thank you. I especially have to thank the REAP leaders and learners who have directly contributed to this study. Your time and insights have helped to tell more of REAPs' story. Thank you.

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## Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1 Introduction: REAPs and Social Aspects of Learning</b>	<b>8</b>
SOCIAL ASPECTS OF 21ST CENTURY LEARNING	8
RURILITY AS A FRAMING CONTEXT	10
RESEARCHER'S BACKGROUND	12
RESEARCH AIM	15
RESEARCHER QUESTIONS	15
OUTLINE OF CHAPTERS	16
<b>Chapter 2 Literature Review: REAP Origins, Purpose, and Characteristics</b>	<b>17</b>
LITERATURE REVIEW PROTOCOL, RESULTS & GAPS	17
REAPS IN THE LITERATURE	19
EVALUATION OF SOURCES & IDENTIFICATION OF GAPS	21
INTERNATIONAL LITERATURE & SIMILAR ORGANISATIONS	23
REAPS - A SYNTHESIS OF WHAT WE KNOW	25
POLITICAL BEGINNINGS FOR REAPS	27
REAP ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY REVIEW	29
NATIONAL CHANGE & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	34
REAPS' MOST RECENT REVIEW & CURRENT WORK	41
LIFELONG LEARNING, COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT & GOVERNMENT FUNDING AS CONTEXTS	45
LIFELONG LEARNING	46
COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT	48
PRESENT GOVERNMENT ENVIRONMENT REALITIES	50
CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY	52
<b>Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework: Social Capital as an Applied Model for REAPs</b>	<b>53</b>
SOCIAL CAPITAL HISTORY & DEVELOPMENT	54
EARLY DEFINITIONS & THEORISING	54
<i>PIERRE BOURDIEU</i>	57
<i>JAMES COLEMAN</i>	60
<i>ROBERT PUTNAM</i>	61
CRITICS, PITFALLS & THE DARK SIDE OF SOCIAL CAPITAL	63
COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL IN PRACTICE	66
NETWORKS	67
TRUST	71
BROKERAGE	72
SOCIAL NORMS	74
OPERATIONALISING THE FOUR ELEMENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL	75
SOCIAL CAPITAL & HUMAN CAPITAL - LINKS IN EDUCATION	77
HUMAN CAPITAL	78
LINKS TO EDUCATION & WELLBEING	80
CHAPTER 3 SUMMARY	85

<b>Chapter 4 Methodology: Exploring Socially Constructed Experiences of REAPs</b>	<b>87</b>
PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPINNINGS OF RESEARCH DESIGN	88
EPISTEMOLOGY: CONSTRUCTIONISM	89
THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE: SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY	94
METHODOLOGY: INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGY	97
METHODS: DOCUMENT REVIEW, SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS & QUESTIONNAIRE	102
<i>PRELIMINARY STAGE DOCUMENT REVIEW</i>	104
<i>STAGE ONE SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS</i>	104
<i>STRUCTURING THE INTERVIEW TOOL</i>	105
<i>SELECTING THE SAMPLE POPULATION OF MANAGERS</i>	107
<i>STAGE TWO LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRES</i>	107
<i>STRUCTURING THE QUESTIONNAIRES</i>	108
<i>SELECTING THE SAMPLE POPULATION OF REAP LEARNERS</i>	110
<i>DATA ANALYSIS</i>	111
<i>CODING AS ANALYSIS</i>	112
<i>INTERPRETIVE PHENOMENOLOGICAL ANALYSIS &amp; TEMPLATE ANALYSIS</i>	114
<i>DATA DISPLAY</i>	116
RESEARCH PROCESS: APPROVAL, ACCESS & DATA COLLECTION	117
ETHICS APPROVAL	117
ACCESSING REAPS	119
CARRYING OUT THE INTERVIEW RESEARCH STAGE	120
CARRYING OUT THE QUESTIONNAIRE RESEARCH STAGE	121
ANALYSING THE DATA	122
CONSIDERATIONS TO RESEARCH DESIGN & PROCESS	125
TRUSTWORTHINESS	125
LIMITATIONS	127
CHAPTER FOUR SUMMARY	128
<b>Chapter 5 Findings: Experiences of REAP Leaders and Learners</b>	<b>129</b>
DEDUCTIVE & INDUCTIVE FINDINGS CATEGORIES FROM ANALYSIS	130
NETWORKS CATEGORY	132
<i>NETWORKS THEME: GAINING &amp; SHARING LOCAL KNOWLEDGE</i>	133
<i>NETWORKS THEME: COLLABORATION &amp; PARTNERSHIP</i>	134
<i>NETWORKS THEME: ACCESSING CONNECTIONS (MULTIPLE ROLES)</i>	136
<i>NETWORKS THEME: BUILDING PERSONAL &amp; INSTITUTIONAL RELATIONSHIPS</i>	137
<i>NETWORKS THEME: INCREASING SOCIAL INVOLVEMENT (REDUCED ISOLATION)</i>	139
TRUST CATEGORY	143
<i>TRUST THEME: CREDIBILITY, REPUTATION &amp; PROFILE</i>	144
<i>TRUST THEME: RESPONSIVENESS &amp; MEETING NEEDS</i>	145
<i>TRUST THEME: INCLUSIVITY &amp; BEING NON-COMPETITIVE</i>	147
<i>TRUST THEME: ESTABLISHING TRUST &amp; EXPECTATIONS</i>	149
<i>TRUST THEME: FLEXIBILITY &amp; ADAPTABILITY</i>	151

SOCIAL NORMS CATEGORY	156
<i>SOCIAL NORMS THEME: VALUES-BASED ACTION &amp; ROLE MODELING</i>	157
<i>SOCIAL NORMS THEME: CULTURAL AWARENESS &amp; APPROPRIATENESS (RURAL)</i>	159
<i>SOCIAL NORMS THEME: CHANGING BEHAVIOURS, EXPECTATIONS &amp; VIEWPOINTS</i>	161
<i>SOCIAL NORMS THEME: IDENTITY, CONFIDENCE &amp; SENSE OF BELONGING</i>	163
<i>SOCIAL NORMS THEME: SANCTIONS AGAINST SHARED NORMS &amp; VALUES</i>	165
BROKERAGE CATEGORY	169
<i>BROKERAGE THEME: BRINGING GROUPS TOGETHER &amp; FACILITATION</i>	170
<i>BROKERAGE THEME: ENGAGING SPECIFIED GROUPS</i>	172
<i>BROKERAGE THEME: LEADERSHIP &amp; COORDINATION</i>	174
<i>BROKERAGE THEME: SOCIAL COHESION &amp; COOPERATION</i>	176
<i>BROKERAGE THEME: GAP FILLING (COMPLEMENTARITY &amp; SUPPLEMENTARITY)</i>	178
EMERGENT NON-SOCIAL-CAPITAL CATEGORY	182
<i>EMERGENT THEME: LIFELONG LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE &amp; SKILLS</i>	182
<i>EMERGENT THEME: MAKING A DIFFERENCE (COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT)</i>	185
<i>EMERGENT THEME: FUNDING TENSION &amp; GOVERNMENT PRIORITIES</i>	187
<i>EMERGENT THEME: INNOVATION &amp; FINDING SOLUTIONS</i>	189
INTEGRATED THEMATIC RESULTS	192
CHAPTER FIVE SUMMARY	194
<b>Chapter 6 Discussion: Interpreting Experiences of REAPs in Action</b>	<b>195</b>
STRONG SOCIAL CAPITAL PRESENCE IN REAPS	196
NETWORKS IN REAPS	197
TRUST IN REAPS	200
SOCIAL NORMS IN REAPS	203
BROKERAGE IN REAPS	208
AFFIRMED LIFELONG LEARNING & COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES	210
GOVERNMENT FUNDING TENSIONS	214
STRONG CONSENSUS AMONG PARTICIPANTS ON POSITIVE REAP ATTRIBUTES	217
CHAPTER SIX SUMMARY	219
<b>Chapter 7 Conclusions: Revisiting Research Aims &amp; Looking to Future Research</b>	<b>221</b>
CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE	222
IMPLICATIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS	223
FURTHER RESEARCH	225
LIMITATIONS AND AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT TO ENHANCE RESULTS	227
REVISITING PRESUPPOSITIONS & FINAL REFLECTIONS	228
<b>References</b>	<b>231</b>
<b>List of Appendices</b>	
APPENDIX 1 - INTERVIEW PROTOCOL FOR REAP MANAGERS	239
APPENDIX 2 - QUESTIONNAIRE FOR LEARNERS INCLUDING RELEASE STATEMENT	240
APPENDIX 3 - MASSEY HUMAN ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER FOR APPLICATION 13/05	243

APPENDIX 4 - REAP BOARD CHAIR INVITATION & REQUEST TO ACCESS	244
APPENDIX 5 - RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET FOR MANAGERS	245
APPENDIX 6 - CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH FORM FOR MANAGERS	248
APPENDIX 7 - RESEARCH PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET FOR REAP LEARNERS	249
APPENDIX 8 - REQUEST TO AUDIO RECORD MANAGER INTERVIEWS FOR TRANSCRIPTION	252

### List of Figures

FIGURE 1 - LITERATURE REVIEW VIA BIBLIOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS (ADAPTED FROM HART, 1998)	18
FIGURE 2 - FORMS OF ACTIVITY TO ACHIEVE THE LISTED ACTIVITIES FROM TABLE 2	27
FIGURE 3 - COVERAGE AREAS FOR REAPS (SOURCED FROM 2007 REVIEW OF REAPS)	43
FIGURE 4 - PROCESS FRAMEWORK FOR REAPS (ADAPTED FROM PHILLIPS & PITTMAN, 2009)	50
FIGURE 5 - REAPS OPERATING THROUGH BOTH BONDING AND BRIDGING SOCIAL CAPITAL	69
FIGURE 6 - COMPONENTS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL THEORY RELEVANT TO THIS STUDY	76
FIGURE 7 - MOBILISING RESOURCES INTO CAPITAL FOR WELLBEING (BASSANI, 2007)	83
FIGURE 8 - SYNTHESIS OF SOCIAL CAPITAL APPROACH FOR REAPS	85
FIGURE 9 - RESEARCH DESIGN OVERVIEW (BASED ON CROTTY, 1998)	103
FIGURE 10 - LEVELS OF CODING FOR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS	113
FIGURE 11 - LEARNER QUESTIONNAIRE RESPONDENTS BY SECTOR	131
FIGURE 12 - LEARNER NETWORK INCREASE RESULTING FROM REAP EXPERIENCES	143
FIGURE 13 - LEARNER RATING OF REAP SERVICE QUALITY	156
FIGURE 14 - LEARNER REPORTED CHANGES IN VIEWPOINT AND BEHAVIOUR	169
FIGURE 15 - LEARNER REPORTED REAP BROKERAGE ACTIVITIES	181
FIGURE 16 - LEARNER VIEWS ON REAP MANAGER STATEMENTS	192
FIGURE 17 - LEARNER RESPONSES TO SOCIAL CAPITAL CATEGORIES	193
FIGURE 18 - WORDS THAT BEST DESCRIBE HOW REAPS WORK FOR LEARNERS	194

### List of Tables

TABLE 1 - REAP-SPECIFIC PUBLICATIONS FROM LITERATURE REVIEW	20
TABLE 2 - OVERVIEW OF REAP SERVICES BY LEARNER GROUP AND DELIVERY TOPIC	26
TABLE 3 - ARNOTT (1996) ETHNOGRAPHIC CASE STUDY RESULTS SUMMARY	37
TABLE 4 - REAP CHARACTERISTICS FROM THE LITERATURE	45
TABLE 5 - BURR'S (2003) CONSTRUCTIONIST ELEMENTS AND THOSE OF REAPS	92
TABLE 6 - REAP MANAGER INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND QUESTION RATIONALE	107
TABLE 7 - EXPLORATORY TEMPLATE ANALYSIS PROTOCOL, BASED ON IPA METHOD (SMITH, FLOWERS & LARKIN, 2009)	116
TABLE 8 - KEY ETHICAL PRINCIPLES ASSESSMENT (PER MASSEY CODE OF ETHICS, 2010)	117
TABLE 9 - MASTER CODING LIST OF THEMES FROM EXPLORATORY IPA TEMPLATE ANALYSIS	124
TABLE 10 - CODED DATA CATEGORIES AND THEMES	130
TABLE 11 - CODED 'NETWORKS' REFERENCE COUNT FROM PARTICIPANTS	142
TABLE 12 - CODED 'TRUST' REFERENCE COUNT FROM PARTICIPANTS	155
TABLE 13 - CODED 'SOCIAL NORMS' REFERENCE COUNT FROM PARTICIPANTS	168
TABLE 14 - CODED 'BROKERAGE' REFERENCE COUNT FROM PARTICIPANTS	180
TABLE 15 - CODED 'EMERGENT' REFERENCE COUNT FROM PARTICIPANTS	191



## **Chapter 1 Introduction:**

### **Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs) and Social Aspects of Learning**

As rural depopulation continues, outlying New Zealand communities are approaching critical tipping points. Services and resources lost from depopulation are resulting in a lessened ability to meet skill shortages, fulfill labour market demands, and innovate (Spoonley, 2015). As a response to this shift, collaborations between the education sector and outside organisations have become increasingly relied upon to achieve shared learning goals (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014). These efforts are part of an evolving expectation by Government for partnerships to generate “flexibility and innovation” in a “whole-of community” approach to educational success (Ministry of Education, 2015, pp. 4-5). This thesis examines REAPs as an enduring rural policy solution, directly tied to the whole of the education system, and how they carry out collaborative efforts amidst scarce resources. The results are intended to better inform policy, partnerships, and practice related to rural, lifelong learning, and community development settings.

### **Social Aspects of 21st Century Learning**

Today's education system is intended to provide us with the necessary skills, knowledge, and attitudes to make sense of the world and fully engage in society. In community education, identity forming is part of learning, enabling fuller participation not only in education, but also within the community itself. This is because identity and confidence gained from successful learning in social spaces enhance self-awareness and informs social disposition (Crick & Wilson, 2005). When we see how we fit into the world, we are best situated to contribute to and become a part of it, achieving the above aim. As such, learning is integral to personal and community

growth, where each day learners are subjected to a continually altered social world, reshaping their outlook through lived experiences.

The breadth of social contexts and experiences referenced above requires an educational model that can cope with not just static skill sets, but knowledge that is both built and applied with social groups in mind. Self-determination and collective action are common examples of shared learning in practice, with the evolving role of education increasingly aligned to concepts like responsible citizenship, family wellbeing, and community resilience (Carneiro & Draxler, 2008). Sought competencies in education that lend themselves to these concepts include those that acknowledge context, shifting everyday knowledge, and learner diversity (i.e. varied backgrounds and viewpoints). The last of those reflects the increased access we have to other cultures, value systems, and ways of life through global technology.

With widening social contexts and sharing responsibilities, comes the demand for today's skills to be increasingly collaborative in nature (Hung, Ng, Thiam, & Lim, 2009). Working together is a modern prerequisite to problem solving, as is the ability to adapt to new knowledge and viewpoints as part of that collaborative sharing. This is a critical point that will underpin core aspects of this thesis - that social exchanges are central to learning and acting together in groups. The crux of successful learning that is dependent on social exchange lies in achieving what have been termed 21st century skills. These include broad and integrated skills such as critical thinking, adaptability, self-awareness, innovation, multi-platform communication skills, life and career skills, as well as collaborative and project-based skills (P21: Partnership for 21st Century Learning, 2015; Shaw, 2010). These skill sets reflect the increasing complexity of the modern world, requiring regular revision to instill these in a diverse learner audience.

The challenge in enabling this kind of learning is that policy is increasingly based on urban rather than rural needs and infrastructure (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014).

### **Rurality as a Framing Context**

Since 2008, more people have been living in urban than rural areas globally (The World Bank, 2015). Such a shift in population has affected policy and infrastructure decisions in developed nations, with New Zealand being no exception (Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011). Population levels drive the availability of local, regional, and national resources, leaving rural communities in an increasingly precarious position of looking after their own development and wellbeing as their populations decrease. In the context of a fast-changing information society, these isolated populations require additional support to keep pace in today's world. Education is the means for these increasingly marginalised pockets of society to develop modern competencies. Adaptability and resilience are concepts readily applied to building the capacity of rural communities to maintain their cultural, economic, and identity-based resources (Brown & Schafft, 2011). As Brown and Schafft (2011) point out, supporting rural populations as a growing minority is important so they may continue to be a source of vital natural resources in the global economy, as well as sources of unique historical and cultural heritage - in this case for rural New Zealand.

Collaborative efforts have become necessary to achieve rural development and safeguard the resource potential outlined above. This is because rural communities have lacked the local skill, insight, and experience to meet the requirements of modern educational reform in the last 100 years (Schafft & Jackson, 2010). Schools are common examples of hubs for rural social, cultural, and civic activities, with intergenerational engagement a part of those activities (Bottrell & Goodwin, 2011).

They can serve as an example of place-based identity for rural communities, where social relations and cultural practices are built and adapted to meet the needs of local individuals and families. When well aligned to the local community, schools can also be viewed as constructed social institutions that increase community-based practices and partnerships, as well as social engagement and social cohesion. However, falling rolls and reducing community sizes impact negatively on the ability of schools to provide for all of a rural community's development needs.

Much like rural schools, the adult learning sector would note that an increasing range of provision is required to address rural needs across the lifespan, driven by the reality that despite depopulation, rural areas are just as diverse in population makeup as urban areas (Benseman, 2006; Spoonley, 2015). In order to provide access to a range of learning activities to meet those needs, there has been an increasing range of organisations taking on support and development roles. Part of achieving skills for growth in communities, particularly where formal education is not fully geared to achieve them or where students disengaged before attaining them, means relying on other institutions to fulfill that development. The NGO<sup>1</sup> sector reportedly operates strongly in that space, more so in New Zealand than most other OECD<sup>2</sup> countries (Dalziel & Saunders, 2014). According to Dalziel and Saunders (2014), the goals of these organisations are often targeted at keeping economy going through training for industry and coordinating disparate services to make the best use of resource. It is these shared goals for development and wellbeing that place NGO work in close proximity to education.

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<sup>1</sup> NGO is an abbreviation for Non Governmental Organisation.

<sup>2</sup> OECD is an abbreviation for Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

As a rural-focused policy solution to the above issues, New Zealand introduced 13 REAPs in three waves between 1979 and 1982 to support rural children, teachers and families in the early childhood and schooling sectors (including adults in post-schooling stages of learning). Today these non-profit organisations work resolving issues of educational access, resourcing, gaps in best practice and collaboration (see REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015b). As such, REAPs are positioned to make use of both the suggested hubs of rural learning (i.e. schools), as well as other means to support learning across the lifespan. Exploring how these NGOs operate with shared learning and developmental goals directly alongside the education system in New Zealand will better our understanding of resourcing solutions in a collaborative and socially contextual environment.

### **Researcher's Background**

I am a rurally born-and-raised, first-generation university graduate. Having attended nine different rural schools by the time I graduated high school, I have a strong appreciation for the challenges of limited resources (and transience) in isolated communities. Teachers and family always pressed education as an opportunity for betterment, with higher achievement equated with greater social mobility. As an undergraduate I trained under a new interdisciplinary honours programme, where core general education was team taught by multiple faculty members from four to five different disciplines. The result was an integrative model of critical thinking that encouraged the mixing of disciplinary insights and tools to approach social issues. I have applied this kind of thinking particularly in my methodology chapter, where I have modified the traditional choices of theory and methodology to ensure best fit for my own research design and rationale.

My involvement and interest in REAPs as grassroots organisations have evolved over the last nine years, starting almost as soon as I arrived in New Zealand in search of a way to get to grips with a "new" education system. Currently serving as the Director of Operations for Eastbay REAP, I began as a volunteer at Far North REAP in 2006, providing tertiary learning support to students either interested or enrolled in training courses and extramural qualifications. Over time, that role became a formal and permanent one. After four years in a senior role leading Far North REAP's education team, I was made Acting Chief Executive for the organisation. I have additionally served as Staff Representative on Far North REAP's Board of Directors, been the first national Secretariat, and am now in my second term as an elected member of the National Board for REAP Aotearoa New Zealand (REAPANZ). Cumulatively these roles have provided a rounded perspective on REAPs from grassroots delivery to high-level strategy. These experiences, and engagement with communities and passionate staff from the other 12 REAPs, have led me to bring REAPs to the fore in educational research.

As I explored REAPs' place in educational research to understand how these organisations operate, I found there is no peer-reviewed research published on REAPs currently. Despite 30 years contributing to rural education in New Zealand, only a handful of self-published studies, two pieces of case study research, three governmental reports, and a text on informal history are available to those outside the REAP movement. This is a critical gap around a core and unique feature of New Zealand's education system. With New Zealand Governments regularly reprioritising investments in education, it is essential that REAPs, as a long-standing feature of the

Ministry of Education, be clearly understood in terms of their contribution in the most rural parts of the country.

Ultimately my interest in this type of research revolves around two key points: the need to investigate a significant phenomenon in the New Zealand educational system for which there is little formal research presently; and the desire to highlight and explain models of community-based learning and development that take a learner-centric and adaptive approach to improving the quality of life for individuals and families. These efforts are underpinned by my own views and assumptions about REAPs. Through my extensive involvement in REAPs, I have experienced them to have a strong collaborative and relationship focus in how they operate across all three educational sectors, both through their own provision and by engineering and supporting joint ventures with partner organisations. The utility of these relationships hinges on the established reputation of REAPs in their area to be effective. The overarching purpose of a relational approach is to influence learning and social change. These views have provided useful insight in shaping the goals of this research, namely that of focusing on a social capital approach as a possible description of the REAP model in action.

Upon investigating collaborative, social, and relationships-based models of community learning, social capital became an obvious model to apply from the early literature review. Given the exploratory nature of this project, great care was taken during early engagement with participating REAPs and ultimately during data collection to avoid explicit social capital language and suggestions. As a researcher I acknowledge that my experiences and preformed notions around social capital have informed the approach to my research design – specifically my views that trusted

relationships and the ability to bring groups together are core aspects of how REAPs undertake their work. I have also taken clear steps to allow focus on the language of participants to articulate how REAPs operate and to allow for other views on the REAP approach to come through.

### **Research Aim**

Noting the social and developmental aspects of learning across the lifespan, an exploratory study that provides insight into these facets of the REAP model and practice was planned. The aim of this study was to use phenomenological methods grounded in a constructionist framework of social capital theory to explore how REAPs contribute to learning in rural New Zealand. Acknowledging the rural context outlined above, this aim provided a targeted investigation of the social spaces of learning relevant to REAP communities. The application of social capital theory also incorporated the relational and exchange-based concepts related to skills development and application, which are aligned to the 21st century and collaborative skillsets necessary for learners to thrive in today's world. An improved understanding of how REAPs, as community-based organisations, operate across the three education sectors in a lifelong learning and community development context provides a better-informed approach to policy, shared community outcomes, and enhanced collaborations.

### **Research Questions**

A review of the literature revealed a gap in peer-reviewed research and a need for further research on New Zealand's REAPs generally. Because aspects of REAP historical and cultural elements have been captured at least minimally in the handful of existing sources, the focus for this research is one of approach – how REAPs do what



they do. Within the context of social exchange, the aim is to explore the approach through which REAPs add value to learning in rural communities.

*Primary research question:*

To what extent do REAPs make use of a social capital approach to contribute to education in rural New Zealand?

*Enabling research questions:*

What are the characteristics of REAPs as they have evolved over time?

What contexts do REAPs operate within based on their characteristics?

What are the key elements of a social capital approach?

## **Outline of Chapters**

Having introduced the scope of, motivation for, and aims of this research, the remaining thesis chapters progress as follows. Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature, particularly around REAPs and concepts related to the defined characteristics of a REAP. Chapter 3 is a conceptual framework that scaffolds the theoretical aspects of a social capital model to explain how REAPs may be described to operate and fulfill their role. This is intended to help delineate the complex variances in social capital definitions, resulting in a clarified and relevant explanation of the concept within this thesis. Chapter 4 explains the methodological approach to the research, from philosophical underpinnings through to methods and issues of validity and ethics. Chapter 5 presents findings from collected data, while Chapters 6 and 7 discuss the implications of those findings and suggest wider significance and further research related to REAPs and social capital.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review:**

### **A Critical Review of REAP Origins, Purpose, and Characteristics**

The review of literature aimed to provide a synthesis and critical review of what is known about REAPs, and focused on characteristics of REAPs in terms of how they operate. Background information for lifelong learning and community development as contexts for REAP work was also explored. Hart's (1998) definition of literature review informed the approach taken in this chapter:

The selection of available documents (both published and unpublished) on the topic, which contain information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfill certain aims or express certain views on the nature of the topic and how it is to be investigated, and the effective evaluation of these documents in relation to the research being proposed.  
(p. 13)

Consequently, the chapter is divided into three sections that illustrate and evaluate how REAPs are presented in the literature:

- Literature review protocol, evaluation of results, and gaps;
- Synthesis and critique of what is known on REAPs (e.g. history, services etc.);
- Framing the REAP contexts of lifelong learning and community development.

### **Literature Review Protocol, Results and Gaps**

For this study, an iterative process has been applied since January 2011, across a range of sources to establish a broad spectrum of materials on REAPs for evaluation and refinement. Key sources for review included published texts, peer reviewed articles, published reports and studies, websites (primarily for educational and community-based institutions), theses, conference papers, and national archives material. Results from searches were categorised and scanned for relevance based on

inclusion and exclusion criteria set by key terms (see below). Those of significance to the research were marked for deeper reading and annotation, with bibliographies used to extract seminal and related research. As all annotated sources from the broad search became incorporated into the thesis in some way, those sources were transferred into the research library (Mendeley) for referencing as necessary. Figure 1 summarises the overall process that informed the ongoing search, taking a bibliographic analysis approach.

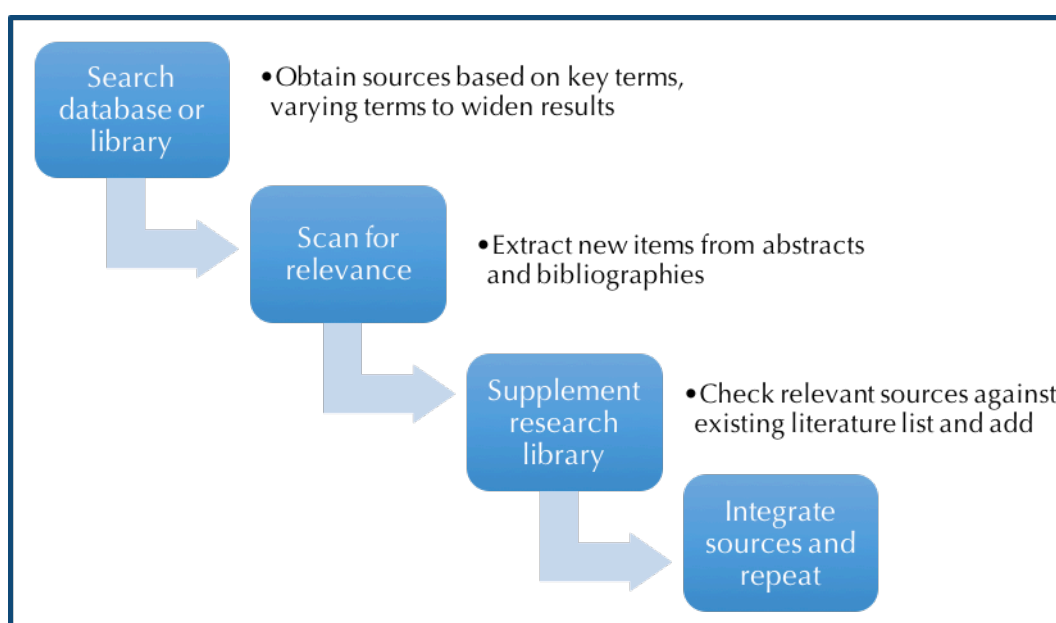


Figure 1: Literature review bibliographic analysis (Adapted from Hart, 1998)

Search terms were focused on two key areas: REAPs generally and phrases designed to capture related organisations, both within New Zealand and globally. Electronic database searches were carried out through a number of educationally relevant sites including (but not limited to): Academic Search Premier, Archives New Zealand, Education Source, ERIC, Google Scholar, and JSTOR. Examples of key specific search terms and criteria for REAPs themselves include: "REAP", "Rural Education Activities Programme", "rural education", "rural education New Zealand",

"rural learning", "rural learning New Zealand", "lifelong learning organisations", "lifelong education organisations", "community development organisations", and "community education organisations". While this is not an exhaustive list, it captures the core of concepts explored across multiple databases.

The ongoing review of literature also acknowledges emerging publications and considers the possibility of near future government reports on REAPs, as well as pending texts, articles, and website updates. Overall results on search terms numbered between 100,000 and 3,000,000 depending on the specificity of the term. Those were filtered through scanning criteria, honing in on community-based learning topics, rurally focused education programmes, and education sector initiatives. Over 3,000 sources were scanned based on inclusion criteria, such as: applied research and texts being within the last 15 years; New Zealand and Australian-based organisations given preference for similar services and contextual aspects (i.e. lifelong learning and community development); and social capital research being in relation to education across the three sectors. Filtering resulted in approximately 750 sources being read and evaluated (around 100 of which are cited). These materials inform the literature review, conceptual framework, methodology, and discussion chapters.

### **REAPs in the literature.**

Search results for REAPs specifically presented a finite amount of research and evaluative material, demonstrating a considerable gap in the literature even at a glance. An initial scoping of existing literature about REAPs provides a limited number of sources on the history and purpose of these non-profit organisations. A few dozen staffing reports, annual reports, and financial returns for REAPs can be found in Archives New Zealand, illustrating the number of workers and levels of funding for

each REAP from their establishment between 1979 and 1982 until the early 1990s. Policy documents and founding research on REAPs from the then Department of Education have not been kept. In fact, there are so few results of published research or reports across REAPs' 35 years, all 13 can be listed in total rather than summarised.

*Table 1: REAP-specific publications from literature review*

REAP-specific publication timeline based on search results		
Year	Publication	Description
1982	<b>Case Study Research on REAPs</b> Nash (Massey University)	Case study on the objectives, structure, and operations of the first wave of REAPs.
1990	<b>Review of REAPs</b> Rivers (Ministry of Education)	Examination of alignment of REAPs to Tomorrow's Schools goals.
1991	<b>REAP Handbook</b> Ministry of Education	Operational guidelines for REAPs as provided by the funding ministry.
1995	<b>Reading Recovery Evaluation Action Research</b> Easton, Hilson & Wilkinson	Action research on the development, implementation, and outcomes of a REAP reading assistance programme.
1996	<b>Rural Services Provision Report</b> Ministry of Education	Environmental scan report on early childhood, school-based, and adult learning opportunities in rural NZ.
1996	<b>Case Study Research on REAPs</b> Arnott (Northern Territory University)	Case study research on operations of REAPs, with a focus on programmes, processes, and pressures.
1997	<b>Technical Policy Paper</b> Anderson (Ministry of Agriculture)	Investigative report on effectiveness and indicators of REAPs in addressing supplementary education needs.
1999	<b>Far North REAP Social Audit</b> Pearce	Self-initiated audit report assessing non-financial performance as perceived by stakeholder research.
1999	<b>Māori Needs in Central Otago</b> Te Whanau Whanui ki Kopuwai (NZ Lotteries & WINZ)	Research report on Māori needs analysis resulting from attempts to develop a Māori Community Worker position.
1999	<b>Youth Issues Survey Research</b> Central King Country REAP	Local survey research project summary examining youth policy, engagement, and educational opportunities.
2002	<b>Informal History of REAPs</b> Shepherd & Hansen	Historical text on the start of REAPs, their evolving lifelong services and changing environmental factors.
2002	<b>REAP Stocktake Report</b> Porteous (Ministry of Education)	Assessment of REAP performance against 2000/2001 contracts, reports, operational and policy issues.
2007	<b>Review of REAPs Report</b> Ministry of Education	Examination of REAP provision, efficiency, and areas of development to enhance government investment.

Substantive results include one external historical case study on the first four REAPs (Nash, 1982), one external case study on two REAPs (Arnott, 1996), one

informal REAP historical research text (Shepherd & Hansen, 2002), three formal organisational REAP review reports (Anderson, 1997; Ministry of Education, 2007; Porteous, 2002), and a handful of small-scale project reports from individual REAPs and agencies (Cooke, 1999; Diver, 1999; Easton, Hilson, & Wilkinson, 1995). The details in Table 1 above provide a snapshot of source material on REAPs, with fuller details and evaluations of those sources available in later sections. Minor conference talks and discussion papers have been referenced in some published materials, but transcripts of those talks could not be retrieved.

### **Evaluation of sources and identification of gaps.**

Reiterating the scarcity of material directly related to REAPs over their 35-year operation, all landmark sources are mentioned here briefly. Three issues present themselves in light of this literature: 1.) only four of the 13 publications above were conducted independently, i.e. by someone outside of the REAP or the funding Ministry, creating a highly normative set of viewpoints in the literature; 2.) only one source makes efforts to provide explanatory details of how REAPs provide their wide-ranging services; 3.) and nothing as yet is available in applied research and refereed journals to recognise REAPs in practice. Consequently, further research needs to be done about REAPs to place their educational role more clearly in the research landscape.

With only a handful of primary sources specific to REAPs to draw from, the viewpoints on any findings are limited by the scope, nature, and even author of those publications. Limited viewpoints could primarily be couched in terms of the "funder and the funded", given that the purpose of four of the above exercises revolve around operational efficiency and Governmental alignment. Three sources from the literature used formal research methodologies: Nash's 1982 case study of four REAPs, Arnott's

1996 case study of two REAPs, and Anderson's 1997 review of all REAPs (though it is unclear what the interview engagement and survey return rates were). Each of these utilised both document analysis and interviews to gather wide data from purposive groups across small numbers of REAPs. Only Arnott's work is able to make claims into widening the understanding of how these organisations operate i.e. how they undertake their well-defined purpose to contribute to rural communities. This thesis is only the second to research how REAPs operate after Arnott's work. While each of these examples from the literature have added to our understanding of REAPs, to date none have been reported as peer-reviewed research, regardless of scope or method. Shepherd and Hansen (2002) remark on their literature review efforts:

[...] from our research we have ascertained that by and large, little is ever written about lifelong learning and the New Zealand rural context. We are certain that the New Zealand REAP model is unique and although there has been international interest, there has not been any update of the equivalent package elsewhere. (p. 144)

Some 12 years on from Shepherd and Hansen, material on REAPs is still lacking. However, this search did reveal REAPs to be globally unique as responsive lifelong learning and development organisations. No other organisation in the literature provides both formal and informal support to all three education sectors as part of their mandate to develop and improve communities. It is clear that any further research into REAPs as a phenomenon would make a valuable contribution to the wider literature. Further value is added by furthering our understanding of how REAPs have developed, from their originally conceived purpose as responsive lifelong learning organisations, into entities that use those efforts as a means to achieve social and community

development ends. This is the first of the enabling research question for this study: *what are the characteristics of REAPs as they have evolved over time?*

### **International literature and similar organisations.**

REAPs operate as community organisations in the rural arena of early childhood, schools, and adult education. Adding the contexts of lifelong learning and community development, as well as a specific framework like social capital means a number of international literatures were considered in developing the investigation. As a basis for wider comparison, the research question around REAPs is primarily situated against the field of rural education in an international context. With an emphasis on the rural context provided in the introductory chapter, multiple literatures are considered briefly below to clarify the placement of this investigation of REAPs in wider fields. Both lifelong learning and community development literatures are reviewed later in this chapter as part of the contextual discussion around REAPs.

Rural education literature (see Brown & Schafft, 2011; Schafft & Jackson, 2010) demonstrates the strongest alignment to REAPs, particularly given their rural education mandate. Looking at REAPs as a policy solution with a rural focus, publications such as the *Australian and International Journal of Rural Education* and the *Journal of Research in Rural Education* offer peer reviewed spaces for emerging trends and ideas relevant to REAPs' work (see Coladarci 2007; Roberts & Cuervo, 2015). Equally there are a number of rural policy aligned organisations that make use of their own publications around rural education issues, including Rural Women New Zealand, the American National Rural Education Association, and the Rural China Education Foundation. Each of these rural sector partners offers a relevant place for research on REAPs and their work in rural communities, although as discussed below, each focuses



on aspects of REAP activity without being comparable on the whole to the totality of what REAPs offer and aim to achieve.

In an attempt to encapsulate the entirety of the REAP model in the international literature, alternative searches to link the REAP model with other comparable organisations in lifelong learning literature proved difficult for a number of reasons. Where REAPs offer services across the lifespan, early childhood through to senior learning, the term "lifespan" in an organisational sense yields results in the human development and mental health arenas, where lifespan education has a specific disciplinary concept. Likewise, the terms "lifelong learning" and "lifelong education" can be synonymous (in a practice sense) with continuing and adult education, which is only one of three core aspects of REAPs' work. Neither search provided comparable organisations to incorporate into the formal literature review.

A further variation of search for similar organisations was carried out with a wider community education lens. While there are innumerable examples of entities that focus on community education projects as part of their mandate (see Fasheh, 1990; McGivney, 1999), it was again difficult to identify organisations in both areas that reflected the wide sector scope and educational mandate of REAPs. It is clear that the "grassroots" community approach to utilise relationships and networks is present in other organisations (see Grassroots Education Project, 2015). There are also strong similarities between distinct projects and outcomes comparable to REAP work. However, results lacked the cross-sector focus in an applied education setting, which is a core component of the research question for this thesis. Without a clear directive to engage with learning at all ages and stages, research into other organisations would not significantly further an exploratory analysis of how REAPs operate in their setting.

## REAPs – A Synthesis of What We Know

Through the source material above, several common threads on the purpose and function of REAPs provide a synthesised definition of these organisations as: *rural and responsive nonprofits that broker, facilitate, enhance, and provide needs-based lifelong learning opportunities from pre-school to adult education, through a networks-based community development approach* (Arnott, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2007; Nash, 1982; Shepherd & Hansen, 2002). This aligns to the description provided by REAP Aotearoa New Zealand as the national REAP body in their most recent *Integrated Investment Plan*:

REAPs [...] provide lifelong learning opportunities based on local need. Our ongoing role is to identify gaps in the provision of education, of all types and for all ages, and develop strategies to fill these gaps, either through our own programmes or in collaboration with other providers. REAP programmes supplement, complement and fill gaps in education in the Early Childhood, Schooling, and Adult & Community Education (ACE) sectors and transitions between these levels. [...] Sometimes REAPs are the leader, initiator and sole provider, sometimes the supporter, broker and facilitator of collaborative efforts, and often the catalyst for change. REAPs take seriously their role in promoting community development, integrating education and provision of information with activities in other sectors including health, social services, community organisations, iwi<sup>3</sup> and runanga<sup>4</sup> and local government. (REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015a, p. 4)

Based on that same planning document, Table 2 provides an overview of the range of these activities and targeted learner groups across REAPs nationally (summarised from REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015a) :

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<sup>3</sup> Iwi is a Māori word, meaning tribe (the largest social unit of a people).

<sup>4</sup> Runanga is a Māori word, meaning governing or administrative board for a group of families.

Table 2: Overview of REAP services by learner group and delivery topic

<b>REAP Aotearoa New Zealand 2015 expected activities by education sector</b>	
<i>Early childhood education with a government focus on increasing participation in quality ECE<sup>5</sup> and increased successful transitions into schooling</i>	
<b><u>Groups engaged with services</u></b>	<b><u>Example learning activity topic areas</u></b>
1. Families with ECE-aged children (including grandparents)	• Curriculum and technology courses
2. Early childhood-aged children, enrolled and not enrolled in ECE	• E-learning support in the home
3. Educators and administrators working in ECE services	• Rural playgroup development
ECE includes kohanga reo <sup>6</sup> , licensed centres, playgroups, and home groups.	• Ka Hikitia <sup>7</sup> and cultural strategies
	• Home-based pedagogy support
	• Community ECE networks support
	• Te Reo <sup>8</sup> and Tikanga <sup>9</sup> Māori
	• Whanau-service relationships
	• Bicultural transitions development
<i>Schools education with a government focus on increasing early years literacy/numeracy and increasing NCEA<sup>10</sup> Level 2 achievement</i>	
<b><u>Groups engaged with services</u></b>	<b><u>Example learning activity topic areas</u></b>
1. Families with school-aged children (including grandparents)	• Te Reo and Tikanga Māori
2. School-aged children, enrolled and not enrolled in school	• Gifted learning support
3. Educators and administrators working in schools	• STEM <sup>12</sup> classroom promotion
Schools include kura kaupapa <sup>11</sup> Māori, primary, secondary and area schools.	• E-learning tools and social media
	• Curriculum and technology courses
	• Ka Hikitia and cultural strategies
	• Home-based pedagogy support
	• Community-schools networks
	• Clustered groups for shared practice
<i>Adult education with a government focus on skills for industry, careers for at-risk youth, adult literacy/numeracy, and achievement for Māori and Pasifika</i>	
<b><u>Groups engaged with services</u></b>	<b><u>Example learning activity topic areas</u></b>
1. Learners with low foundation skills (e.g. less than Level 3 on the NZ Qualifications Framework)	• Basic computing and digital skills
2. Learners whose initial learning was unsuccessful (i.e. at school)	• Job readiness (CVs and interviews)
3. Priority groups such as disengaged youth, Māori, and Pasifika <sup>13</sup>	• Drivers licence and literacy courses
	• Te Reo and Tikanga Māori
	• Youth pathways planning
	• NCEA basics for parents/students
	• Positive parenting programmes
	• NZ Sign Language and ESOL <sup>14</sup>
	• Embedded literacy and numeracy

<sup>5</sup> ECE is an abbreviation for Early Childhood Education.

<sup>6</sup> Kohanga Reo is an immersive Te Reo Māori language early childhood learning environment.

<sup>7</sup> Ka Hikitia is an early childhood curriculum, based on a Māori cultural worldview.

<sup>8</sup> Te Reo is a Māori word, meaning Māori language.

<sup>9</sup> Tikanga is a Māori word, meaning practices.

<sup>10</sup> NCEA is an abbreviation for National Certificate in Educational Achievement.

<sup>11</sup> Kura kaupapa is an immersive Te Reo Māori language school-aged learning environment.

<sup>12</sup> STEM is an abbreviation for Science, Technology, Engineering & Mathematics.

<sup>13</sup> Pasifika refers to indigenous people of the Pacific Islands (not including Māori).

<sup>14</sup> ESOL is an abbreviation for English for Speakers of Other Languages.

To better illustrate the planned programming above, those services can also be distilled into categories according to the form the learning activity takes:

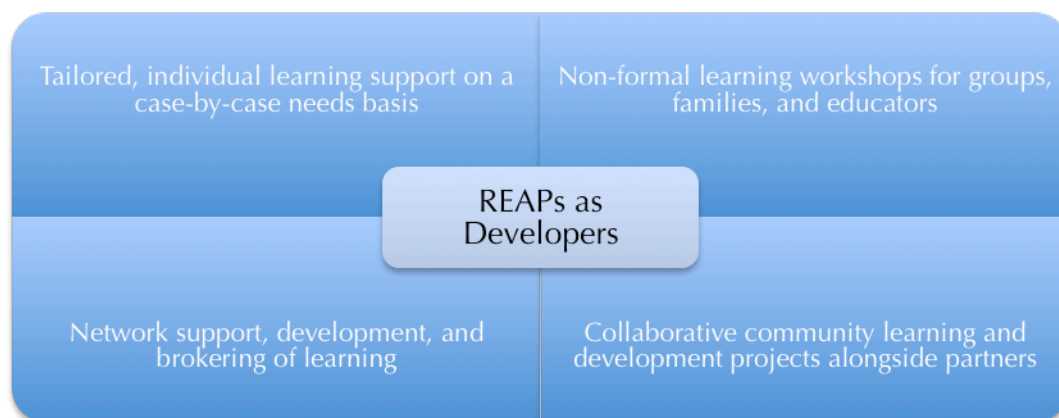


Figure 2: Forms of activity to achieve the listed activities from Table 2

The genesis and examination of those activities in action were extracted from historical accounts and reviews of REAPs over the past 35 years, from their political beginnings through to present operations.

### **Political beginnings for REAPs.**

While there is certainly nothing formally documented around the formative development of REAPs as a concept in the late 1970s, multiple sources (Arnott, 1996; Nash, 1982; Shepherd & Hansen, 2002) credit REAPs as a reactive political manoeuvre. In the electoral campaigns leading up to the 1978 general election in New Zealand, the highly active and influential Federated Farmers (and other rurally oriented constituents) made pointed inquiries in public forums as to what was being done to address rural disparities in education. The result was an announcement two months prior to the election to establish 13 REAPs in three waves in the most rural districts of the country, with three of the four initial REAP areas described as "highly marginalized constituencies" (Nash, 1982, p. 7). According to Nash (1982), "a proposal to provide supplementary educational resources to rural districts with specific

needs was made in the 1978 Election Manifest of the National Party", whereby resources would be directed by management committees comprised of local community members, and where "resources would be provided at all levels of the educational system – pre-school, primary, secondary and community" (p. 3). Nash further elaborates that the districts to be included in the REAP movement included (in their respective 'waves'):

Central Otago, East Coast, Marlborough, and Taihape-Ruapehu (1979); Central King Country, Eastern Bay of Plenty, Northern Wairarapa, Northland, West Coast and Western Nelson (1980); and Central Plateau, Southland and Wairarapa (1982). There is [...] no available written information about the criteria used to determine which districts would be provided with REAPs, at which phase of the rolling programme, or with what character and level of staffing. (pp. 4-5)

What is significant here is that with the plan for implementing a national REAP scheme, comes the first account of the most consistent attributes of REAPs in the literature: that they are locally responsive organisations designed to supplement educational opportunities across all ages of learning in rural communities (where rural was defined as centres with populations below 20,000). These are the most cited hallmarks of REAPs throughout the early years of their development, although other attributes become clear as REAPs stabilise in their communities.

Other primary aspects of REAPs, that come through the later literature, revolve around their community development nature, specifically that networks, facilitation, and brokerage play a pivotal role in how they achieve their educational aims of being responsive across the lifespan (Arnott, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2007; Porteous, 2002; Shepherd & Hansen, 2002). These are aspects that are revealed during REAP

evaluative exercises after their establishment, and are discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

### **REAP establishment and early review.**

The establishment of these rural learning organisations, beyond the political determination behind their creation, is best captured by the sole published text on REAPs. Robin Shepherd and Jens Hansen, founding Community Education Organisers (CEOs) of Far North and Westland REAPs respectively, provide a wide reaching socio-political background for REAPs in their 2002 text *And So Shall They REAP: An Informal History of the New Zealand Rural Education Activities Programme (REAP)*. Their book comprehensively covers the issues of organisational culture, shifting political landscapes, and on-the-ground, as-it-happened accounts of REAPs over a 20-year period. Many examples of delivery services are used to illustrate REAPs as adapting to both government climate and community need. Many of their views and statements on REAP history are supported by the review and research sources referenced above, which support the account of how REAPs developed in their early years of operation.

Shepherd and Hanson's anecdotal and evidenced accounts of the beginnings of REAPs are in line with those laid out by Nash previously. They point out the then Department of Education's view on the role of REAPs by 1982 when all 13 were fully operational:

[...] a coordinated package of rural education services across the lifespan that allocates supplemental staffing resources to pre-schools and schools, creates linkages to agencies, provides pastoral care and professional development to educators, and delivers responsive training (especially pre-employment) to adults. (pp. 30-1)

Much like Nash, Shepherd and Hansen (2002) surmise the responsive intent of REAPs, that the "innovative management of resources that enable deliberate, responsive and sustained growth in education" was the guiding operational principle to allow REAPs to get underway, with input from local people to develop local solutions for learning (p. 10). And so with that key principle in hand, the named Management Advisory Committees (MACs) would begin in 13 rural regions, starting with the first four in 1979, five in 1980, and the final four in 1982.

In terms of practical operations, the established management committees began working under a mandate to implement their responsive principle. They were entrusted to "provide direction and advice [... as well as] general oversight of the elements of the scheme [REAP] in the district; to consider reports at regular intervals from staff members [...]; to evaluate the functioning of the scheme [... and]; to provide a forum in which representatives of local interests and individuals can consider the educational requirements and concerns of the district" (Nash, 1982, pp. 6-7). The intent was to ensure locally guided and responsive learning activities in each of the 13 rural regions. These efforts were reinforced by the first REAP handbook developed by the Department of Education in 1983, as cited by Shepherd and Hansen (2002):

REAP is based on the belief that the local community is best able to identify its own special needs and to continuously reassess these needs. It ha[d] been assumed that there will be greater coordination in the education system if resources provided to meet locally identified needs are managed at a local level across the spectrum from pre-school groups to continuing education. (p. 31)

This provided consistent messaging around the role and purpose of REAPs from those who established them, and those who would begin to provide services. From this

basis, management committees began hiring CEOs to lead operational activities and ensure appropriate staff in the form of pre-school educationalists, visiting teachers, reading and speech specialists, community education staff, and rural liaisons.

With work getting underway and a growing sense of momentum developing in REAP activity, the first REAP newsletter was published out of Southern Hawkes Bay in 1980 to share the aims and objectives of REAPs widely. They espoused:

- Recognising that each district has unique features and specific needs that should be reflected in programmes;
- Strengthening, enriching, expanding and coordinating the various resources of existing educational services;
- Innovating and developing flexibility in educational programmes from Pre-school to Community Education;
- Encouraging people in the local community to become interested and actively involved in educational activities. (Shepherd & Hanson, 2002, p. 29)

The elements of district uniqueness, supplementing existing services, innovating across the lifespan of learning, and promoting participation are all mainstays of the REAP ethos still documented today, as seen in the opening statement from the current REAP Aotearoa statement of purpose. It should be noted that with these activities and responsive mandate came no codified statutory powers, which Shepherd and Hansen posit became an opportunity for innovation to meet need in isolated communities. The Department of Education handbook gave an overview of operating principles (e.g. the management committee structure, REAP objectives listed above, and placement of REAPs nationally), but nothing truly regulatory in terms of meeting the responsive needs identified. Shepherd and Hanson (2002) comment on the cultural impact of such a flexible platform within the organisation, given "that during its formative years,



in the period that preceded the educational reforms of 1989, the overarching philosophy of REAPs emphasized spontaneity and self-directed social development" (p. 11). REAPs were to operate, as envisaged from their inception, as a responsive resource to meet the needs of the community/constituency at large.

By 1982 when the last wave of REAPs was established, the Department of Education commissioned rural research expert Roy Nash, then Senior Lecturer in Education for Massey University in Palmerston North, to undertake a review of the first wave of REAPs to map progress and consider challenges and changes ahead. REAPs were a new venture in the education sector and with such a flexible mandate, Nash set out to evaluate what had been accomplished thus far by the pioneering REAPs. With that novelty in mind, Nash (1982) employed a case study methodology using document analysis, interviews with REAP staff, and commentary feedback from management committees on the draft report to achieve the following aims:

1. Study the objectives of the REAPs as held by those involved with REAPs at all levels.
2. Investigate the nature of the organisational structure of the individual REAPs.
3. Investigate the modes of operation of the individual REAPs.
4. Identify the problems and issues (both structural and contingent) that individual REAPs may have experienced, and to report upon the strategies used to resolve those difficulties.
5. Report on the success or otherwise of the REAP operations in achieving their objectives. (pp. 9-10)

These were somewhat lofty aims for such young organisations. These four REAPs were far removed from one another geographically, operating remotely and with few (if any) guidelines on best practice.

Notwithstanding the novelty of REAPs (or perhaps because of it), Nash's report from 1982 provided some clear insights into the sector and operational difficulties in the early days for REAPs. Nash's findings include:

- Over allocation of hours to a single area of support, leaving others vulnerable;
- Poor communication and input from regional and national offices of the Department of Education;
- Over professionalization of leadership to the point of discouraging lay relationships in communities;
- And a lack of commitment and clear communication from management committee membership.

Outside of these concerns, the most notable finding was the multiple examples of decision making by management committees that neglected consultation with key stakeholders such as teachers' unions and Education Board representation in those areas. This finding was coined as "disturbing" by the sector given it counters the responsive philosophy of REAPs (Shepherd & Hanson, 2002, p. 55). This would become a focus for improved REAP practice over the next period of time.

A number of factors would likely have contributed to the rocky operational start, from the general newness of the REAP scheme and the unprecedented flexibility in approach, through to the realities of trying to galvanize support and involvement from an isolated and sporadic rural population, professional and layperson alike. Nonetheless, Nash gave overall praise to the early REAP efforts, providing an evaluative assessment that they were all functioning within the framework, "one optimally [... as a result of] strongly representative locally evolved policy" and that "no

one is in any doubt that areas with REAPs are better off than those without" (1982, p. 74). The report's assessment and findings were accepted and no further formal review was undertaken for the following eight years. It is likely that the relative newness of REAPs as a government-community venture, coupled with the overall positive response from the initial evaluation of the first wave, was sufficiently reassuring not to warrant ongoing assessment. However, as part of educational reform in 1989 with a shift to more neoliberal thinking, the Ministry of Education tasked a review group to evaluate the state of REAPs as a result of the *Tomorrow's Schools* initiative (Shepherd & Hanson, 2002, p. 118). Led by Mary-Jane Rivers, a consultant to the Ministry, this report would consider a range of options for REAPs going forward in the new educational era, from full closure and redistribution of resource to sustained operation without change.

#### **National change and community development.**

The Rivers report was comprehensive in the consultative sense. A team of three, led by Rivers, visited every REAP community across the country in an effort to provide a comprehensive consideration of effectiveness, responsiveness, and equity from the perspectives of officials and agencies associated with REAPs. The primary focus held to considering the alignment of REAPs to the changing government agenda and how they might operate in that changed environment. The report recommendations reinforced the success of responsive flexibility, a supplementary and complementary approach (adding value to and extending existing services), and lifelong community-based learning. The report also provided a number of recommendations around specific accountability measures including criteria for management committee makeup, as well as strategies for Māori engagement and iwi relationship building.

The most wide-reaching recommendation, however, was that each REAP should be incorporated as its own legal society in order to allow for more detailed contracting of services from the Ministry and other agencies (Rivers, Dewes, & Drumm, 1990). This recommendation would be enacted by REAPs throughout the early 1990s to ensure their continued operation in a reformed Government and educational environment. A trend emerges in this and subsequent REAP review activities. The focus becomes operational as the supplementary and complementary lifelong model of REAPs becomes increasingly understood. This is significant in that the role of REAPs becomes clearer from the mid-1990s, which can be interpreted as a coming-of-age period for the nonprofits. Their place in the rural educational spaces across the sectors is thus becoming accepted as they navigate the changing environment.

Another significant shift, resulting from the incorporated independence of the 13 autonomous REAP organisations, was the need for a pragmatic response to national reviews, initiatives, and requirements from Government. This would be addressed in the formation of a national association of REAPs which could act as a national body on behalf and with expressed consent of the 13 member REAPs. The reforms of 1989 meant, from a REAP perspective, "that for the first time, staff found that an environment had been created within which a national REAP organisation became very important. Collectivity assumed a new value and the outcome was a stronger national body than had previously existed" (Shepherd & Hanson, 2002, p. 109). Thus REAPs began a national association that would continue as a collaborative channel to Government until it was formalised as an incorporated society in 2004.

Amidst the growing national efforts of the REAP movement, these nonprofits found themselves the focus of an ethnographic case study by an Australian researcher

in 1996. Allan Arnott's independent work provides critical insight into REAPs at this stage in their development, as the first piece of external research on their operation since their years of establishment. Specifically, his research aimed to "explore, analyse and understand the [studied] REAP as a service provider of educational activities to communities in their regions" with a focus on community development processes given REAPs are a "little understood or analysed subject" (Arnott, 1996, p. 1). Arnott's work came at a time when REAPs were emerging as a recognised body on a national level in the context of major shifts in education policy and practice. Of particular interest to Arnott was what he termed the "hidden" aspect of REAP work, meaning the community development aspect of how REAPs mobilised their responsive learning activities. With little written on how REAPs operate beyond their now accepted supplementary and complementary lifelong learning mandate, Arnott's work brings a much needed 'deepening' of understanding REAPs.

Arnott used an ethnographic approach to account for the complexity, interrelatedness, and social aspects of REAP work in a community setting. He was also clear in focusing interviews and conversations on CEOs as leadership roles within REAPs, given that "their role is underpinned by community development processes" (Arnott, 1996, p. 3). Overall he aimed to use immersive field study (30 semi-structured interviews, participant observation, and artifact collection) to answer questions about what activities REAPs provided, what processes they used to provide them, and what pressures or tensions came about during that operation (Arnott, 1996, pp. 4-5). His results succeeded in meeting his aims and were informative in that the range of activities was as diverse as would be expected from a responsive approach, in addition to providing the first account of community-based processes for REAPs:

Table 3: Arnott (1996) ethnographic case study research results summary

<b>Research area:</b>	<b>Summarised responses:</b>
REAP activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Childhood Establishment</li> <li>• Supporting and Training</li> <li>• Primary [Schools] Supplement</li> <li>• Secondary [Schools] Supplement</li> <li>• School Itinerants</li> <li>• Staff Development Activities</li> <li>• Community Enterprise Support</li> <li>• Non-award Courses</li> <li>• Formal Workshops</li> <li>• Train-the-trainer (tutor) – Facilitation Skills Course</li> <li>• Programmes for the Elderly</li> <li>• Board/Committee Development Support</li> <li>• Community Resource</li> <li>• Extramural Assistance</li> <li>• Professional Mentoring</li> <li>• Formal Network Organising</li> <li>• Community Worker Networking/Training</li> <li>• Youth Worker Programmes</li> <li>• Sponsored Positions Programmes</li> <li>• Informal Networking, Brokering and Resourcing</li> </ul>
REAP processes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Found complex processes in play that demonstrate elements of education, logic, critical reflection, networking, mindfulness of timing, and community/relationship (political) awareness</li> <li>• Define community development process in a REAP context as containing two elements: resource (in the form of the skilled and knowledgeable REAP officer), and networks (the relationships carried by the officer)</li> <li>• These are hinged on a brokering role between groups</li> </ul>
REAP tensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Visible versus invisible processes in community action</li> <li>• Cultural issues, particularly around inclusion of Māori</li> <li>• Politics of community action perceived by outsiders</li> <li>• Variable personality types creating vulnerable networks</li> <li>• Cost effective practices in a decentralised environment</li> <li>• Emphasising a national versus regional REAP profile</li> </ul>

Arnott, like Nash and Rivers, provided a positive report on the value of REAP activities, though with recommendations on improvements to practice. He stated that given the wide range of programmes and responsive, connected nature of the work, REAPs "contribute widely to the educational needs of the communities in which they are ensconced" (Arnott, 1996, p. 73). More important than the generalisations, however, were the series of comments that were the first to articulate community development elements that describe the REAP approach in more social terms. Similar key statements

to the ones that follow are often referenced in descriptive source material on REAPs, but little research has demonstrated them:

- REAP "promotes lifelong learning [...] through the use of a community development approach, working alongside groups and organisations rather than simply providing courses." (Arnott, 1996, p. ix)
- REAP's "range of activities from formal and non-formal course to informal activities ... [are] interconnected and based on informal elements of practice." (Arnott, 1996, p. ix)
- "An investigation of processes revealed that in many instances they were based on brokering and networking skills. An extensive network, a knowledge of the resources (including human resources) that were required in given situations, and the ability to broker such resources through appropriate networks allowed CEOs to initiate and develop various activities/courses/programmes." (Arnott, 1996, p. ix)
- "A continuing theme that created tension was that of the "hidden" or tacit nature of community development processes underpinning much of REAP officers' work." (Arnott, 1996, p. x)

This work reflects a medium to long-term perspective on REAP work as the only piece of external research to date documenting considerable examples of REAP practices and experiences. In these observations, REAPs extend beyond their mandate for lifelong and responsive rural activity, to include community development concepts. Socially based terms such as networks and brokerage are also associated with REAPs in this piece of work, which is a trend seen elsewhere that year.

One example of developmental terminology can be seen in a nation-wide publication accounting for the changes, developments, and future ideals for the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector in Aotearoa. Hindmarsh (1996) comments on

her views of REAP engagement with adult, community, and continuing education, making commentary closely related to the above, that:

The purpose of REAPs is to provide services to the “whole” rural community: to promote as well as to provide learning opportunities across the whole spectrum of life and all education sectors – from early childhood, through schooling to adulthood – which will enhance, promote and provide lifelong learning opportunities, community development and personal development (REAP Handbook, 1991: 2). Locally, variable emphasis is placed on these functions, but all REAPs include adult and community education development, brokerage, networking and some course provision in their activities. (pp. 68-9)

Later that same year, an *Education Services for Rural Communities Report* was published by the Ministry of Education that describes the services mandated for rural regions. REAPs are described briefly in terms of what they offer early childhood, compulsory schooling, and adult and continuing education sectors. REAPs are presented in a complementary and supplementary lifelong fashion across the sectors as has been discussed. However, here they are listed with the added dimension of "community and personal development" as is seen with other views of REAPs at this time. While not explicitly stated, this can be seen as the result of REAPs having been operating long enough for their approach and results to be observed and articulated with some consistency. Communities, partner organisations, and Government are now able to name the developmental actions and results associated with REAP activity.

The social and developmental aspects to how REAPs operate are also articulated in a 1997 technical policy paper prepared by the Ministry of Agriculture (Anderson, 1997) to consider indicators of effectiveness for REAPs across their three core areas of activity. While providing an overview of existing REAP literature and review outcomes



for the time, the technical paper used document analysis, a mail out survey, informal discussions and a facilitated workshop at the 1997 REAP annual conference to frame what could be used as indicators for progressing rural needs. Anderson makes explicit the connection to social and developmental aspects of REAP work. In her view "REAPs are ideally placed to provide [lifelong education] services because of their knowledge of the local community, their proven skills in empowering people, networking, and encouraging participation, and their expertise in co-ordinating the activities of different service providers/agencies" (Anderson, 1997, p. 25). Each of these aspects of community development, traced back in their infancy to the relationship and engagement language used by Nash in 1982, is crystalising as part of the REAP model.

In his introduction to Shepherd and Hansen's account of REAPs, then Minister of Education Trevor Mallard highlights the community development attribute of REAPs some 20 years on from their inception. He cites them as organisations that "provid[e] lifelong learning and community development activities from pre-school through to post-retirement [... where] REAP components vary from region-to-region in order to reflect the particular needs of diverse communities of learners" (Shepherd & Hansen, 2002, p. 2). This publication was released the same year as the Ministry of Education's latest review of REAPs in the form of a stocktake report. Conclusions cited strong relationships, knowledge resource, and networks as key strengths to take REAPs forward "as neutral, honest brokers" that provide "a community-based education resource of effective support for local learning and development" (Shepherd & Hansen, 2002, p. 3). While accompanied by a range of increasingly operational suggestions for improvement (primarily around reporting, data collection, and government priority

alignment), this latest review reiterates REAPs as organisations that develop communities in a social as well as an educational sense.

**REAPs' most recent review and current work.**

The most recent review of REAPs took place in 2007, and provides the latest published documentation in the literature on these organisations outside of REAPs' own materials. Again instigated to review alignment of Government investment and the effectiveness of operations and infrastructure of these organisations, the latest evaluative exercise listed the following objectives, to:

- consider the current role of REAP in the context of the government's social and educational priorities;
- identify further opportunities for the government and REAP to work together towards shared outcomes; and
- assess whether current Government contracting arrangements for services provided by REAP can be amended to better support the social and educational outcomes sought by government (Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 16-17).

Little new information was revealed about REAPs, which are described as operating:

[...] in rural areas of New Zealand to facilitate access to lifelong learning opportunities for people living in rural areas. A large part of REAP work is in a brokerage role, connecting learners with appropriate learning across the early childhood (ECE), schooling and adult community education (ACE) sectors. [...] [A] separate management and community board structure was put in place for each REAP [in 1991]. The current model allows REAPs flexibility to identify and respond to the particular needs of their communities. (Ministry of Education, 2007, p. 6)

The above statement clearly places REAPs in a responsive, educational support role in their respective areas of the country. This is very much in line with early source material on REAPs' purpose, and inclusive of the marked brokering and network-focus

articulated at the turn of the century. The extension into a community development context is reinforced by the Ministry's description of how REAPs undertake their work:

REAPs contribute to a range of social outcomes including knowledge and skills, cultural identity and social connectedness. Statements of Intent from the Ministry and from MSD [Ministry of Social Development] show that the REAP objectives are most closely aligned with Education objectives. However, REAPs' work is similarly aligned with some contributing outcomes in the MSD's Statement of Intent relating to education and skills to supporting parents, families and whanau. (Ministry of Education, 2007, pp. 8-9)

In the most recent REAP literature, the services and approach of these organisations are clearly linked to discrete categories of educational and social outcomes. The literature has broadened REAPs' characteristics and thus a synthesised definition of REAPs is presented for use in this thesis: *rural and responsive nonprofits that broker, facilitate, enhance, and provide needs-based lifelong learning opportunities from pre-school to adult education, through a networks-based community development approach.*

Aside from strong recommendations around alignment to Government priorities, a single key change was made as a result of the final review– namely the population threshold for what is defined as a rural centre. REAPs were originally targeted for rural communities in districts with populations less than 20,000. While these boundaries (set by the Ministry of Education) have not changed since their inception, "as a result of [the review of REAPs] the Minister of Education agreed that the size of urban centres that are excluded from REAP areas be increased from 20,000 to 30,000" (Ministry of Education New Zealand, 2007, p. 4). This allows REAPs to service a rural population of 340,800 across 22 rural Territorial Local Authorities (districts). Figure 3 illustrates the combined rural coverage of those 22 districts for the 13 REAPs nationally.

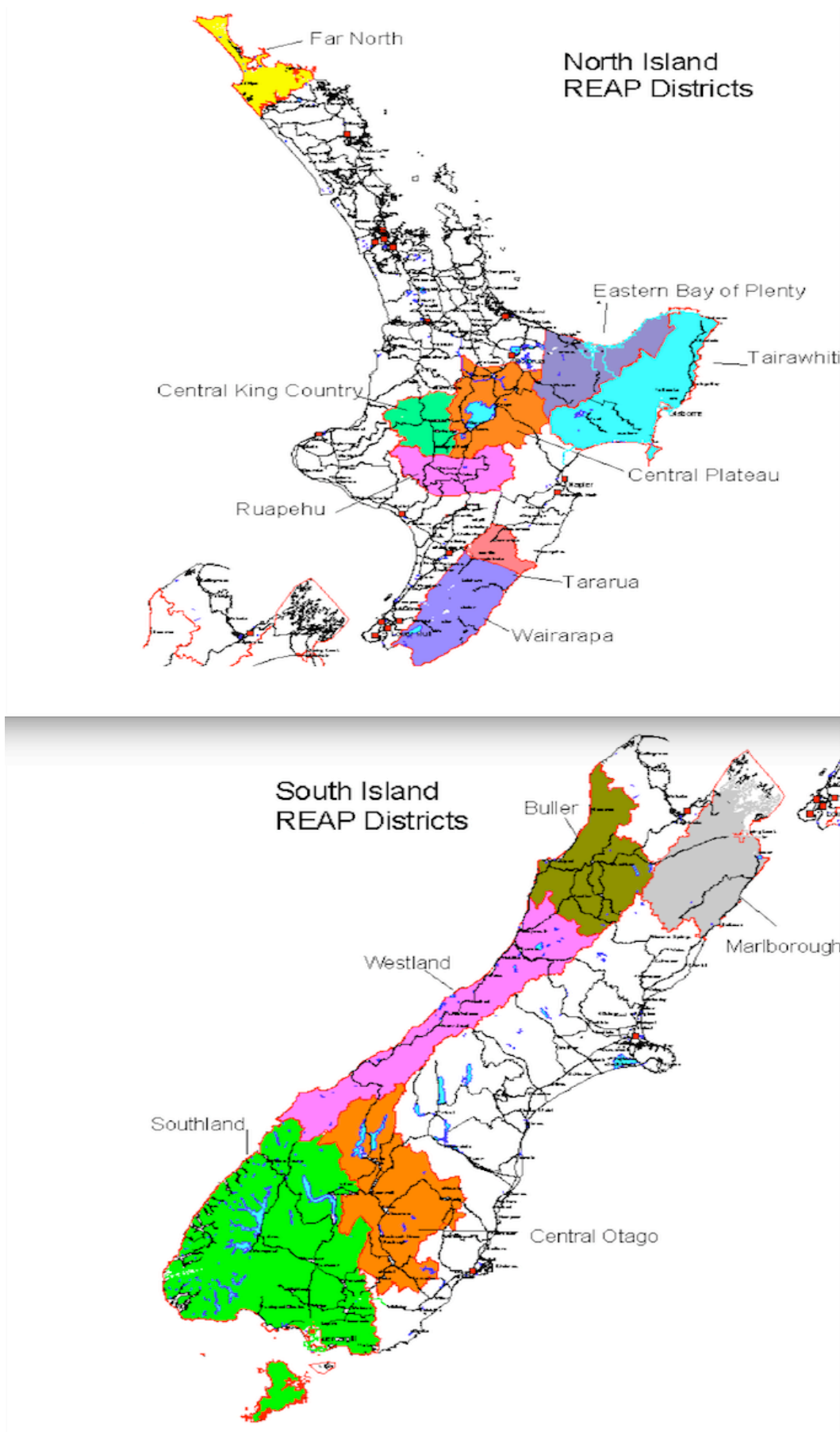


Figure 3: Coverage areas for REAPs (sourced from 2007 Review of REAPs)

Today these non-profit organisations work on a local needs-based model of promoting and delivering educational opportunities to rural communities through resolving issues of educational access, resourcing, gaps in best practice, and collaboration (REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015). Thirty years on from Shepherd and Hansen's (2002) account, while funding mechanisms and the increased commodification of education have shifted rural learning dynamics, "REAPs are still operating to those core principles" (pp. 142-3). And, as described in review reports of REAPs over the last 15 years, social-based features and outcomes have come to be defined as core work for these organisations. A current description of REAPs and their services confirm this model of working:

REAPs exist to provide lifelong learning support to their communities through multiple work streams, including early childhood, working with schools and adult and community education.

[...]

REAPs also work closely with local government, local trusts and community groups in their area. Much of the work in REAPs is of a developmental nature. REAPs are specialists in promoting and nurturing community change. (REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2013, p. 1)

With a clear mandate to support an educational ethos across multiple learning sectors, the nature of REAP work rests heavily upon collaborations with networks and groups to develop communities and promote social change. This REAP characteristic from the literature becomes especially relevant to the exploration of the social aspects of how REAPs do what they do. As laid out in the research questions for this thesis, the crux of these collaborative social efforts will be later contextualised using social capital as a framework, discussed in the following chapter.

Through this range of sources, REAPs are defined as rural and responsive non-profit organisations that broker, facilitate, enhance, and provide needs-based lifelong learning opportunities from pre-school to adult education, through a networks-based community development approach. Their shared purpose is to progress community development through quality lifelong education in their regions (REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015). The table below helps to outline operational aspects of the 13 REAPs.

*Table 4: REAP characteristics from the literature*

<b>Questions-based analysis of what is known about REAPs:</b>	
Who? (Stakeholders)	REAPs are mandated to support a wide section of the population. Stakeholders categorised by education sector: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Early childhood-aged children, their families, and educators and staff working in all types of ECE services.</li> <li>– School-aged children, their families, and educators and staff working in all types of compulsory schooling.</li> <li>– Targeted adults requiring functional life skills, as well as community educators and support services staff.</li> </ul>
What? (Services Provided)	REAPs both facilitate and provide learning programmes of varied content, length, and setting, based on identified stakeholder need. This is achieved through adapted activities such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Individualised learner development;</li> <li>– Group learning sessions and workshops;</li> <li>– Community events and forums; and</li> <li>– Brokerage and consultation across groups.</li> </ul>
Where? (Area of Provision)	REAPs provide services in government-specified rural regions (as identified in 1978) where populations are less than 30,000. This includes around 340,000 learners in 22 New Zealand districts.
When? (Ages & Stages for Provision)	REAPs are able to deliver learning and support services to learners of all ages, from pre-natal and infant-focused learning through to learning for the third age.
How? (Approach)	REAPs operate under a responsive delivery model, utilising a broad community network base and history of service to inform any planned learning and support activities.
Why? (Purpose)	REAPs aim to achieve successful learning for rural learners across the lifespan. Particular attention is paid to improved quality of life and self-determination for individuals and communities.

### **Lifelong Learning, Community Development, and Government Funding as Contexts**

There are clear themes around the role and approach of REAPs that provide context for developing current research. Contexts provide an understanding of what kind of environment and expectations REAPs operate within before exploring *how* they

operate. The first two of those contexts are processes – lifelong learning and community development. These are the ends to which REAPs strive (with the means or the “how” being explored through the primary research question). The original mandate to provide responsive lifelong learning is still central to the REAP approach today. Equally, a community development approach has evolved out of REAP practice over the years, and is clearly signaled as a contemporary REAP feature. Beyond these two processes (defined as such below), government funding realities is added as a context or framing factor that impacts on REAP activity. Briefly defining all three of these contexts for REAPs is intended to help place them in relation to the upcoming conceptual framework, as they all impact on the outcomes of social capital - the key theory behind the conceptual framework chapter. By elaborating the environment REAPs operate within, these points progress the second enabling research question: *what contexts do REAPs operate within based on their characteristics?*

### **Lifelong learning.**

In a broad conceptual sense, lifelong learning is most easily encapsulated by the notion that there is a strong link between social change and ongoing learning across the lifespan (London, 2011). Knowing that the social world is in a constant state of transition, it follows that both individuals and groups would need to continually enhance skills to cope with that transition. In addition to compulsory learning in schools, institutional supports have become necessary to fulfill goals of learner growth and life transitions. There is also value in acknowledging lifelong learning's "emphasis on the social context of learning [to look] beyond immediate learning situations and communities to wider issues of learner diversity, social identities and inequalities in education" (Morgan-Klein & Osborne, 2007, p. 4). The adaptive and socially focused

characteristics of lifelong learning harken back to the rural context already discussed, where educational access and inequality are everyday realities. This creates a space for the community development context outlined in the next section.

In terms of what lifelong learning means in a practical sense, Morgan-Klein and Osborne (2007) provide a broad definition of lifelong learning, seeing it as a combination of skill, vocational, and socially based factors that accumulate throughout life. Many of today's educational policies and practices share this view, at least in part, citing the modern "learning society" as a goal of the developed world - one in which learning, economic productivity (Ministry of Education, 2014), and quality of life are all balanced. Issues of training pathways, learner capability, social identity, and place-based learning all feature in this approach to lifelong learning, and all are common to REAP services. Such varied means and goals of lifelong learning and personal development create a complicated space for REAPs to operate. This suggests the need for a working definition of lifelong learning that encompasses both the learning and social aspects of this work.

Jarvis (2007) describes lifelong learning as an integrative process. Over the course of a life, individuals' experiences shape their values, knowledge, and disposition. This description acknowledges a highly interactionist component of social life, where the choices we make are mutually dependent on the social structures and relationships in which they operate. Such an approach to lifelong learning fits the framework of REAPs' approach to rural education, and features throughout the methodological choices discussed in later chapters. Through Jarvis (2007) we can adopt a definition of lifelong learning: the constant process of integrating new knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, and beliefs from social situations and exchanges



into an individual's whole self. This definition fits well with REAPs' social and developmental characteristics, which have been shown to underpin the learning activities they provide across early childhood, schooling, and adult education sectors.

### **Community development.**

The second environmental context for REAPs is community development. By the very nature of the diversity of communities, community development has varied definitions and applications. Aimers and Walker (2013) frame community development in Aotearoa as many do - by locating the practice in local and personal experiences reflective of the communities of focus. For New Zealand practice, community development has progressed through various states since the 1930s: from that of community rebuilding after World War II, through a rights and needs-based movement for activist groups in the 1970s, and now into an inclusive and strengths-based approach led by communities themselves (Aimers & Walker, 2013). This latest approach lends itself to developing the capability and self-determination of individuals and whole groups - a common outcome of community development practice. Self-determination also fits with the responsive and needs-driven approach of REAPs, providing a solid foundation for a suitable definition of community development.

New Zealand community development practice enacts the notion of building capability through "intervention that is underpinned by the values, principles, and commitment to social change for the individual, group and community" (Chile, 2007, p. 21). This means providing a contextual form of development activities that reflect social and cultural norms and are inclusive of those requiring development (here with a strong holistic and wellbeing focus). Chile (2007) argues that the base principles for this kind of community development include those that reflect: a collective identity

across the community; meeting needs that further strengthen that identity; and ensuring self-awareness and belonging for those involved in the process. In fact, the process itself is critical in community development, if it is to produce outcomes that are reflective of social and cultural norms referenced earlier. So through Chile's notion of developed capability, community development is defined here as the process of collective effort to overcome oppressive barriers in a social group, through changing social structures (e.g. institutional and economic) and growing individual capacity for self-determination (adapted from Chile, 2007). Again the features of this defined context for REAPs align well to REAPs themselves - in this case to reflect the social change and personal development qualities of REAP activity found in the literature.

In terms of how REAPs enable this kind of community development, Phillips and Pittman (2009) provide detailed accounts of both the process and outcomes of community development as they relate to building capacity and producing change in communities. Their efforts provide a final defining piece of the community development context relevant for this research - the relatedness of social capacity to social capital. Using Phillips' and Pittman's (2009) process, community development builds capacity for individuals and groups by enhancing skills, knowledge, and outlooks. Grown capacity then enables groups to make use of social capital (networks and the ability to act in social settings for Phillips and Pittman, 2009) as the mobiliser for development and change. Specifics of the relatedness of community development outcomes and social capital are illustrated in more detail in the conceptual framework chapter. Figure 4 threads these concepts together as a process framework for REAPs in communities, with grown capacity able to be mobilised through social capital to undertake community development.



Figure 4: Learning and development process for REAP activity (adapted from Phillips & Pittman, 2009)

### **Present Government environment realities.**

One of the recurring themes in the review reports in recent years has focused on the issue of Government priorities and alignment of REAP work to those goals. This is a useful context for the discussion of contributions made by REAPs to rural New Zealand given the continued funding of core services by the Ministry of Education. Ostensibly this carries with it the requirement to ensure the work that is undertaken fits within the goals and priorities of Government of the day. The potential influence on REAP services as outlined above is very real, making Government strategies (e.g. strategic documents) a notable source of information on what we know about REAP operations in rural communities. Some comments are relevant for discussion of the conceptual framework in Chapter 3, and its focus on forms of capital in education (and how that connects to REAPs' work within that context).

The Ministry of Education *Statement of Intent 2014-2018*'s "strong focus on achieving the Better Public Services targets, to ensure New Zealand has a world-leading education system that enables every child and young person to fulfill their potential" takes an achievement focus to learning (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 2). Key areas of results under those targets involve early childhood participation rates, early years literacy achievement rates, and National Certificate of Educational

Achievement (NCEA) Level 2<sup>15</sup> achievement rates (as a foundation qualification for society). With a focus on achievement and potential, New Zealand's current Government also acknowledges international findings driven from the UNESCO<sup>16</sup> and OECD, where education is seen to be a "major contributor" to both social and economic outcomes. These findings suggest that when learning is socially focused and tailored to a particular individual or group, there are "strong positive impacts on learner and community wellbeing" – a topic central to the link between social and human capital (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 7).

Moving across the educational sectors, the *Tertiary Education Strategy 2014-2019* articulates the role of tertiary education as one that: "supports wider economic growth and prosperity" and which "signals a shift toward a more outward facing New Zealand tertiary education system, with strong links to industry, community and the global economy" (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2014, p.2). As an adult education strategy that picks up where compulsory schooling leaves off, there is a connection to lifelong learning where current Government states that "[h]ow people approach their learning – including goals, pathways and providers – can vary substantially over time as technology and the needs of society and the economy change" (Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment, 2014, p. 3). There is merit in a contextualised approach to learning and the need for adult learning in particular to be flexible and to build on the diverse needs of individual learners. These goals sit firmly within the Ministry of Education's (2014) continued position that "education is a major contributor to growing both our social and economic capital" (p. 2). That

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<sup>15</sup> NCEA Level 2 is considered the base level of adult qualification for life, work, and further study.

<sup>16</sup> UNESCO is an abbreviation for United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation.

statement has strong bearing on the relevance of the upcoming conceptual framework for considering how REAPs operate. In any case, the underpinning strategic intent from Government is a strongly relevant source of information on REAP work, as it informs the alignment of responsive lifelong learning to the social, developmental, and economic principles of the day.

## **Chapter Two Summary**

REAPs are based in rural communities where geographical isolation and resource availability are commonplace barriers in day-to-day life. The innovation required to respond to the myriad of needs stemming from these barriers of the last 35 years have established REAPs as organisations that not only work across all ages and stages of life, but do so in a way that is contingent on understanding their communities. REAPs have been shown as remaining loyal to the supplementary and complementary roles they were intended to fill for lifelong education in rural areas. Based on the literature, REAPs are viewed as responsive lifelong learning organisations that have evolved to more fully incorporate a socially oriented approach, resulting from their community learning and development features. These broader social aspects of learning are used to frame the theory and methods for this study.

In the next chapter, the social capital conceptual framework is predicated on the assumption that exploring how the REAP model contributes to education in rural New Zealand requires an understanding of the forms of capital at work in an educational context. Particular attention is paid to the social and developmental dimensions of learning already touched on in the review of REAP literature, given the emergent themes mentioned above.

### **Chapter 3 Conceptual Framework:**

#### **Social Capital as an Applied Model for REAPs**

A conceptual framework is included to establish a cohesive rationale for using social capital to research REAPs' work. It is premised on the social and developmental nature of REAPs' responsive services in a community setting, as discussed in the preceding literature review. To justify a social capital framework, attention is given to social exchanges and the value they hold for the development of individuals and groups, particularly from a learning perspective. Through a developmental lens, learning across the lifespan can be seen as the social transmission of value (or capital) in economic, cultural, and social terms (Morgan-Klein & Osborne, 2007). These transmissions or exchanges give relevance to the potential role of social capital in the context of learning and exploring REAPs.

This project is not concerned with measuring specific levels and accounts of social capital as they occur in REAPs and their programming – a common aspect of social capital research (see Portes, 1998). Rather it investigates the presence of social capital within REAPs through identifying and evaluating characteristics, components, and outcomes relevant to a social capital approach to education. Through this conceptual framework chapter, the third enabling research question is answered: *what are the key elements of a social capital approach?*

The conceptual framework chapter will unfold in sections as follows:

- History and development of social capital as a concept;
- Applied social capital and distilling key components for use;
- Linking social capital and human capital in an educational context.

## **Social Capital History and Development**

Over the last 100 years, social capital has found a strong and sometimes contentious place in educational and socio-economic research. It has grown in popularity among scholars as a far-reaching concept that helps explain the dynamic people-based elements of education and community development (see Lin & Burt, 2008). In simplified terms for this project, social capital provides a framework for the complex relationship between what people learn and how that learning is applied in day-to-day life. Social capital is, however, criticised for its varied definitions, the result of several disciplines taking up the concept and interpreting both the "social" and the "capital" aspects to suit their own ends (Fine, 2010). In order to overcome this tension, the broad historical genesis of social capital is reviewed to provide an understanding of its social and capital aspects. This will lead into the following section, where specific components of social capital, relevant to this thesis, are distilled from its many current definitions.

### **Early definitions and theorising.**

The conceptual beginnings of social capital are generally agreed to be found in the theorising of Alexis de Toqueville and Emile Durkheim in the mid to late 1800s (Field, 2008). The former's focus on American membership of associations (primarily voluntary), and the latter's efforts to develop an empirical approach to explain social phenomena and behaviours provide grounding ideas for several key aspects of social capital as it is later defined. Durkheim in particular emphasised the relationships between individuals and institutions, as well as the ritualised social acts that create bonds and solidarity for groups of people (Turner, 2009). This is a strong tenet of

various iterations of social theory and social capital theory, which requires acknowledgement.

Although references are made to these two prominent French sociologists prior to the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the widely accepted first discussion on the concept of social capital comes from an American Harvard researcher who worked primarily as a supervisor of rural schools in the American South between 1912 and 1920. Hanifan's (1916) focus on the relationships and shared community values that revolved around schools helped frame how education cannot make people productive in and of itself – social factors are also at play to put learning to use. Writing as a progressive educator in 1916, Hanifan began discourse around social capital in community studies by explicating the concept:

In the use of the phrase social capital I make no reference to the usual acceptation of the term capital, except in a figurative sense. I do not refer to real estate, or to personal property or to cold cash, but rather to that in life which tends to make these tangible substances count for most in the daily lives of people: namely good will, fellowship, sympathy, and social intercourse among the individuals and families who make up a social unit ... the individual is helpless socially, if left to himself ... if he comes into contact with his neighbor, and they with other neighbors, there will be an accumulation of social capital, which may immediately satisfy his social needs and which may bear a social potentiality sufficient to the substantial improvement of living conditions in the whole community. (Hanifan, 1916, p. 130)

Hanifan identifies the intangible yet useful nature of individuals connecting socially to meet personal and communal needs. He takes a figurative approach to assets by illustrating how (notably in rural areas) relationships built with neighbours and community members hold potential for improving the quality of life. Through goodwill



and fellowship, Hanifan's approach sees a produced benefit for individuals and groups both within and around the schooling environment. Although it would not be clear until many years later, Hanifan's ideals around sustaining quality of life in this sense relate to the productive quality of human behaviour – the ways in which we acquire and apply skills and knowledge for personal and communal benefit. While the metrics of this are still contested today, this founding tenet of social capital is central to its defined role and use.

Many (Castiglione, Van Deth, & Wolleb, 2008; Field, 2005; Portes, 1998; Woolcock, 1998) acknowledge a gap in the literature from Hanifan's era until the resurgence of class and production-based research several decades later. Working to refine parts of what Karl Marx and Max Weber articulated as means of understanding social production prior to the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, modern economic theorists began reshaping previous theories. Theodore Schultz (1961) and James Becker (1992) are credited with identifying human capital as an applied means to measure the value of workers' skill in a production economy (Field, 2008, p. 14). This is a turning point for social capital, as the concept of acquisition had now been taken (by economists no less) out of the sphere of physical resources and into the less tangible, but still measurable, framework of skill sets. Such a shift provided a platform for social researchers to further define other forms of capital as they relate to the ways in which individuals and groups work to produce resources, influence and ultimately social power. This would become a complex and dynamic field of work whereby the social nature of human interaction and environments could be quantified and qualified as a means to explain and potentially predict human behaviour.

**Pierre Bourdieu.** At the beginning of the dynamic upsurge in social capital theory and research, French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu would pick up on this critical link many decades later with his work around social classes and fields (the many structured social spaces in which we operate, each with their own set of rules and values) (Grenfell, 2009). Bourdieu (1986) used class mobility and economic benefits/disadvantages to refine social capital as the potential resource found in durable networks of institutionalised relationships. He developed a complex set of social constructs to explain how individuals both shape and are shaped by the environmental expectations and values operating around them – his concepts of field, habitus, doxa, and capital. Each carries its own significance in social research; however, it was his work with the concept of field that guided Bourdieu to give the idea of capital not one, but three domains out of which to operate – economic, cultural, and social. Bourdieu (1986) gives clear definitions of these types of capital at play in social contexts:

capital can present itself in three fundamental guises: as *economic capital*, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights; as *cultural capital*, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications; and as *social capital*, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility. (p. 47)

The title of nobility certainly implies a tangible result of social status or standing as the item for exchange (as with the institutionalised property and qualifications for economic and cultural capital respectively). Within this economic exchange framework, Bourdieu goes on to clarify that:

[s]ocial capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition – or in other words, to membership in a group – which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectively owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit. (1986, p. 51)

So although he, like Hanifan, acknowledges the relational component of social capital, Bourdieu carves a path of ownership for social capital as an intangible social process that also yields something measurable - resources for an individual to access and use. Here the described form takes a more meaningful shape where we can see the potential application for social learning environments. Acquaintance and recognition in a group become synonymous with the social connections and relationships essential to rural communities where economic and cultural (in the qualification sense) forms of capital are available to a lesser extent than in urban environments – a topic covered in later sections in more detail.

The connection to previous discussions on social context and diversity of social actors (learners for the purposes of educational research) is certainly not lost on Bourdieu. He recognised that regardless of how one describes, quantifies, and measures any form of capital or resource of exchange, the diverse and social context of that exchange must first and foremost be acknowledged. In his words, to operationalise exchanges of capital:

[T]he structure of the distribution of the different types and subtypes of capital at a given moment in time represents the immanent structure of the social world, i.e., the set of constraints, inscribed in the very reality of that world, which govern its functioning in a durable way, determining the chances of success for practices. (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 46)

Bourdieu's terminology provides a foundation for the socially contextualised concepts encountered earlier. Where social relationships, connections and structures have been identified as essential to rural learning and lifelong learning, forms of capital and exchange within and between those social structures now give us something tangible to consider.

Here the myriad of social situations, actors, and settings come to the fore from REAPs' varied educational roles. Early childhood settings can be formal as with private learning centres and kohanga reo, or informal as with playgroups and home-based care. These different settings have a particular combination of social actors in the form of parents and extended family, care providers and educators, and most importantly the children themselves. The same variety can be found in mainstream compulsory schooling, kura kaupapa, and home-schooling environments. Tertiary learning too can be formal (as with PTEs<sup>17</sup>, polytechnics, and universities), as well as informal (as with ACE provision and self-directed study). In all of these examples, there comes a different set of expectations in terms of learner activity, educator practice, and opportunity for social exchanges with other learners.

Not only can we use capital to give shape to the exchanges taking place in social environments, we continue to see how rich and diverse those social settings can be. As Bourdieu (1986) says, regardless of what terms we use to give value to the exchanges happening in a social context, we must remain mindful that the rules of exchange are entirely dependent on the rules of that social world and those social actors at that given time. In other words, context means everything and context can change dramatically. This reinforces the need for responsive and adaptive learning

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<sup>17</sup> PTE is an abbreviation for Private Training Establishment.

that meets diverse needs across the whole of a particular community in order to see wellbeing achieved – all hallmarks of lifelong learning approach described in the REAP model and seen as highly relevant in rural areas.

**James Coleman.** Besides being defined in measurable terms, an important step for social capital was its continuing evolution in various research applications as a model of how the social world works. James Coleman (1990) was an American sociologist who took social capital into a more distinctly theoretical framework through his seminal work *The Foundation of Social Theory*. While still referencing modes of production laid down by Bourdieu, Coleman defines social capital in terms of the exchanges embedded in the relationships between those acting within social structures or settings, and in doing so further broadens its potential in social science research.

Coleman frames social capital as taking many shapes with two key characteristics:

They all consist of some aspect of a social structure, and they facilitate certain actions of individuals who are within the structure. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. [...] A given form of social capital that is valuable in facilitating certain actions may be useless or even harmful for others. Unlike other forms of capital, social capital inheres in the structure of relations between persons and among persons. It is lodged neither in individuals nor in physical implements of production. (Coleman, 1990, p. 302)

Within the notion of social structures permeating our everyday lives and actions, Coleman's distinction in the evolution of social capital's definition is to insist on its use and value on a group scale, rather than strictly individual. Coleman's description also opens up discussion on the potential for both benefit and harm to individuals through

group exchanges, something he attributes to social norms or values-based expectations later in the text.

Overall, Colman's efforts set the stage for a more theory-based approach to social capital, especially in educational settings where the outcomes of social capital can be measured and used to explicate the social influences around learned skills and how they contribute to both individual and collective capital. Coleman published a seminal piece of research in 1988 on high school dropout rates and illustrated empirically the relationship between social capital and human capital. Coleman correlated dropout rates to variances in parental human capital (in the form of educational achievement) and parental social capital (in the form of involvement with their children's learning) and affirmed the possibility that the latter could play as significant a role in predicting student matriculation as the former. This paved the way for researching the role of social capital networks and relations in education. It also demonstrated some of the collective impact within social capital that would enable the concept to be transferred to other fields.

**Robert Putnam.** In one of the latest developments for social capital, the concept has been honed to focus specifically on the civic aspects of individual and collective social life. Robert Putnam stands out as the American political scientist credited with popularising the concept of social capital in his published works on the relatedness of social capital to national declines in civic participation in the United States. He extended the definition of social capital from simply one that encompasses potential capital resource through networks and relationships into one that more specifically uses those connections to undertake civic activities in democratic life and build trust, resulting in a collective gain (Putnam, 2000).

Putnam moves the benefits of social capital from one of mobilising resources that advantage the individual to one that focuses on its functions for collective action – “an aggregate concept that encompasses the association networks, norms and trust that facilitate collective interactions for mutual economic and social benefits” (as cited in Huang, van den Brink, & Groot, 2009, p. 454). One of the ongoing debates around Putnam’s claims that social capital determines civic engagement in communities, relates to his suggested measures of associative involvement as determinates of levels of social capital present in a group. Among Putnam’s standard survey items for stock takes of social capital are: newspaper readership, membership in volunteer groups, and expressions of trust in authoritative institutions such as government – all of which have come under fire as too indirect to determine a causal relationship with collective action, with the idea of “civicness” itself declared tautological by some (Portes, 1998, pp. 18-20). Still, Putnam’s indicators of social capital continue to be used by many social capital instruments worldwide.

Another key contribution from Putnam’s (2000) seminal text, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, was the distinction of social capital into two types: bonding and bridging. These types are based on the makeup of the networks and norms outlined above. In the case of bonding social capital, there is observable “ingroup loyalty” for a homogenous and exclusive group with shared beliefs; this is paralleled by bridging social capital, where the group is inclusive and varied in its makeup (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). Putnam points out that both have positive unifying traits – bonding social capital is highly effective for mobilising solidarity, while bridging social capital can connect assets and disseminate information widely.

However, this modeling of the theory would dovetail into aspects of critique of social capital, which continues today.

### **Critics, pitfalls, and the dark side of social capital.**

All three of these founding theorists found fault with the potential use and abuse of social capital, although others would also take up the cause to warn against what is coined the "dark side" of social capital (Field, 2008; Fine, 2010; Portes, 1998; Zhang, 2011). From the beginning of Putnam's early work into social capital, he was quick to acknowledge the doubled-edged sword and potential pitfalls of the concept. He noted that with bonding social capital in particular, "malevolent" and "antisocial" characteristics were immediately possible, citing the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazi party as emotive historical examples (Putnam, 2000, p. 22). This provided a more narrowly defined example of the negative reinforcing of social norms and reciprocity Coleman (1990) also cited in discussion his relational approach to social capital in action.

Critics also generally find that the economic principles that hold the potential for empirical study lie in Bourdieu's early works, ones that extend a Marxist approach to the systematic study of social agents (Grenfell, 2009; Portes, 2007). This issue can be seen as an important one when considering the productive modes, interactions, and values places on social systems. However, for the purposes of this research into an educational perspective on social capital, the economic basis becomes secondary to the social value that accrues for individuals who benefit from education's social capital. The danger here is a conflation of the individual's value into, and in some cases determined by, that of the larger collective. The result can be the exclusion of outsiders from a social group and the reinforcement of negative behaviours shared by the majority of a group. This has become one of the central criticisms and potential



dangers of social capital – the harmful reinforcing of negative behaviours within social structures (acknowledged directly by all three theorists discussed in the previous section). In these circumstances, the individual's access to social capital in a group is limited by the social capital already at play in that group. In this way "social capital can promote inequality ... where some people's connections are more valuable than others", particularly those who are impoverished (Fine, 2010, p. 69).

Ben Fine, a contemporary British economist, remains the foremost critic on social capital, often citing the negative attributes of the concept. Most notably he points out that the disciplinary crossover between economics, social theory and political action has left the concept blurring the boundaries between social actors and social processes (Fine, 2010). Fine makes several useful observations over his long career with social capital. Fine (2010) makes a list to introduce his most recent text, *Theories of Social Capital: Researchers Behaving Badly*, citing clear reservations about the concept's wide and varied use. The ease and speed with which so many in both research and policy have picked up this term in a span of 20 years has produced a wide variation of social capital definitions, applications, and resulting implications. Fine (2010) argues that: this distorts rigorous social research; the majority of such research is selective in how it applies vague or partial definitions of the concept; and social factors that are included or discarded are often presented with little consideration and justification. Fine's strongest example is the World Bank, which has recently produced many papers on policy implications of the measurement of social capital indicators in developing nations.

Getting deeper into what is commonly coined the dark side of social capital, negative outcomes can result, where exclusionary behaviours and group inequity can

both be reinforced. Fine (2010) specifically calls out “corruption”, “racism”, and “violence” as negative social behaviours that are reinforced by social capital principles (p. 6). Where individuals do not fit the expected norms or behaviours, one sees the furthering of “social exclusion as the corresponding dark side of social capital” (Fine, 2010, p. 30). The significance for REAP activity and research is in recognising that the application of social capital in communities where social exclusion already exists, holds the potential to further that exclusion – making engagement and cooperation increasingly difficult. Such difficulty exacerbates inequity in communities, a point Field (2008) makes with an emphasis on the damaging effects on socio-economic and cultural factors for individuals. These factors are critical in a rural context, thus the negative potential impact of social capital is noted for this research.

Notwithstanding critique, social capital still emerges as an energetic recent multidisciplinary field. Aspects of all three core theorists' work are relevant to defining social capital for this study. Bourdieu's examination of social conditions that affect social actors differently is certainly important to understanding community-based learning at any level (and REAPs operate across many). Coleman's efforts hold promise in terms of better understanding the relational structures between individuals and groups in an educational (social) setting. However, the productive value for the individual, as well as the potential for collective action espoused by Putnam, become the measurable result of social capital's effects and should not be overlooked. These broad strokes of social capital's theoretical development give way to a more in-depth look at how researchers have applied the above models. The following section identifies, selects and justifies the varied components of social capital to provide an operational definition for use.

## **Components of Social Capital in Practice**

The boom in social capital research has meant a great deal of discussion and debate on the agreed definition and place of this concept in various literatures. While the inclusion of so many fields' methods on the analysis of social topics can bring about confusion and disagreement (as has been discussed in the literature around social capital already), the potential still stands to use the critical eye of so many researchers to strengthen social capital. In practice social capital is increasingly seen as "a heuristic device for generating a most interesting and fruitful theoretical and applied discussion. It places emphasis on the will and capacity of people to solve community problems and improve their lives in a joint enterprise" (Zacharakis & Flora, 1999, p. 305). The community empowerment and involvement that comes from engaging social relationships around education is, arguably, what keeps social capital so appealing.

Given the historical account of social capital's growth across the disciplines since 1916, and with education clearly marked as a field ideal for application, an integrated definition that accounts for relevant aspects of this research can be articulated. A review of relevant social capital definitions by various agencies provides an applied layer to the theoretical background already reviewed on the concept. By combining social capital's theoretical origins and uses in practice, a working definition is presented at the end of this section that reflects relevant applications for REAPs. Four key elements of social capital are argued as recurring in the literature and relevant to this study: networks, trust, brokerage, and social norms. By justifying specific characteristics of social capital in a working definition, the third enabling research question is addressed: *what are the key elements of a social capital approach?*

**Networks.**

Within the broad fields that have adopted social capital for their own purposes, networks are the most consistently referenced and least controversial element across those varied definitions. Central to any definition of social capital, networks are the first and most intricate of the four elements presented in this thesis. All other elements of social capital in this conceptual framework (and likewise nearly all applied models of social capital, regardless of definition) are reliant on networks to operate. In terms of defining networks and their characteristics, Stone and Hughes (2002) describe them as:

informal ties with kin, families, friends, neighbours, and workmates; generalized relationships with local people, people in civic groups, and people in general; and relationships through institutions. With the purpose of measuring social capital, they also identified dimensions of networks, which include size and extensiveness (for example, number of neighbours personally known), density and closure (that is, whether network members know each other), and diversity (ethnic, education, and cultural mix of networks). (As cited in Ravanera, 2007, p. 353)

The shape of networks is laid out as relational ties - connections between people based on common traits or shared membership of social groups. The variety of size and makeup of networks described by Stone and Hughes helps to create an understanding of the complexity of social structures and conditions. Thus networks are seen as complex spaces where people maintain relationships for social exchange. Alongside those structural relationships and varied dimensions, networks require an active element of exchange, which gives more clarity to their role and justification for use.

A networks-based model of exchange relies heavily on the interaction of multiple networks in order to drive the stable production of skills and abilities that

serve as the foundation of well-being. The leading proponent of the network theory of social capital, Nan Lin, sees social capital as:

resources embedded in one's social networks, [...] that can be accessed or mobilized through ties in the networks. Through such social relations or through social networks in general, an actor may borrow or capture other actors' resources (e.g. their wealth, power, or reputation). These social resources can then generate a return for the actor. (2001, p. 43)

Nan's account of networks brings in Coleman's social theory by focusing on the actor and mobilising factors. Networks become defined and varied social structures that are active spaces of exchange with potential for gains or losses based on their makeup.

Again acknowledging those critical of social capital, the ability to use networks for the kind of returns outlined by Lin et al. (2008) is dependent on the membership of that network. Putnam (2000) draws distinctions between types of social capital, specific to the makeup of networks being engaged. He differentiates between bonding social capital, which "brings together people who are like one another in important aspects (ethnicity, age, gender, social class, and so on)" and bridging social capital, which "brings together people who are unlike" (Putnam, 2002, p. 11). Putnam suggests that while bonding networks have a higher potential to produce negative experiences for those who are not like the membership, they also provide much needed social support in difficult situations. Equally positive is the bridging of networks to bring together varied views for problem solving. In both cases the network's composition has a direct impact on the ability to access and mobilise resources for social gain.

REAPs demonstrate this context, given their varied networks across multiple sectors in education. Figure 5 shows both bonding and bridging forms of social capital

in terms of three separate, but related, learning initiatives. In the first, a marae<sup>18</sup>-based basic computing course is delivered to kaumatua<sup>19</sup> and kuia<sup>20</sup> who wish to communicate with family members overseas, using software such as Skype and Google Hangouts. The second is a church-based youth group that has requested support around fundraising skills to take an educational trip. Both groups are 'exclusive' in the sense their makeup is generally homogenous in terms of age, outlook, and (for the most part) lifestyle. In both cases REAPs provide responsive learning support based on its relationships with those groups, playing a part in a bonding social capital process.

A third initiative is undertaken where both of the above groups have identified an interest in learning and sharing whakapapa<sup>21</sup> Māori. Having relationships with both networks, REAPs broker a learning opportunity that meets the needs of both groups by bringing them together around the shared learning experience. Two diverse groups are then connected to build relationships and mutual trust by sharing views on social norms and practices related to cultural identity. In this example, REAPs play a role in a bridging social capital process. Figure 5 illustrates this model using examples drawn from the REAPs' national delivery plan (REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015a).

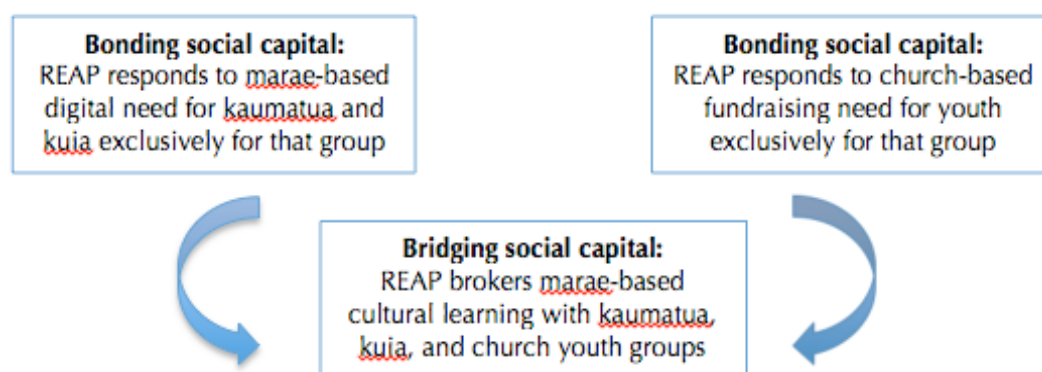


Figure 5: REAPs operating through both bonding and bridging social capital

<sup>18</sup> Marae is a Māori word, meaning meeting house.

<sup>19</sup> Kaumatua is a Māori word, meaning a male elder.

<sup>20</sup> Kuia is a Māori word, meaning a female elder.

<sup>21</sup> Whakapapa is a Māori word, meaning genealogy.

Rurality, being the essential environmental context for REAP work, by its very nature mandates a focus on social connections and local identity. Communities that are isolated and rate lower on infrastructure and resource rely on the cohesion of their population to meet local needs. The people and their social connections become the primary resource – an idea explored extensively under the guise of social capital. Particularly in rural communities, "place-based social relationships still play a central role in meeting people's daily needs; they continue to be adaptive mechanisms between individuals, families and larger social structures; and they are often an integral component of personal identity" (Brown & Schafft, 2011, p. 36). This reinforces the notion that social relationships are an ostensible focus for investigating how rural learning takes place and what means are required to produce it.

In terms of setting a premise for how strong place-based relationships would yield positive benefits, Brown and Schafft (2011) make a clear case for social cohesion and inclusiveness as essential characteristics for a sustainable rural community:

[s]trong community organisation, whether viewed from a systemic or a relational perspective, is essential for personal and community wellbeing. [...] [I]nclusive communities with strong social relationships, responsive institutions and low degrees of inequality are more *sustainable* than other places. They are able to balance development with social needs and environmental quality, to avoid short-term solutions that compromise long-term wellbeing, and plan for the future in a way that enhances individual opportunity while strengthening the public good. (pp. 52-3)

Essentially the enhanced social bonds and exchanges in rural communities become part of a larger effort to improve quality of life and personal wellbeing with what resources are available. The ability to improve quality of life and wellbeing underpins a networks-based approach to social capital in a way that contributes to social

cohesion, as well as personal and community development. These benefits suit the aims of REAPs strongly. In achieving these ends through social exchange, networks provide the pathway and connection between individuals to build the trust and reciprocity outlined by Coleman and Putnam - the next key element of social capital.

### **Trust.**

The central premise to the bonding and bridging social capital processes above is the notion of trust – trust in those who are like us to share our values, trust in others to do things on our behalf, trust that those we have strong relationships with will meet our needs – all of which operate on an individual and a collective level. Uslaner (2008) separates these kinds of trust into two types: moralistic trust as "the belief that others share your fundamental moral values and therefore should be treated as you wish to be treated by them" and strategic trust towards those unlike you "that reflects our expectations about how people *will* behave" (p. 103). In the former, we exhibit trust towards those we know are like us out of familiarity and comfort, where in the latter trust is extended more generally out of a sense of broad social expectation – that those unlike us ought to behave in a certain way, so we trust in a general (but perhaps not complete) sense.

In both forms of trust there is no guarantee about how others will act. Put another way, "you trust someone when you commit to a relationship before you know how the other person will behave" (Burt, 2005, p. 93). This means there will be a range of trust, something Putnam (2000) refers to as thin versus thick trust, based on the amount of previous behaviour we have to judge those in our networks by. Putnam talks about social trust as a "generalised reciprocity" that takes place in networks – the notion that one develops a set of expectations through regular interactions with others



to fulfill obligations (2000, p. 136). The more we know and have experience with various networks, the greater the opportunity for trust to be strengthened or weakened as a result. This can then either enable or erode mutual relationships that are relevant to personal and social development goals.

In an applied sense, Golding (2007) makes clear connections between trust and social capital by compiling a review of research around the micro-level participation of volunteers at community level and the macro-level results of improved social cohesion and engagement as byproducts of adult learning. Specifically, Golding declares the role of community-based organisations as crucial to the development of trust and mutually beneficial relations as social capital components that improve lifelong learning in rural areas (2007, p. 14). This is where the growing definition of social capital in an educational context suggests the need to operationalise learning in a way that incorporates relational networks, because they are seen as the produced resources that enhance learners' achievement. Again this aligns to the key features of REAPs as responsive organisations focused on developing communities through learning. That responsiveness, if successful, builds trust and strengthens relational networks. Conversely trust is lost where responsiveness is promised but not provided. The ability to incorporate trusted relational networks into rural learning activities lends itself to the third element in a contextual social capital approach - brokerage.

### **Brokerage.**

Being able to form trust in a social capital framework provides a direct link to the most active element of social capital processes: brokerage. Where networks are defined as social structures of varying sizes and compositions, Ronald Burt has made considerable contributions to the study of the holes inherent in those structures.

Identifying, navigating, and closing those structural holes is central to his views of using trust to enable social activity and change. In fact, this is essential to his definition of brokerage or "the action of coordinating across the [structural] hole with bridges between people on opposite sides of the hole", where the "hole is a potentially valuable context for action" (Burt, 2005, p. 18). In Burt's view, understanding the makeup of networks aids in navigating and linking them up based on shared values and goals.

Here is the bridging language used by Putnam on types of social capital processes, where Burt sees the opportunity to use trust in connecting gaps, or overcoming differences in networks of people to activate collective action – another role articulated in the purpose and function of REAPs consistently in the literature. According to Burt (2005) the goal of brokerage activities is closure, which creates "networks in which people are connected such that no behaviour goes unnoticed" so as to improve trust (Burt, 2005, p. 95). This is accomplished by recognising the need to close gaps in networks where there is mistrust between groups. This can be facilitated from within those groups or a trusted third party as a way to improve how groups connect, cooperate, and undertake collective action.

Where closure is achieved and trust is in place, social obligations are more easily fulfilled and the expectations of behaviour based on shared views increases. Brokered activities provide an opportunity to translate beliefs and demonstrate value of members of a different group and their views (Burt, 2005, pp. 61-2). It is these improved connections and cohesiveness around social expectations – or norms – that provide the final component of the social capital framework for studying REAP contributions to rural learning.

**Social norms.**

Where networks of people operate with trust and brokered closure, Putnam noted the potential for collective social action. Lubricated by a shared sense of values, a shared sense of purpose and achievement can enable those within a network to access social resource through connectedness. What makes those networks effective is the ability of those included in the network to feel a sense of solidarity or shared vision that expedites the support. Coleman made this a central observation when discussing the reinforcing benefits of generating social norms (or sanctions to reinforce existing norms):

closure of the network [of actors] gives increased potential for amplifying returns to the actors. Thus a system in which others have connections to the actor may exhibit a strong potential that induces higher levels of activity, but a system that in addition has high closure has an extra potential, due to the benefits that each of those who experience externalities of the actor's action receive from one another. There is an amplification that occurs even before the rewards get back to the actor himself [sic]. (1990, p. 278)

This potential for influence and reward within a social network is what Putnam (2000) and Burt (2005) refer to as changes in social norms resulting from closure. REAPs fit this approach given their core services include the bringing together of groups around community learning and development goals. Related examples include setting up a playgroup to meet early childhood needs of local families; developing positive parenting programmes that target improving domestic behaviours; or encouraging tertiary training options for economic mobility. In each case, the benefits of including varied members of a community to mobilise personal and collective gain demonstrates the effects of shared social norms (and their influence) in a network of people.

To acknowledge social capital in the context of education “reflects an orientation toward the future by strengthening human capital and social capital for economic and social development. Schooling spreads knowledge – the basic component of human capital, and cultivates social norms – the core of social capital” (Huang, Van den Brink & Groot, 2009, p. 455). The essence of the link between human and social capital is articulated as the cultivation of behaviours – the changed way a person or group approaches the world as a result of applying their learned skills and developed abilities – their human capital in action.

This application of social capital and its ability to affect the way in which people live, and by extension their decision making and quality of life, lends itself to application to any number of social groups. In examining the wellbeing of nations, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development or OECD (2001) states that social capital is seen as integrated into behavioural norms, originating from several sources: family, schools, and local communities. These groups are identical to the learning groups targeted by REAPs as part of their core ethos, furthering the connection between social capital and the REAP model. Not only that, these groups notably cover a wide range of ages and stages in life, reinforcing the last key theme common to both the review of REAPs and the social capital literature – lifelong learning.

### **Operationalising the four elements of social capital.**

In the contexts of learning and community development, a working definition of social capital can now be established to inform methodological choices and data analysis for this research. The key components accepted for use in this project are distilled in Figure 6. Each of these characteristics of social capital is examined in the following discussion of existing research, providing a definition of social capital

applied in this thesis to maintain clarity and validity: *social capital is the resource residing in networks of individuals, based on mutual trust and shared social norms, which can be brokered and mobilised to achieve social benefits, particularly in the application of knowledge and skills.*

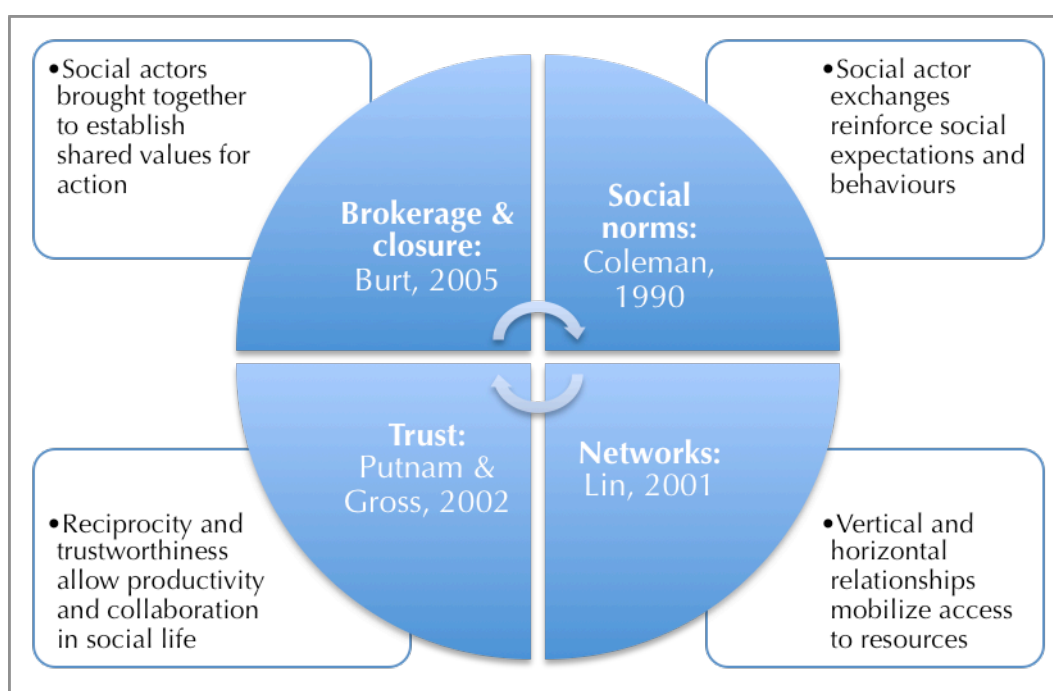


Figure 6: Components of social capital theory relevant to this study

This distilled definition of social capital is suggested as the framework through which REAPs can be explored in terms of their contribution to rural education. Several of the defined characteristics of REAPs and their services from the literature support this approach:

- the fundamental and pervasive use of community and social networks for REAPs' responsive learning activities;
- the established trust required for REAPs to continually engage in rurally isolated communities where prior experiences enable or prevent ongoing exchanges and reciprocity;

- the prescribed role and ability of REAPs to broker social groups for learning activities that cross shared values and needs; and
- the ability of REAPs to influence social norms or expected behaviours within groups by enabling increased knowledge and the application of that knowledge in social groups.

Put into practice, these characteristics illustrate how REAPs are established collaborators and providers of lifelong learning, developed within the context of individual and group needs in rural communities. The networks basis and brokering approach to this work is well documented, allowing REAPs to fulfill obligations to learners by researching their needs, abilities, and viewpoints as a basis for responsive activity (Anderson, 1997; Arnott, 1996; Ministry of Education, 2007; REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2014). The goal of this work is one of progressing community development and achieving outcomes of improved learning and social change – namely the overall connectedness and cohesiveness of communities.

### **Social Capital and Human Capital – Links in Education**

Having defined social capital in a way that can be applied in a lifelong learning and community development context, the final section of this framework places those concepts within an educational research framework. While the connection between social and human capital has become increasingly evident in educational research over the last 25 years, there is much to sift through to illustrate what that educational connection looks like. This includes threading social capital (as it is defined above), lifelong learning, and community development into the explicit links between human and social capital. Social capital's presence across various disciplines (particularly sociology, economics, and political science) has resulted in volumes of work that span

over 100 years. Add to this that there has been a marked expansion in social capital research since its popularising in the mid 1990s, and the need to focus the research within the context of this thesis becomes even more necessary.

An online search demonstrates the scale of social capital in recent research efforts: Google Scholar yields 3,070,000 results on the term social capital, with 40% of those published in the last 20 years. What is interesting and relevant for this research is that education has come to the fore much more strongly in social capital applications in that same 20 years – resulting from the strong proven links between social capital and education in that time. Search results from ERIC show that 81% of its 4,360 social capital research results date from the last two decades. Education Plus shows 86% of its 10,356 social capital results occurring in that same period. This illustrates an exciting period for social capital within educational research and a justification for pursuing it as a conceptual framework in this thesis. What follows in the final sections of this chapter is the focusing of current research on the link between human and social capital as a justification for applying a social capital framework within educational research. These points are situated within the lifelong learning and community development contexts previously discussed.

### **Human capital.**

Nobel Laureate Theodore Schultz was recognised for his groundbreaking work translating human work and productivity into an equitable form of human capital or cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1986) terms. His research on comparative income levels and returns of productivity based on level of qualification provided a clear set of propositions on the role of education in economic growth:

- (1) Increases in output come predominantly from the growth in real factor inputs and only to a minor extent from 'total factor productivity'.
- (2) The growth in the productive services per laborer is mainly a consequence of additional skills.
- (3) Increases in the general level of skills are attained slowly and, as a rule, gradually over time; they are in this sense long run developments and not to be had either quickly or suddenly.
- (4) The acquisition of skills that account for the additional quality of labor over time come in large part from schooling and education and associated activities.
- (5) The acquisition of these skills is in essence an investment in human capital and its contribution to output depends upon the amount of the investment and upon the realized rate of return. (Schultz, 1971, p. 1)

Across the ten-year span between his initial research and the presentation above regarding national education policy, the link between human capital as learned skills and knowledge gain through schooling and productivity became quickly accepted in economic circles. In his 1992 Nobel Lecture, economist Gary Becker, partner to Schultz's work throughout the 1960s and 1970s, described the essence of human capital as an "approach [that] considers how the productivity of people in market and non-market situations is changed by investments in education, skills, and knowledge" (1993, p. 39).

Schultz (1961) was the first to liken skills and knowledge to a deliberate investment in economics as a human form of capital. Gary Becker (1962) helped reinforce the concept of human capital in terms of the positive relationship between education and economic prosperity, noting how unemployment has also been shown through political economy to be negatively associated with skill level. Since then Becker (1993) has explained education as "the most important investment in human



capital. [...] However, these [investments] produce human, not physical or financial, capital because you cannot separate a person from his or her knowledge, skills, health, or values the way it is possible to move financial and physical assets while the owner stays put" (p. 85). Acknowledging the human element of capital creates an inextricable bond between the skills gained in a person and the social realities of putting those abilities to use in a real world environment.

This is where the field of social capital has made its mark in educational research, particularly over the last 20 years. With learner-centred education on the rise (Killen, 2006) and growing support for the use of individualised learning methods tailored to the uniqueness of each student in the classroom (Schweisfurth, 2013), approaches based on the social aspects of learning have also become more prominent. Social capital has made its way into the educational arena by way of these developments, primarily focused on its associations with educational achievement and community participation. In that time, an inextricable relationship between human and social has been demonstrated as a way to understand and mobilise learned skills for individual and societal benefit.

### **Links to education and wellbeing.**

Coleman (1988) provided some of the earliest applications of social capital's exchange benefits to education in a seminal study on the dropout rate of high school students based on the variances of their parents' human capital (in the form of educational achievement) and social capital (in the form of involvement with their children's learning). In his study, the social structure of an engaged family is shown to provide social capital for the student, improving matriculation. Coleman asserted that "all social relations and social structures facilitate some forms of social capital; [that]

actors establish relations purposefully and continue them when they continue to provide benefits" (1988, p. 105). He argued the shared value for education as demonstrated by involvement by various parent structures across all members of a social group was the binding force that strengthened the social capital of its members – later to be identified as closure.

In an educational setting these social benefits are suggested to be the added value of trust and relations between individuals and their learning environment where the strength of the former improves adherence to the values of the latter (Teachman, Paasch, & Carver, 1997). Coleman's results strongly supported this claim and paved the way for a great deal of research around the networks and relations of social capital in the education field. Drewry, Burge, and Driscoll (2010) succinctly identify outcomes from over twenty studies since Coleman's seminal research on the effect of social capital on high school dropout rates that reinforced the embedded role of social capital in an educational setting. Socioeconomic backgrounds, attendance, community social capital, and parental expectations and involvement are all seen as social capital contributors to educational success.

A recent study that supports the role of closure in networks is Roberts and Lacey (2008), who utilised rural community development case studies to better identify the specific mechanisms that link human and social capital as intertwined processes and products for social groups. They identify compulsory education as a continuum for social relationship development in students and for social values and trust exchanges to create a baseline for community expectations (Roberts & Lacey, 2008, p. 107). The study points to a form of closure as the "x factor" to generate a link between human and social capital whereby individuals exhibit "a common purpose and a commitment

to both themselves and the group to maximise both their individual and collective success" (Roberts & Lacey, 2008, p. 113). This aligns with what is known about a social capital approach, including the four defined key elements for this project.

Furthering the foothold of social exchange research within education, topics on the importance of relationships to education practice have become prolific, including teacher-student connections, family support and involvement, faculty development, and community integration. McGonigal and colleagues (2007) explain these connections in terms of children experiencing inclusion in the social spaces provided by schools, whether that be the curricular activities in the classroom, the collegiality of team sports during and after school hours, or by the cliques seen in hallways and cafeterias. These are seen as network associations built between the students through the school as an institution – an inevitable outcome of required participation in an education system. Vryonides (2007) supports this role of social capital in formal learning where "social relationships and networks outside the family that can be used to establish favourable conditions [...] for engaging and advancing in the educational system" (p. 869). Vryonides goes on to show how social capital in this context plays a critical role in shaping and even limiting post-secondary schooling choices for marginalised groups. This demonstrates the importance and impact of mobilised social capital for those navigating from the compulsory educational environment into further education or employment - an example that emphasises the lifelong context discussed.

Given the established lifelong learning context of REAPs, research also takes us beyond the direct link between human and social capital through more holistic outcomes from these two concepts: that of individual and community wellbeing. A related concept to community development, wellbeing has a strong presence and

relevance for a social capital approach and its outcomes. The OECD (2001) report, through its Centre for Educational Research and Innovation entitled *The Well-being of Nations: The Role of Human and Social Capital*, was a means of exploring these two forms of capital in the contexts of sustainable development and the wellbeing of countries throughout the world. From a global perspective, the link between people's skills and the relationships that allow them to mobilise those skills for their own benefit is at the crux of the developmental nature of lifelong learning and REAPs.

In order to place wellbeing as an outcome of a social capital approach, the recurring link to human capital in social capital research has been mapped against various social systems to help explain the relational factor in building skills in individuals. Youth studies have recently contributed to how this model of wellbeing looks in terms of the interplay between human and social capital, where the social structures help to mobilise the human skills resources to produce wellbeing.

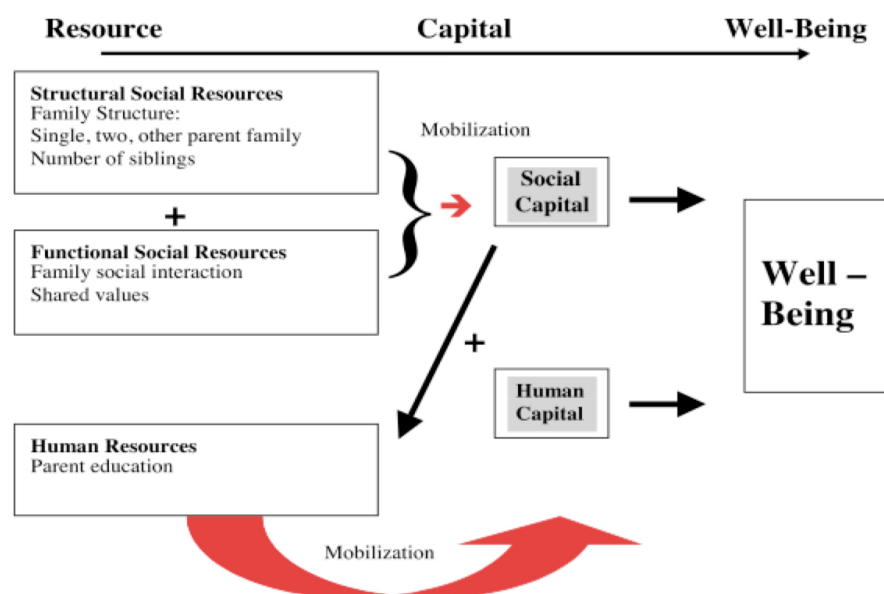


Figure 7: Mobilising resources into capital for wellbeing (Bassani, 2007)

As outlined by Bassani (2007), the social structures we operate within (in his case family structure) have their own set of rules and values. Thus the things we value are at least partially determined by what kind of family structure we belong to, because those people hold the most potential to influence our thinking and action. In Figure 7, these structures inform the way we mobilise resources and engage in our surroundings, but they are not the only active factor leading to our state of wellbeing. Human capital (education) also plays a role, and as Bassani illustrates, because those family structures have a large bearing on our own development, so does the human capital held by those family members. The stronger the positive association with that human form of capital, the more significant the impact on overall wellbeing (see also (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2001). The notion of wellbeing as a positive developmental outcome is the final thread that brings the wider REAP contexts into focus as part of the link between human and social capital.

When brought together in the realm of education, these applications of social capital are valuable in a developmental sense as:

the social credibility, norms, and networks, which are all resources with which people may solve common problems. The socially reciprocal norms, [and] networks [...] have self-enhancing properties through the continuous application [...] that influence individuals' ability to act and quality of life. (Zhang, 2009, p. 397)

Not only does the positive impact of networks reinforce the integrated definition provided by the review of social capital's conceptual history, but there is also an indication for support through lifelong learning and access to multiple networks related to learning in order to achieve the ends of developing communities. In bringing all these elements together in their various contexts, Figure 8 illustrates how they work

together for REAPs to further rural community development and lifelong learning with a social capital approach:

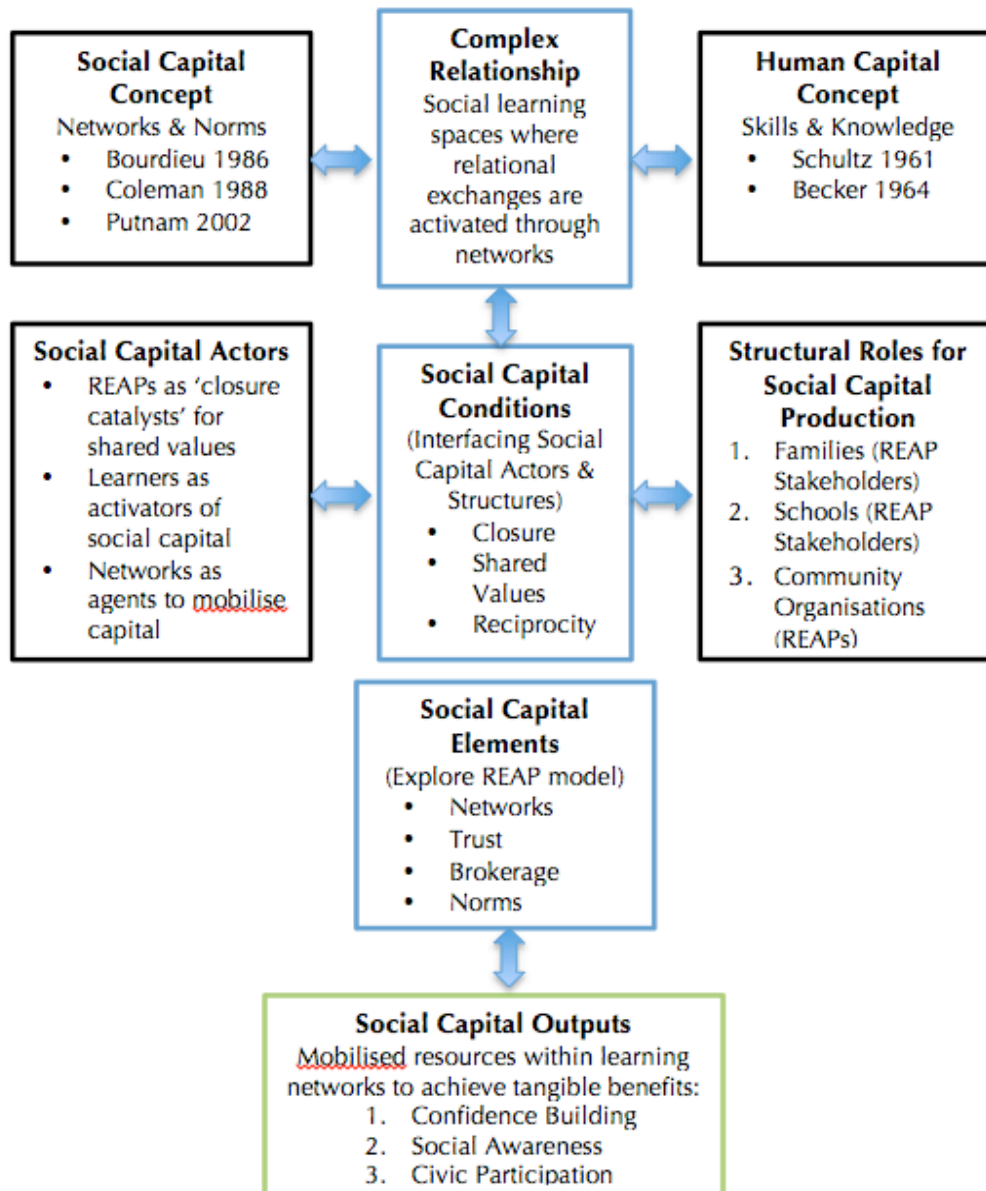


Figure 8: Synthesis of social capital approach for REAPs

### Chapter Three Summary

Social capital builds capacity for lifelong learning and community development. This is accepted as a core assumption in the theoretical framework used to justify the exploration of how REAPs as learning organisations contribute to social capital as a key

factor in mobilising skills and resources for individual and community benefit. Going forward into the next chapter on methodology, philosophical stances and practical research tools will be selected to explore how REAPs contribute to rural communities through the social capital approach explained in this framework. Themes, positions, and definitions outlined in the literature review and the conceptual framework chapters focus on the social aspects of exchange in community-based learning. They are accepted as fundamentally driven by the understanding of reality as something constructed and unique to the individuals and groups involved in those exchanges – a framing component of the research design laid out in the next chapter.

## **Chapter 4 Methodology:**

### **Researching Socially Constructed Experiences of REAPs**

Methodology was designed to explore the premise that REAPs operate by a social capital approach to learning. Examining the role of networks, trust, brokerage, and social norms in REAP-driven learning activities was central to understanding those contributions. REAP research to date has employed a qualitative case study approach. A qualitative approach was appropriate, as it allows for design that examines pluralistic and multidimensional topics, particularly those where personalised meaning and relationships are at play (Punch, 2009) – a strongly verified theme for both REAPs and social capital. Ultimately the research design examined the lived experiences of REAP leaders and learners in order to answer the research questions raised in the introduction. The primary research question and the three enabling research questions, identified within the formative chapters of the thesis, are revisited to ground chosen methodology:

*Primary research question:*

To what extent do REAPs make use of a social capital approach to contribute to education in rural New Zealand?

*Enabling research questions:*

What are the characteristics of REAPs as they have evolved over time?

What contexts do REAPs operate within based on their characteristics?

What are the key elements of a social capital approach?

As an established approach to methodology design, Michael Crotty (1998) provides a practical road map to the ordering of a research process. Crotty suggests a "four element" approach to the research design:



- Epistemology: the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology.
- Theoretical perspective: the philosophical stance informing the methodology and thus providing a context for the process and grounding its logic and criteria.
- Methodology: the strategy, plan of action, process or design lying behind the choice and use of particular methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes.
- Methods: the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis. (1998, p. 3)

This chapter is organised into three sections that describe and justify key aspects of the research design, using Crotty's four elements, and describe the research process:

1. Research design, which includes epistemological, theoretical, and methodological choices that informed methods selection; as well as justifying tools and techniques by which data were collected and analysed;
2. Research process, which outlines the steps taken to fulfill the planned research design, from ethics approval to data analysis; and
3. Design considerations, which clarify issues of research validity, limitations, and changes to design resulting from the research process.

### **Philosophical Underpinnings of the Research Design**

Placing research design within a justified framework is essential to creating a well-founded investigation into the way something works in the world. Clarity around the components of research helps build the case for convincing results, as Crotty reminds us when it comes to human knowledge:

[a]t best, our outcomes will be suggestive rather than conclusive. They will be plausible, perhaps even convincing, ways of seeing things – and, to be

sure, helpful ways of seeing things – but certainly not any ‘one true way’ of seeing things. (Crotty, 1998, p. 13)

To navigate the variability and plurality of knowledge described by Crotty, decision points are explained in regards to the choices and selections around research design.

The following positions are taken and justified to answer the posed research questions:

1. Epistemology – Constructionism
2. Theoretical Perspective – Social Capital Theory
3. Methodology – Interpretive Phenomenology
4. Methods – In-depth Interviews & Questionnaires

**Epistemology: Constructionism.**

Epistemology is presented as "a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we can ensure that they are both adequate and legitimate" (Crotty, 1998, p. 8). At the most macro-level of research design, choice of epistemology provides a pathway to suitable theoretical perspectives that inform the consideration, collection, and analysis of information within existing literature and approaches. Objectivism, constructivism (or alternatively constructionism in Crotty's view), and subjectivism are the most commonly accepted, although not universal, epistemological standpoints to choose from in research design. Each takes a distinct approach to the treatment of knowledge, falling into either positivist (with meaning or truth externally observable to the researcher) or interpretivist (with meaning or truth dependent on views and culture) categories:

- Objectivism holds that reality exists independently of consciousness – in other words there is an objective reality ‘out there’; [...]
- Constructivism rejects [objectivism's] view of knowledge; [it holds that] [t]ruth and meaning do not exist in some external world, but are created

by the subject's interactions with the world. Meaning is *constructed* not discovered, so subjects construct their own meaning in different ways, even in relation to the same phenomenon. [...]

- Subjectivism [holds that] meaning does not emerge from interplay between the subject and the outside world, but is imposed on the object by the subject. Subjects do construct meaning, but do so from within collective unconsciousness, from dreams, from religious beliefs, etc. (Gray, 2009, p. 18)

In a crude sense, these different approaches to knowledge can be viewed in disciplinary terms to more clearly articulate their differences and how best to apply them in generally accepted research terms (the following has been abstracted from Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2000). One can connect objectivism to study of the natural sciences, where experimentation on natural phenomena yields results on real world truths or natural laws. This approach fits the positivist model of observation through reliance on the senses for developing models of the world based on scientific method. Constructivism (or constructionism as Crotty uses it – a distinction that is explained shortly) brings the human element into the equation, whereby the views, experiences, and interpretations of individuals and groups have a significant bearing on how knowledge is considered and legitimised – the hallmark of social sciences such as sociology, psychology, and education. In this epistemological framework, positivism is refuted and interpretivism comes into play, allowing social reality to be considered as distinct from natural reality, under different rules and influences (namely cultural and historical). Finally, subjectivism provides an approach suited for situating knowledge in philosophy, as well as the arts and humanities, where the uniqueness of each individual human condition and perspective is given equal footing and validity in a research context.

A constructionist epistemological position is considered best fit for this research design to investigate the posed questions around how REAPs contribute to learning by utilising a social capital approach; an approach which requires a focus on relationships, trust between people in social situations, shared values, and social norms within a group. Constructionism is defined here as "the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted within an essentially social context" (Crotty, 1998, p. 42). The appropriateness to REAPs and community-based learning is strongly represented in this approach, where learning takes place through social interaction and is developed for use and purpose in a given (rural) social context. Crotty goes on to further delineate constructionism from the related and sometimes-misappropriated term mentioned above – constructivism. For this thesis, the position is shared with Crotty (1998) that constructivism is taken as the creation of meaning within an individual's mind as they encounter phenomena in the world, whereas constructionism is defined as the creation and sharing of meaning in social or collective terms. The latter epistemological position is again best suited to the social context of the research aims outlined previously. The focus of investigation is a shared understanding of REAPs and how they contribute in wide community or social terms given their socially situated approach to learning.

The use of constructionism is further justified in that, as an interpretive paradigm for research, it "focuses on social relationships, as well as the mechanisms and processes through which members in a setting navigate and create their social worlds" (Bailey, 2007, p. 53). Again this fits the exploratory research questions given the

construction of meaning in social exchanges between people forms the basis of social capital potential as an essential part of the learning process for REAPs in their rural areas. Examining the network and relationships-based trust and values exchange as part of a learning process is central to both a social capital model and a constructionist view of knowledge. Burr (2003) adds depth to constructionism's definition through placing it amidst a number of operating characteristics, many of which are particularly relevant for the study of REAPs. Burr elaborates on constructionism's tenets, with several key aspects directly aligning with core elements of REAPs and the social capital framework they operate by. Table 5 below summarises these alignments.

*Table 5: Burr's (2003) constructionist elements and those of REAPs*

<b>Characteristics of constructionism</b>	<b>Characteristics of REAP approach</b>
Knowledge is built through social processes whereby everyday social engagements between individuals and groups are what construct what we know of the world.	REAPs deliver in a responsive manner via social networks, where prior experiences, knowledge, and perspectives of community members determine learning activities.
Knowledge is embedded in social action as individuals engage with one another over time, which informs collective action, decision-making, and exclusion in those groups.	REAPs require trust and collaboration in social settings to achieve action, consulting with and responding to sub-groups in a community to determine learning activities.
Social phenomena are located in the social settings, institutions, and constructs around individuals, rather than within those individuals' minds.	REAPs operate as institutional social actors, where learning activities are often brokered between/determined by social groups and environments within specific cultural contexts or settings.
Social processes form knowledge i.e. that knowledge isn't something external to possess, but rather a collaborative exchange between individuals.	REAPs emphasise collective, personal, and community development as goals of learning activities, founded in collective values and shared normative social expectations.

Another key component of a constructionist epistemology is the idea of positioning. For Burr, "the concept of positioning recognizes both the power of culturally available discourse to frame our experience and constrain our behaviour while allowing room for the person to actively engage with those discourses and employ them in social situations" (2003, p. 113). For learners in a REAP context this is

reflected in that isolated communities are heavily reliant on relationships and social acceptance to operate. An example in an early childhood setting would be playgroups and kohanga reo, both of which are run and heavily influenced by local families who manage these services. Where participating families disagree with the philosophy of the managing families or have damaged personal relationships, the ability of their children to participate positively in those learning opportunities is hindered. This illustrates how positioning between families influences choices for action - human agency in action. Educational choices are thus influenced by the relationships with, and local culture and outlook of other families.

The above tension of human agency and ability to influence social change through intentional positioning is central to exploring learning relationships. In a constructionist view "[t]he actions, words, and thoughts of human beings appear to be reduced to the level of byproducts of larger linguistic entities of which we may be largely unaware" (Burr, 2003, p. 120). This can be likened (and is in one of Burr's examples) to religion as a belief structure, where an individual declaring membership of a particular belief system makes them a spokesperson for that system rather than for their own individual value set. In essence we give ourselves over to something else larger than ourselves, which subverts our individual agency. This is particularly relevant to the controlled agency discussed by Bourdieu and Coleman in social capital theory, where the social constructs (spoken and unspoken), as well as conditions for engagement influence the actions of individuals. While a tension certainly exists where social conditions meet individual choice, the aim of this project is not to resolve, but rather to acknowledge that tension as present in a constructionist approach to social research.

### **Theoretical Perspective: Social Capital Theory.**

With epistemology chosen, the consideration of theoretical perspective is critical, as it provides the underlying assumptions and logic of selecting the appropriate approach to collecting data that will yield a contribution to knowledge. As Bailey (2007) highlights, "[t]heories are important for selecting a topic, creating goals, developing research questions, and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data" (p. 59). Theory is set out here as "a set of propositions which together describe and explain the phenomenon being studied. These propositions are at a higher level of abstraction than the specific facts and empirical generalizations (the data) about the phenomenon" (Punch, 2009, p. 33). This is supported by Crotty's (1998) view on theoretical perspective as "an approach to understanding and explaining society and the human world" (p. 3). It is "a statement of the assumptions brought to the research task" that ground the inquiry activities (Crotty, 1998, p. 7).

Having established a constructionist epistemology, an interpretive (as opposed to positivistic) theoretical framework is selected to provide a foundation for setting the boundaries of inquiry. That is, given the human-based nature of inquiry in an educational setting, it is accepted that "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of the social life-world" hold the best insight and potential for revealing new knowledge through research (Crotty, 1998, p. 67). A number of interpretive theoretical approaches could be appropriate, including symbolic interactionism, phenomenology, hermeneutics, and naturalistic inquiry. Each has been considered briefly for its appropriateness to the posed research questions, based on Gray's (2009) comments on various interpretive research paradigms. While more traditional constructivist approaches to research design, these are not considered best fit. In each

of these, individual cultural and personal interpretive factors form the core of their approaches. These are argued as too narrow for exploring REAPs' contributions to rural learning, where collective social processes are the core component of the research. This is particularly relevant for exploring REAPs given the socio-exchange basis of community learning and development. This is underpinned by the active process elements of a social capital framework (networks, trust, brokerage, and social norms), where learners are engaged and re-engaged in social community settings as part of the REAP model.

Given the review of literature on REAPs and the social exchange premise of the conceptual framework chapter, social capital theory emerges as an appropriate fit with constructionist epistemology. The focus of social capital theory on meaning and knowledge forming through social interaction and processes makes it a suitable theoretical extension, again where theory provides a working model of how the world being researched works. It also strongly aligns with Crotty's approach to research design, where any accompanying assumptions brought into the study are clearly stated. Both the introduction and conceptual framework chapters of this thesis have done that, clarifying social capital theory as part of the researcher's views and assumptions in developing this study – specifically the central role of trusted relationships and bringing groups together within the REAP approach. The result is a design premised on social relationships and interactive processes – an elaborated aspect of the social capital framework, and accepted characteristics of the phenomena being researched.

The asserted responsive approach of REAPs has been defined as contingent on how members of their communities perceive, value, and engage with personal and community development needs. Learning activities that are genuinely responsive must



then be dependent on the social interactions between people in a community that define those needs, as well as the social interaction with REAPs to assess, plan, and respond with meaningful learning activities (as well as the social processes taking place during those learning activities). The changing social nature of communities (e.g. actors, values, expectations etc.) reinforces Bourdieu's concepts of doxa, field, and habitus as relevant to a constructionist epistemology, where the shifting social environment and contexts of social action influence the agency and meaning created by individuals. These concepts work together so that social actors (i.e. individuals or learners in a social setting) utilise capital in daily interactions while carrying both doxa and habitus within them, shaped by the field in which they operate. Bourdieu believed that people were shaped by their unseen dispositions in life and beliefs of the masses in their community. These things heavily influenced how we act in social situations. These influencing factors were further subjugated by the forces of societal structures and practices that added a further layer of control and influence on our actions. All of these things affect how we might make use of his various forms of capital to participate in society, which is the primary focus in this research.

These three concepts serve as a strong foundation for exploring a social capital approach to learning, where the focus of analysis is aimed at networks, interpersonal trust, and brokering groups based on shared values and norms. This theoretical approach also creates a legitimised space for the plurality and variability of social processes being given priority for understanding a phenomenon like REAPs. This sets the stage well for the upcoming methodology of lived experiences and things in themselves, as people give meaning to situations in their day-to-day lives: the already mentioned phenomenology.

**Methodology: Interpretive Phenomenology.**

Ethnography, phenomenological research, grounded theory, heuristic research, action research, survey research, and experimental research are the methodologies more commonly (but not exhaustively) mentioned by Crotty (1998). Phenomenology emerges as the preferred methodology for this research design. Ethnography was seen to be too limited in scope to enhance understanding of how REAPs operate, where grounded and heuristic approaches lend themselves to too wide an exploration for the research question. Likewise, experimental research design is not well suited to constructionist epistemology and requires a focus on causal factors and relationships, which are not appropriate for an exploratory approach. A phenomenological approach is used given its fit with the need to make use of unique accounts and interpretations about REAPs to determine their purpose, and the goal of gaining a contextualised description and analysis rather than developing a result that is generalisable to a larger population – all key features of phenomenology at the methodological level (Gray, 2009).

Reiterating the gap in research literature around the REAP model, a methodology needs to be employed that can account for the differences in what have been confirmed as separate and distinct educational non-profits, each operating in a unique and isolated part of rural New Zealand. To answer the research question about the extent to which REAPs contribute through social capital as a phenomenon requires exploring the experiences of those who engaged with REAPs directly. Clark Moustakas (1994) underscores this goal by highlighting that “[t]he understanding of meaningful concrete relations implicit in the original description of experience *in the context of a particular situation* is the primary target of phenomenological knowledge” (p. 14).

Here we see the opportunity to investigate REAPs by acknowledging the meaningful relationships, exchanges and experiences that take place throughout REAP work. By using a methodology that asks 'what is experienced' when REAPs are involved, the research design then holds the potential to reveal insight through data that most directly reflects those researched.

Honing this methodological approach merits clarifying the type of phenomenology being undertaken. Phenomenological research is acknowledged for its varied approaches and applications, often being debated in terms of its place in research design (Finlay, 2009). At its core, phenomenology presents things as they are experienced. Initially defined as a transcendental effort by Edmund Husserl at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century to counter naturalistic and positivistic approaches to understanding meaning and knowledge, phenomenology is primarily concerned with consciousness and meaning making in its various forms (Moran & Mooney, 2002). According to Moran and Mooney (2002), Husserl recognised that objective knowledge needed to be reconciled with subjective consciousness, which led him to focus on what is seen as a pure iteration phenomenology, where the interplay of consciousness and experience is paramount. This form of phenomenology is the basis of modern descriptive phenomenologies, which aim to describe the essence of a phenomenon where being intentionally conscious of something (Husserl's intentionality) can be examined through setting aside everyday judgments and understandings of a conscious phenomenon (Husserl's epoche) (Ferguson, 2006). Researchers in this area collect and reductively analyse lived experiences that reveal renewed meaning about the specified phenomenon.

A contrasting phenomenological approach is the existential or interpretive one, later extended out of Husserl's work by a number of philosophers and psychologists, foremost by his mentored successor Martin Heidegger (Ferguson, 2006). Heidegger took the position that the personal and cultural context of the lived experience becomes central to examining a phenomenon as a series of interpretive events rather than the internal conscious space of creating meaning (Ferguson, 2006). In other words, the events of our daily lives are each encountered and responded to in their own right, creating a unique chain of interpreted experiences. This differs from Husserl in that it does not work from the premise that a true or essential experience lies beneath what we see of the world. Rather, the key to understanding lived experience rests in the combination of individual history and socio-cultural context around individuals.

Here enters the first methodological clarification: does this project employ descriptive phenomenology based on Husserl's core principles of consciousness and meaning associated with human experience, or interpretive phenomenology based on Heidegger's later work to refocus those principles on the context of human experience (see Reiners, 2012). We know the project seeks to explore how REAPs operate in a number of contexts (e.g. lifelong learning, community development) and not just describe their efforts. We also know that there are 13 REAPs across New Zealand, each with a range of differing communities and individuals to be considered as part of that exploration. Add to this the involvement of the researcher and REAPs themselves as participants to explore the phenomenon, and an essentialist approach does not fit. Equally, the justifications for constructionist epistemology and social capital theory above, give credibility and emphasis to the social processes and constructed meaning

of lived experiences. As a result, an interpretive phenomenology emerges as the most appropriate methodology for the research design.

Wojnar and Swanson (2007) provide a comparative overview that supports the choice of an interpretive phenomenological approach. When considering either a descriptive or interpretive analysis, an interpretive approach fits investigations: where "the emphasis is on understanding the phenomena in context"; where it is believed "that the contexts of culture, practice, and language are what humans share"; and where "understanding and co-creation by the researcher and the participants are what makes interpretations meaningful" (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 176). For this research, multiple contexts have been clearly laid out for understanding REAPs in action; social exchange has been established as a space to create shared experiences that influence our actions; and the researchers background and views on a social capital approach have been signaled in the formative stages of design. On each of these fronts, interpretive phenomenology fits the design well to explore the research questions.

Lifelong learning and community development further reinforced exploring REAPs through lived experiences, having been identified as social processes that provide an operational context for REAPs' approach. The interpretive approach also acknowledges the interpretations of described experiences from the researcher's standpoint – a point reportedly made in particular by Heidegger (Ferguson, 2006). He "introduced the concept of *dasein* (*the human way of being in the world*) to emphasize that individuals cannot abstract themselves from various contexts that influence their choices and give meanings to lived experience" (Wojnar & Swanson, 2007, p. 174). He believed:

all people, philosophers included, are inseparable from the world they inhabit and, therefore, it is not possible to bracket off one's way of seeing and identify the essence of a phenomenon, as Husserl proposed [...] instead, [phenomenology is] concerned more with interpreting the meaning of the things in their appearing from a position that is always grounded in the things themselves. (Langdridge, 2007, pp. 28-9)

Heidegger's championing of the interpretive approach takes a focus on "the practical activities and relationships, which we are caught up in, and through which the world appears to us, and is made meaningful" (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 17). This aligns with the social process arguments that have driven selection of a constructionist epistemology and social capital theoretical perspective. It also provides a clear space to apply methodology that allows exploration of the active relationships and networks in and around REAPs that contribute to learning achievement, as well as social uses of that learning.

Classifications and nomenclature for phenomenology are varied, although through Moran and Mooney's (2002) account, there are clear patterns and groupings to how its principles have been applied. This can be seen as forms of phenomenology have branched through specific disciplines, beyond philosophy and into various forms of psychology (as with the work of Brentano and Giorgi), hermeneutics (see Ricoeur and Gadamer), as well as linguistics (notably Sartre and Derrida). There are clear connected elements between each of these iterations. In each there is a common goal to extract perceived experiences as lived by people and distill out of those experiences what is essentially known about a particular phenomenon. What differs is the internalised or externalised focus of investigation, where methods are applied to understanding the phenomenon as a transcendent object, a contextualised construct,

or a variation between the two. Again, the contextualised construct approach suits exploring REAPs in the established constructionist and social theory settings.

As a final comment on an interpretive phenomenology, pre-interpreted scaffolding underpins what is known of REAPs and how they operate; the researcher acknowledges this in the development of the research design. Part of Husserl's approach involves the bracketing or separating out of personal views and experiences of the explored phenomenon from the research process (Moustakas, 1994). In the case of this project, what the researcher knows of REAPs and how they operate clearly informs the design and is embraced as part of the conceptual framework. Thus the researcher's views are intentionally not bracketed as part of project design. Utilising the researcher's constructed meaning of REAP-based experiences in the methodology aligns to Heidegger's interpretive methods, and gives effect to the process for data collection, consideration, and results. This is justified further as part of the methods section, where a specific school of interpretive phenomenology is explicated for the analysis stages – *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis* (see Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009).

### **Methods: Document Review, Semi-structured Interviews & Questionnaires**

A constructionist view of knowledge influenced the choice of social capital theory as a theoretical perspective and interpretive phenomenology as a methodology. These also influence decisions about data gathering and data analysis methods. Multiple data collections methods were chosen to maximise the potential to collect data on perspectives and trends within REAP activity from a range of sources, enhancing validity factors in the design (discussed in more depth later in the chapter). In-depth face-to-face interviews with REAP managers were planned to gain

perspectives on the social capital contributions of REAPs from a leadership perspective, partially informed by common factors identified through pre-interview document analysis. Interview data was then used to develop part of a questionnaire that investigated learner experiences. Both tools make use of open-ended questions to access genuine experience-based responses from participants. Qualitative thematic coding, primarily following the Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method, was selected as the data analysis framework for the full dataset. The choice of data collection methods (sampling, and instrumentation) and analysis (thematic coding and reduction) are justified in the following sections. Figure 9 summarises the broad research design in line with Crotty's four elements, before entering more detailed specifications of methods design.

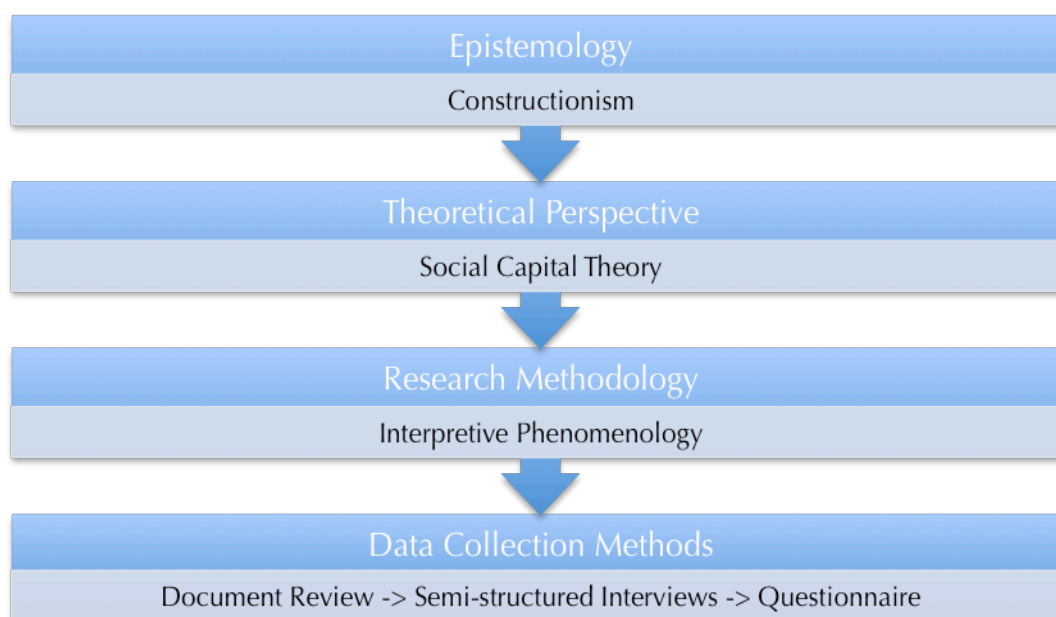


Figure 9: Research design overview (based on Crotty, 1998)

Chosen methods are justified below, based on suitability for the intended participant samples. Both leaders and learners of REAPs were chosen as best fit to provide lived examples of how REAPs operate and contribute to rural learning.



Managers were positioned to provide the most comprehensive knowledge around the contribution of these organisations as liaisons between the governing Boards of each REAP, staff, and community stakeholders. Conversely, learners were positioned to provide first-hand accounts of REAP interactions, activities, and perceived outcomes.

***Preliminary stage document review.*** Document review was used to inform two of the seven questions for interviews with REAP managers. This was done to help ensure questions reflected the views and experiences of REAPs rather than those imposed by the researcher. Because those in leadership roles were chosen for interview (discussed below), strategic plans from participating REAPs were used as the informing document for question formulation. These two questions incorporated the vision, purpose, and core values of each REAP to inform shared experiences during the interview. The source of the other five questions is explained below, each was open-ended and intentionally lacking any preconceived reference to social capital or its defined elements.

***Stage one semi-structured interviews.*** Both the interview and questionnaire tools were selected given their appropriateness to qualitative design practices broadly (Cresswell, 2009; Gray, 2009) and phenomenological design (Crotty, 1996; Punch, 2009). Taking Tuckman's (1978) considerations of interviews and questionnaires into account, the use of these tools in the research design helps to measure "knowledge or information" about how REAPs work, participants' "values and preferences" regarding benefits and outcomes of REAP services to the community, and "attitudes and beliefs" around the potential social capital features employed by REAPs (p. 237). These data collection tools are able to identify a wide range of personal data (as above), aligning

chosen methods with the exploratory goals set forth in the methodology to gather genuine lived experiences and perspectives of REAPs.

For the first formal stage of data collection, semi-structured interviews were selected over questionnaires to allow follow-up questions and clarifications on participants' experiences. Strict questioning without follow-up opportunities was seen to increase the potential for lost data if clear meaning was not communicated right away by the participant. Interview questions were indirect and nonspecific in nature so as to “engender frank and open responses [...] while provoking less alarm” in the participants (Tuckman, 1978, p. 238). Probing and redirecting questions were used to reduce the potential wide range of random information provided by participants and keep answers aligned to the specified investigative questions.

*Structuring the interview tool.* For the semi-structured interview protocol, a deliberately broad and open series of questions (provided in Table 6 with their rationale for inclusion) was developed to allow interviewees to describe REAPs and their contributions based on lived experiences. It was expected that honing and probing questions could be necessary throughout. Open-ended language and phenomenological prompts (Crotty, 1996) were used to shape interview questions, with a focus on eliciting managers' views on REAPs' approach.

The overall structure of the protocol is broad, to situational, and back to broad. The intent was to invite managers to reflect on their views and experiences of REAPs holistically, letting those early questions open natural responses that could be followed up with probing as required. Early, broad questions (one and two from Table 6) allowed managers to describe REAPs and their importance/contribution to their local

community. This was intended to prime the participants' reflections around REAPs without any specific context to the questions.

Middle questions (three and four from Table 6) used content drawn directly from document review of that REAP's strategic plan to elicit information on how that REAP went about contributing to its communities. Specifically, each REAP's vision statement and guiding principles was presented for explication by that REAP's manager, without alteration by the researcher. This was seen as providing some mitigation of bias in collecting data on how REAPs work the way they do, which is central to answering the research question. Managers were asked to provide lived examples of those statements in action. These questions were intended to provide meaningful insights into how REAPs achieve the results they do as experienced by those who lead them, and using language and concepts familiar to their day-to-day leadership roles.

Further questions (five to seven in Table 6) focused on important features, common characteristics, and a described model of REAPs, as experienced by those managers. These questions were intended to broaden participants thinking from the examples of fulfilling goals specific to their REAP, back into the REAP model more widely, again without any specific context beyond their own views of REAPs' characteristics. The final question (eight) was again broad, allowing the interviewee to articulate further experiences of the REAP model in action they might have overlooked in the course of the interview. By emphasising broad and personally contextual questions (rather than context provided by the researcher), the design lends itself to rich and unique qualitative data from each participant based on their efforts to drive the work of their REAP. Table 6 outlines the questions for the REAP manager interview

protocol (also attached as Appendix 1), and provides the justification for their inclusion.

*Table 6: REAP manager interview protocol and question rationale*

<b>Interview questions for REAP CEOs and rationale for inclusion in protocol</b>
<b>1.)</b> How would you describe a REAP – what is it and what does it do?
<i>Open question designed to elicit broad thinking and personalised response.</i>
<b>2.)</b> Why are REAPs important - what contribution does your REAP make to its community?
<i>Open question designed to elicit thinking on lived examples of community impact.</i>
<b>3.)</b> What is an example of your REAP's vision "inserted statement" in action?
<i>Semi-directed question designed to put interviewee in the mindset of lived action.</i>
<b>4.)</b> Please use examples to explain how your REAP achieves its guiding principles "listed":
<i>Semi-directed series of questions designed to elicit further lived examples.</i>
<b>5.)</b> What are the important features of your REAP and why are they important?
<i>Semi-specific question designed to elicit how others experience REAPs.</i>
<b>6.)</b> What characteristics would you expect are consistent throughout all REAPs and why?
<i>Semi-specific question designed to elicit how REAPs are commonly experienced.</i>
<b>7.)</b> How would you describe the REAP model to others – how do REAPs do what they do?
<i>Revisited open question designed to elicit experiences around REAP features.</i>
<b>8.)</b> Is there anything else you'd like to add that we haven't covered?
<i>Open question designed to elicit new information having considered earlier responses.</i>

*Selecting the sample population of REAP managers.* Stage one consisted of six in-depth interviews with REAP managers. The number selected follows the guideline of six to ten participants presented by Onwuegbuzie and Collins (2007) from qualitative sampling literature on interviewing within a phenomenological design. All 12 managers were invited to participate in the research (where Far North REAP was excluded for reasons of ethics, discussed further below); however, an accessible population of six was targeted to ensure feasibility across the study's timeframe. Managers were selected as key participants for their combination of strategic and operational knowledge around REAP services and approach.

**Stage two learner questionnaires.** While interviews and observation are often cited as the conventional data collection tools for phenomenological research,

questionnaires that are designed to collect qualitative data are also justifiable (see Crotty, 1996). For this research, semi-qualitative questionnaires were designed with several open experience-based questions that follow phenomenological prompting – a method used in phenomenological research in nursing and other social sciences (Crotty, 1996). This was meant to maximise the potential for rich, unique data from a number of learners across multiple REAPs to enhance validity and the limited generalisability of findings to other REAPs. While just under half of the questions were entirely open-ended, one-third of these experience-based questions were framed within the context of the four key elements of social capital without naming them as such: brokerage and closure, networks, norms, and trust. This was intended to explore learners' experiences of social capital in their REAP activities, again without using language that indicates social capital as a concept. This is justified in the explanation of the questionnaire below.

*Structuring the questionnaire.* The learner questionnaire (Appendix 2) provided a mix of three kinds of questions for REAP learners (and incorporated a consent statement). These are now described and justified:

1. Five open-ended experiential questions to gain insight into how learners describe their engagements with and contributions from REAPs (questions 2 – 5 and 12);
2. Two Likert scale questions to elicit learners' views on how REAPs operate and to compare their perspective with managers' perspectives and a that of a social capital approach (questions 6 – 7); and

3. Four Likert scale questions to elicit learner's views on REAPs' contributions to the four elements of social capital without naming networks, trust, brokerage, and social norms (questions 8 – 11).

For questions two to five, Crotty (1996) provides an example list of qualitative statements for a phenomenological research questionnaire, which serves as a prompt for fill-in responses in keeping with the methodology outlined earlier. These prompts were built around phrases such as "the phenomenon can be described as ..." or "when I think of the phenomenon I think of" – many of which were easily adaptable to asking questions on experiences with REAPs. These are the heavily qualitative and phenomenological questions that satisfy the research design. A fill-in response mode was utilised as it provided limited bias and the widest range of response flexibility for participants (Tuckman, 1978, p. 249-50).

Question seven was developed from an analysis of stage one interview data on common themes in CEO responses to how REAPs contribute to rural learning. These were introduced as a way of comparing experiences between leaders and learners to see if there were strong commonalities or differences in how the two groups internalised or interpreted REAPs. Questions six and eight to eleven were framed in related, but not explicit, terms from the four social capital elements. These were intended to elicit learners' views on social capital elements in action, based on their experiences with REAPs. These questions were designed as a way of adding a layer of experiential language from participants' responses to prompts, but only after they had been given open-ended opportunities to describe their experiences without any preconceived language or concepts being used. For example, asking learners closed questions about the extent to which REAPs collaborate or build relationships before

they shared their views of REAPs in open-ended questions was seen as a potential influence on the latter set of responses to include collaborative or relationships-based concepts.

While somewhat unconventional in their inclusion within a phenomenological research design, they were based on a known version of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) method, called template analysis (discussed in the analysis section of this chapter). Ultimately, the addition of closed questions as a means to compare experiential language does not compromise the research design. At worst, those questions could be negated, leaving sufficient open-ended questions to make the responses viable for depth in a phenomenological approach. At best, these closed questions would provide further depth to emergent themes in the responses, as they would expand the understanding of the phenomenon of REAPs and their social capital contributions.

*Selecting the sample population of REAP learners.* Purposive sampling was chosen to ensure a balance of perspectives on the experiences of engaging with REAP services from the three core sectors. It was expected that teachers, administrators, and family members in any of the three educational sectors (i.e. early childhood, schools, and adult and community education) being sampled had unique motivations and outcomes from interaction with REAPs, so the purposive sample ensured no one sector perspective outbalanced another during analysis. Judgment error was noted in selection as a core disadvantage of purposive sampling (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012). Consequently, the criterion (one of two) that participants select only one, primary sector of educational support mitigated that risk.

The participant target for each of the three sector groups was 30 (or 90 targeted across the total sample), where a sample size of 20 to 30 can be seen as a size threshold just large enough to draw conclusions (Fraenkel, Wallen & Hyun, 2012), but where qualitative aspects require smaller samples to allow for in-depth analysis (Miles, Huberman & Salanda, 2013; Punch, 2009). The two sample groups, managers and REAP learners, represented a multilevel relationship, defined as one where members of the distinct groups “are extracted from different levels of the study (i.e., different populations)” (Onwuegbuzie & Collings, 2007, p. 292). Using ongoing REAP engagement as a second criterion for participation contributed to population availability as participants had a regular relationship with the organisation being investigated.

**Data Analysis.** Gray’s (2009) approach provided a helpful explanation of how the investigation of REAPs was shaped in the data analysis phase, based on the two standard methods of qualitative analysis:

Deduction begins with a universal view of a situation and works back to the particulars; in contrast, induction moves from fragmentary details to a connected view of a situation. [...] Through the inductive approach, plans are made for data collection, after which the data are analysed to see if any patterns emerge that suggest relationships between variables. [...] Through induction, the researcher moves towards discovering a binding principle.  
(pp. 14-5)

In Gray's description, there are two paths to analysis - looking for patterns that emerge naturally from data (inductive analysis), and looking at specifics within an understood framework (deductive analysis). This research made use of both, taking an inductive-deductive-inductive process approach. Analysis was kept aligned with the exploratory



nature of the research question (to what extent), by focusing on the phenomenological methodology that puts lived experiences at the heart of the data source, based on the conceptual framework outlined in chapter three. This framework provided a set of four social capital elements (Gray's particulars) that could be considered, again with the intent of exploring the extent to which social capital was evident within REAPs.

In order to maximise the interpretive and phenomenological aspects of research design, deductive analysis was only applied at a macro level of data categories above coded themes. This ensured data themes reflected language of the participants, not language of the conceptual framework. An added layer of inductive analysis allowed an open exploration, where the fragmented details of REAPs (e.g. the defined characteristics, operating contexts, strategic goals, and individual leader/learner views) were examined as a whole. This was a critical aspect of data analysis to fulfilling the research design - making use of inductive measures that acknowledge interpreted experiences. The coding process used to achieve this dual analysis is outlined below.

*Coding as analysis.* For qualitative research, collected data is examined and marked by code (considered the most micro level of meaning unit in qualitative analysis). A code is defined as "a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative, salient, essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of language-based or visual data" (Saldana, 2012, p. 3). While coding serves as "an exploratory problem-solving technique" it is taken as a step in a cyclical "linking" process that allows constant revisiting of the data and associated codes for a refinement of the emerging themes (Saldana, 2012, p. 8). This is because at the next level up, codes are then organised into themes of similar phrases, key points, and language.

This serves as an organising intermediary step for connecting emergent patterns across multiple responses and data sources before the macro level categories are selected.

For this study, the macro-level categories were pre-determined to fulfill the deductive analysis discussed above. These categories include the four social capital elements identified in the conceptual framework (networks, trust, brokerage, and social norms), and a fifth emergent category to allow for emergent themes from analysis that did not fit within the pre-determined categories. This template-based approach to analysis is supported by some phenomenological researchers and is explained shortly. Following on from that macro-level framework of categories, the identified themes and their reordering to create text-based codes for analysis was entirely reliant on the language and interpreted meaning from participants. This meant that while a deductive framework existing in the four named categories, those were set aside as much as possible so that the thematic work was primarily inductive. Once reviewed and refined, those inductive themes could be refined until simple text-based codes could be assigned to allow further analysis. Figure 10 provides a top-to-bottom snapshot of the analytical process.

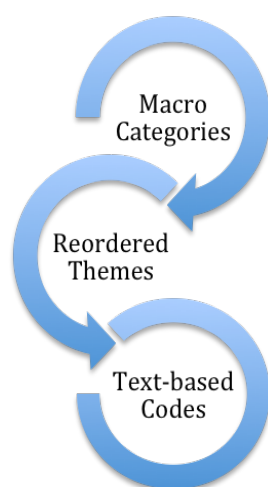


Figure 10: Levels of coding for textual analysis

In terms of the micro-level coding process for data analysis, Miles, Huberman, and Salanda (2013) itemise 16 different types of coding approaches, suited for various qualitative data processing. The chosen phenomenological approach for this project used a combination of in vivo coding, which "uses words or short phrases from the participant's own language in the data record as codes", and holistic coding, which "applies a single code to a large unit of data [...] to capture a sense of the overall contents" as a preparatory coding exercise (Miles, Huberman & Saldana, 2013, p. 74-7). This is a commonly used qualitative method for analysis and is in keeping with phenomenological methods in that it makes direct use of participant language when examining data for patterns. Once initial coding was complete, holistic coding was used as an early indicator of intermediate categories or even precursors to themes where the language is clear and consistent enough across participant responses. In order to capture the best data for analysis across in vivo and holistic coding, both inductive and deductive approaches to phenomenological analysis were applied.

*Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and Template Analysis.* The analysis model developed for this research was intended to ensure a thorough review of data that is true to phenomenological methods, but that also considers the data within a specific framework - in this case, that of social capital. To achieve this, a template of four broad, deductive categories was set up and then set aside, allowing data to be:

1. Interpreted in a phenomenological sense to create coded data based on participant language and exploratory notes;

2. Distilled into multiple themes that could be situated according to the four broad deductive categories based on the conceptual framework (these steps incorporate the in vivo and holistic coding approaches above); and
3. Inductively reviewed for themes not fitting the deductive framework to allow additional trends to come through as emergent.

This inductive-deductive-inductive approach maximises the interpretive process to consider data in respondents' terms (a phenomenological requirement for this type of methodology), as well as within the social capital conceptual framework of the thesis.

For the first stage of this analysis, data coding followed Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) model presented by Smith, Flowers and Larkins (2009). This model of analysis was chosen for its openness to explore qualitative data as it is presented. IPA results in identified themes that are representative of key phrases and ideas directly from textual data. In it, exploratory notes are made alongside transcript data to allow the researcher to mark and analyse meanings and pattern in the text. These notes are reviewed and refined after several reads into short phrases or themes that reflect a salient, recurring idea within the data. Qualitative guidelines for this kind of coding meant targeting between 20 and 30 common themes that could be refined into five or six categories (Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2013). These relevant themes can then be easily ordered to determine similarities and differences from the thematic elements of theoretical and conceptual models - in this case, those of social capital.

Because there is a pre-formed conceptual framework as part of the exploratory research question, a deductive element was also introduced as part of the IPA analysis - template analysis. As an accepted form of IPA, template analysis allows:

the possibility of using a coding frame (template) devised theoretically *a priori* (i.e. before collecting the data). This enables the researcher to specifically explore theoretically important aspects of experience while allowing the meaning in these particular areas to emerge in the analytical process, as is normal in phenomenological research. This is often of great help in applied research, where time and money constraints prevent more general exploration of the data or where strong theoretical grounds are identified for exploring a limited aspect of experience. (Langdridge, 2007, p. 56)

The template approach incorporates both exploratory research notes and assigned themes on either side of transcribed data (see Table 7):

*Table 7: Exploratory Template Analysis protocol, based on IPA method (Smith, Flowers & Larkin, 2009)*

<b>Coded Themes from Master Coding List</b>	<b>Line</b>	<b>Speaker</b>	<b>Interview Content</b>	<b>Exploratory Commentary for Coding</b>
Theme from common exploratory notes Steps 4, 7 & 8 below	#	Name	Transcript	Researcher's interpretive comments on transcript; informs thematic coding Step 3 below

*Data display.* For both the interviews and questionnaires, coded and themed categorical data have been presented in table and histogram format (Gratton & Jones, 2003) to clearly convey the demographic characteristics of and relationships between the two samples. Other appropriate forms of data display utilised included matrices ("with defined rows and columns") and concept maps of networks ("series of nodes and links" of themes or data units) as common visual representations of final-stage qualitative data (Miles, Huberman & Salanda, 2013, p. 109). For questionnaire data collected in the second phase of the research, coded themes and patterns were reported in frequency tables with polygons and circle charts used to illustrate responses

on experienced social capital outcomes and views on REAPs' role in the learning sector.

### **Research Process: Approval, Access, and Data Collection**

Having set out the justifications and processes around the design of data collection and analysis, the research process can be described. This includes approval of the research design and ethics, as well as accessing REAPs to carry out the study and collect data.

#### **Ethics approval.**

Considerable efforts were made to highlight potential ethical concerns and their mitigations, which primarily revolved around the researcher's role as a member of the CEO target population, as well as being an elected representative of the National Executive Board of REAPANZ. Issues and their mitigations are presented in Table 8.

*Table 8: Key Ethical Principles Assessment (Based on Massey University's Code of ethical conduct for research, teaching and evaluations involving human participants, 2010)*

<b>Principle</b>	<b>Implications for research</b>	<b>Mitigation(s)</b>
10.1 Risk of harm to participants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reported details on experiences of REAPs from interviews with CEOs and questionnaires from learners have the potential to cause "emotional distress, [or] embarrassment" (p. 7)</li> <li>There could be perceived potential for "emotional distress" on peer CEOs to feel pressured to participate in the research (p. 7)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants were given interview transcripts for editing and checking prior to coding and reporting.</li> <li>Pseudonyms were used for all participants and REAPs to prevent identifying details of a sensitive nature.</li> <li>Information sheets clearly outlined the purpose and use of information to be collected and provided a clear opportunity for refusal to take part in the research.</li> <li>Transparent and collegial discussions throughout 2011 and early 2012 provided supportive and positive interest as a collaborative effort to explore how REAPs work.</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No formal relationship existed to add pressure for REAP CEOs to participate as all 13 organisations operate independently.</li> </ul>
10.3 Risk of harm to groups /communities/ institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same risks carried as with 10.1 but across wider community groups</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pseudonyms were used for all involved participants and REAPs to prevent identifying details of a sensitive nature.</li> <li>Information sheets clearly outlined the purpose and use of information to be collected and provided a clear opportunity for refusal to take part in the research.</li> </ul>
12. Respect for privacy and confidentiality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participants' rights to confidentiality as part of the data collection</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recordings and collected data were kept secure, consent forms stipulated that "it is not possible to give an <b>absolute</b> guarantee of confidentiality where information is being recorded" (p. 10) and that requests for information and research summaries under the Official Information Act may require the release of data to appropriate sources.</li> <li>As with 10.1 mitigations, names and identifying details were changed to maintain confidentiality of all data.</li> </ul>
14. Avoidance of conflict of role/interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As the researcher sits in an elected position on the national body for REAPs, there is an interrelated although not necessarily "dependent relationship" with participating REAPs – potential for influencing participation from REAPs (p. 11) – meaning a conflict of interest existed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organisational structure illustrated the independent structure of REAPs as autonomous bodies whose national body's primary role is one of advocacy and fund holding for REAPs.</li> <li>REAPANZ <i>Constitution</i> and <i>Terms of Reference</i> documents outline sovereignty of REAPs and guiding role of REAPANZ as a collaborative body of elected REAP Managers and Board Chairs.</li> <li>Peer Review model across REAPs shows an already established precedent and culture of peer review and participation – research projects are an expected extension of this collegial approach in the REAP sector.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential for bias and direct relationship influences within Far North REAP as a potential participating REAP given the researcher's position as CEO</li> <li>• Potential for bias in relation to data analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information sheets made it clear that information collected during the research will be widely shared to maintain transparent understandings of the purpose and scope for participants.</li> <li>• Consent forms clearly gave participating CEOs an opportunity to opt for an alternative interviewer given the peer relationship with the researcher.</li> <li>• Far North REAP was excluded as a participating REAP to avoid more direct conflicts of interest.</li> <li>• Clear declarations of researcher's assumptions in introduction and conceptual framework, as well as mitigating techniques in data analysis stages</li> </ul>
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Application was formally made for ethics approval, with only minor amendments around clarified communications timeframes with participants and the format of shared final results required. Final ethics approval was received in May 2013, (Massey University Human Ethics Committee Southern B Application 13/05). The approval letter is attached as Appendix 3.

### **Accessing REAPs.**

Recruitment of participants was undertaken in a face-to-face discussion with CEOs where they were able to ask questions about the research and consider benefits of involvement for REAPs. This was conducted in November 2012, with an electronic invitation requesting an indication of interest sent to all 12 eligible REAPs via their Board Chairpersons (where the researcher was the 13<sup>th</sup> CEO and excluded from the sample). Six REAPs expressed an interest in participating (three from the North Island



and three from the South Island; two small, two medium, and two large in size), so there was no need for further filtering criteria to meet the set sample size with an ideal sample achieved. These expressions of interest were followed up upon receipt with a formal invitation letter to the Board Chairperson of those six REAPs, which included a two-page information sheet (see Appendices 4 and 5) on the scope and purpose of the research, as well as research ethics precautions discussed later in this chapter. All followed through from their initial expression of interest to a formal agreement to participate.

These included: 1.) a written response from the Board Chairperson authorising the REAP to participate at all levels of the research project; 2.) a signed release form from the CEO accepting the terms of participation in a face-to-face interview, committing to distribute stage two questionnaires and information sheets for learners (Appendices 6 and 7) to designated learner populations, as well as the release of anonymous coded data (after a designated withdrawal period) for use in designated publications and further research; and 3.) a copy of the participating REAP's Strategic Plan to help inform questions in the interview protocol for CEOs. Responses were generally received within a month, and all six REAPs had confirmed to participate by the end of July 2013. This allowed the researcher to immediately plan scheduled face-to-face interviews over the course of a full week in August 2013.

### **Carrying out the interview research stage.**

The researcher traveled to the REAP offices of all six participating REAPs for face-to-face interviews in August 2013. Preparation and materials included a field notes template for qualitative interviewing as part of the interview protocol (see Appendix 1), and an audio recording device. Again, the interview protocol was

informed by preliminary document review of the participating REAP's current Strategic Plan. All six interviews were carried out at the scheduled times in the offices of the six participating REAPs. In each case the interviewee was reminded of a number of pre-interview details including: the scope of the project; the intended use of anonymous data in publications and public presentations; the information sheet and consent form (Appendices 5 and 6); and the request to audio record the interviews for transcription (Appendix 8). In each case the interviewees responded positively having been given an opportunity to ask further questions or clarifications prior to moving forward with the interviews. The researcher noted that this exchange of reminders also served as a "breaking the ice" period to relax conversation into the research topic and put the interviewee more at ease prior to engaging the interview protocol. All interviews were completed without issue, with transcription completed within two weeks. This timeframe was necessary as part of the research design in order to allow for broad thematic coding that could inform the development of the learner questionnaires for stage two of the research.

#### **Carrying out the questionnaire research stage.**

Participants for stage two were selected by negotiating with participating CEOs to have administrative personnel in each of their REAPs initiate invitations to stakeholders based on set criteria below. Questionnaire dissemination was planned to be electronic via e-mail through a Survey Monkey web link. No technical issues were reported by participating REAPs or by the researcher. Ultimately, an accessible, purposive sample of 130 community members who had engaged in REAP services in the past five years was accessed against a set target of 90 participants in the original purposive sample.

The sample parameters were set to achieve 15 community members from each participating REAP, comprised of five participants in each of the three core areas of REAP work – early childhood, schools, and adult and community education. A large, evenly distributed sample received invitations to participate. Based on achieving a 10% return rate to fulfill the 90-participant threshold, this meant each participating REAP identifying and inviting 150 possible learners (50 in each of the three core sectors), with the aim that five from each sector would respond per REAP. The nearly 15% return rate achieved fulfilled the minimum viability requirement of 30 learners per sector.

### **Analysing the data.**

As a complete process, through both IPA and template analysis, text was engaged with directly, reviewing common themes and revisiting the data to ensure interpreted themes reflect what participants presented. By incorporating IPA procedures from Smith, Flowers and Larkins (2009), and IPA template analysis from Langdridge (2007), the following procedure was undertaken for data analysis:

1. A master coding list (see Table 8) was set with four category headings for the key elements of a social capital approach: networks, trust, brokerage, and social norms; and a fifth emergent category. No themes are listed under the categories at this stage.
2. Once entered into the Template Analysis (TA) protocol (Table 7 above), transcribed interviews and questionnaire responses were read and re-read to ensure familiarity with text and concepts presented by interviewees.

3. IPA exploratory notes were made, elaborating the researcher's initial response and analytical thoughts around each line of text in the right-hand column of the analysis template.
4. Draft themes were noted on the left-hand column of the template using in vivo and holistic coding techniques to provide a reduced phrase to represent the essence of the text.
5. The master coding list was then populated to reflect the themes coming through the initial transcript readings. Relevant themes were entered under the four social capital categories. Themes that did not explicitly fit the deductive categories were entered under the emergent category.
6. Transcripts were re-read and themes checked for occurrence across all samples to eliminate coding that would not be representative of the majority of responses, as per the Template Analysis methods. The master coding list was adjusted accordingly to reflect the reduced themes.
7. After a final updating of the master coding list, a final thematic code was attached on the left-hand column of the TA protocol to denote interpreted themes from responses.
8. Once themes were noted against the TA protocol, a further inductive reading against exploratory notes was done to highlight non-TA themes.

Utilising IPA exploratory notes in the initial stages ensured phenomenological methods led any identified interpretations from the data. Key words, phrases, and analytical thoughts in the text came first and foremost from respondents. These efforts were then filtered into a broad categorisation of the four social capital elements, still allowing themes to be phrased according to respondent language and interpreted intent. After

application of TA coding to deductively examine emergent social capital themes from responses, a further inductive review of the data was done to search for respondent language that could shape themes outside the deductive framework.

The resulting non-TA themes were included to provide balance in the interpretation of data, to ensure the deductive efforts of TA did not overlook other significant trends in responses. Table 9 illustrates the resulting themes from data coding.

*Table 9: Master coding list of themes from IPA Template Analysis*

<b>Final Template Analysis Thematic Coding List</b>	
<b>Category: Networks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>N: Building personal and institutional relationships - BUILDING</li> <li>N: Increasing social involvement (including isolation) - INCREASING</li> <li>N: Gaining and sharing local knowledge - GAINING</li> <li>N: Accessing connections (including multiple roles) - ACCESSING</li> <li>N: Collaboration and partnership - COLLABORATION</li> </ul>
<b>Category: Trust</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>T: Establishing trust and expectations - ESTABLISHING</li> <li>T: Credibility, reputation, and profile - CREDIBILITY</li> <li>T: Inclusivity and being non-competitive - INCLUSIVITY</li> <li>T: Flexibility and adaptability - FLEXIBILITY</li> <li>T: Responsiveness and meeting needs - RESPONSIVENESS</li> </ul>
<b>Category: Social Norms</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>S: Cultural awareness and appropriateness (including rural) - CULTURAL</li> <li>S: Identity, confidence, and a sense of belonging - IDENTITY</li> <li>S: Values-based action and role modeling - VALUES-BASED</li> <li>S: Changing behaviours, expectations, and viewpoints - CHANGING</li> <li>S: Sanctions against shared norms/values - SANCTIONS</li> </ul>
<b>Category: Brokerage</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>B: Bringing groups together and facilitation - BRINGING</li> <li>B: Leadership and coordination - LEADERSHIP</li> <li>B: Social cohesion and cooperation - SOCIAL</li> <li>B: Gap filling (including complementarity/supplementarity) - GAPS</li> <li>B: Engaging specified groups - ENGAGING</li> </ul>
<b>Category: Emergent Themes from Inductive Review</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>E: Lifelong learning, knowledge, and skills - LIFELONG</li> <li>E: Making a difference (including community development) - DIFFERENCE</li> <li>E: Funding tension and government priorities - FUNDING</li> <li>E: Innovation and finding solutions - INNOVATION</li> </ul>

## Considerations of Research Design and Process

All steps taken to plan, design, and carry out the research tasks of this thesis are laid out in stepwise fashion earlier in this chapter. Add to this the justifications for philosophical, theoretical, and methodological choice, and the reliability and confirmability of this project are reasonably evident, i.e. presented with sufficient clarity for another researcher to undertake similar work and produce similar results (Creswell, 2009). Additional considerations around thesis limitations, changes, and ethics are outlined below.

### **Trustworthiness.**

Trustworthiness and interpretation criticisms of phenomenological and qualitative approaches are acknowledged. To establish confidence around findings, four aspects of trustworthiness are addressed in accordance with Lincoln and Guba (1985): *credibility* as the truthfulness of the data; *transferability* in terms of being able to apply the research in other contexts; *dependability* to demonstrate consistent results when repeated by other researchers; and *confirmability* regarding the degree of neutrality exhibited by the researcher.

Credibility of data is verified through multiple aspects of design. These include: member checks of completed transcripts by interviewees prior to coding; multiple checks of all reported data during coding (at least three); use of large and unedited segments of quotations to capture full meaning and context; as well as wide and even spread of quotations from leaders and learners (drawn from 239 pages of interview transcription and 546 qualitative questionnaire responses outside of closed-questions). Where generalisability is a methodological criticism, it is not sought for this research, given REAPs are a highly specific target group. The uniqueness of these organisations

in their mandate across multiple education sectors, their genesis as a Government feature of the New Zealand education system, and ultimately their evolution into community and social development have already been established as making REAPs specialist. Dependability is addressed through multiple stepwise descriptions of procedures, including template tools and diagrams to demonstrate the researcher's approach.

Confirmability is at least partially acknowledged through the intentional inclusion of the researcher's background and views in the introduction and conceptual framework chapters to clarify motivations and interest. Where the researcher's assumptions held a social capital context, non-social capital language was emphasized in questions to reduce conceptual bias for participants. During analysis and writing, participant language was used to check and recheck interpretations and further separate the researcher's views from data consideration. Again, themes were developed based on participant language where possible with broad, macro-level categories framing the interpretive process. Steps were taken (outlined previously) to intentionally include checks for criticisms of the theoretical framework within the data. Additionally, transcribed interviews were sent to managers to ensure thoughts were captured appropriately for interpretation prior to coding steps being undertaken.

Further to confirmability, interpretation criticism was addressed by employing several methods suggested by Cresswell (2009): multiple checks of transcription to ensure mistakes in recording did not affect resulting data; codes were reviewed comparatively throughout coding to prevent "drift"; where possible codes were cross referenced with outside research; rich data was collected by shaping very open in-depth interview questions; countering findings were deliberately sought out and

presented clearly alongside confirming data in reporting stages; and “prolonged time in the field” is confirmed through the researcher’s established involvement with REAPs at multiple levels (pp. 32-4).

### **Limitations.**

Sample size and lack of generalisability are primary limitations common to a phenomenological study and are recognised in the context of this research (Gray, 2009, p.48-9). While the sample size is small relative to the wider populations available in education, the target of six out of 13 REAP CEOs provided a sample of nearly 50% of the specified population. Comparably there were 130 questionnaires returned out of the 900 that were electronically distributed, providing a 15% return rate. Given the need to access a sample size of 90 to draw conclusions from qualitative data (Onwuegbuzie & Collins, 2007), and that response rates for surveys can be expected as low as 10% (Silverman, 2013), 900 learners were sampled to achieve a viable qualitative result. While a viable return rate for the population sample set for the study, it is acknowledged that a higher return rate could trend results in a different direction dependent on the responses of the other 85% of the population.

A further population limitation is identified in the nature of the adult learner sub-population for the electronically based questionnaire, many of which, as foundation learners, may not have access to a computer/internet or be sufficiently computer savvy to complete a computing-based survey response. This is mitigated somewhat in that several forms of REAP adult programming facilitate e-learning to increase the very skills that would allow for an e-questionnaire, as well as by the fact that not all foundation learners have digital literacy gaps.



Potential researcher bias is identified as a further limitation, with some mitigation present in the proposal's introduction and transparent disclosure of history working with REAPs in various roles. As discussed by Seidman (2006) "[i]t is important that researchers acknowledge that in this stage of the process they are exercising judgment about what is significant in the transcript. In reducing the material interviewers have begun to analyze, interpret, and make meaning of it" (p. 118). The identified social capital themes were not locked in place as the only points of significance from transcribed text. Emergent themes outside the conceptual framework were expected and built into the coding process.

#### **Chapter Four Summary**

The methodology for this project was based in constructionism and social theory, a conceptual framework against which the REAP model was to be explored, using social exchange and interpretations of constructed individual experiences within those exchanges. Enabling methods under this design require tools and techniques that can widely access the lived experiences of a range of participants, and reveal their views in light of the exchanges they have participated in through REAP activity. Thus an interpretive phenomenological methodology informed the semi-structured interviews and questionnaires designed to collect personal experiences from leaders and learners of REAPs. The following chapter will present those findings and pave the way for discussion on how well the chosen philosophy, theory, and tools were able to answer the research question on REAP contributions to rural learning.

## **Chapter 5 Findings:**

### **REAP Leaders' and Learners' Experiences**

The presentation of findings in this chapter details responses from interviews and qualitative aspects of questionnaires. Responses from closed Likert questions in the questionnaires are integrated into the qualitative findings. In terms of organising data, responses fit under five categories, derived from the data analysis process. Categories represent wide yet distinct concepts, able to be explored for recurring themes in the data. Each category yielded four to five themes, which provide a framework for the chapter's structure, and ultimately analysis to address the research questions. Language for themed headings is taken from participant data. As a result, many category responses are closely related or even interconnected. That is noted where strongly apparent, and expanded upon in the discussion chapter.

Final categories were chosen to reflect the four elements of social capital from the conceptual framework, as well as an emergent category from inductive analysis. Thus, data categories are as follows: 1.) networks, 2.) trust, 3.) social norms, 4.) brokerage, and 5.) emergent. Each of the four deductive categories revealed five themes during analysis, while the emergent category revealed four themes - providing a framework of 24 themes (Table 10). To provide a clear chapter structure, each theme is addressed in its own section. The intent is to demonstrate that the thematic coding consistently aligns to the findings. Data excerpts are presented with managers and learners designated as coded respondents (e.g. M1 or L80). This is intended to maintain confidentiality for individual participants. Sections are ordered according to total frequency of thematic occurrence across managers and learners, from most to least frequent. Findings are integrated in a final section before the chapter summary.

Table 10: Coded data categories and themes

<b>Networks Category Themes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Gaining and sharing local knowledge</li> <li>2. Collaboration and partnership</li> <li>3. Accessing connections (including multiple roles)</li> <li>4. Building personal and institutional relationships</li> <li>5. Increasing social involvement (including reduced isolation)</li> </ol>
<b>Trust Category Themes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Credibility, reputation, and profile</li> <li>2. Responsiveness and meeting needs</li> <li>3. Inclusivity and being non-competitive</li> <li>4. Establishing trust and expectations</li> <li>5. Flexibility and adaptability</li> </ol>
<b>Social Norms Category Themes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Values-based action and role modeling</li> <li>2. Cultural awareness and appropriateness (including rural)</li> <li>3. Changing behaviours, expectations, and viewpoints</li> <li>4. Identity, confidence, and sense of belonging</li> <li>5. Sanctions against shared norms/values</li> </ol>
<b>Brokerage Category Themes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Bringing groups together and facilitation</li> <li>2. Engaging specified groups</li> <li>3. Leadership and coordination</li> <li>4. Social cohesion and cooperation</li> <li>5. Gap filling (including complementarity/supplementarity)</li> </ol>
<b>Emergent Category Themes</b>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Lifelong learning, knowledge, and skills</li> <li>2. Making a difference (including community development)</li> <li>3. Funding tension and government priorities</li> <li>4. Innovation and finding solutions</li> </ol>

The four social capital elements discussed in the conceptual framework are here referred to as categories for the purposes of data review.

### **Deductive and Inductive Findings Categories from Analysis**

Analysis of qualitative data identified examples of how REAPs operate for all participants. Each interviewed manager articulated a range of lived experiences that allowed for interpretation, coding, and analysis against the conceptual framework. Additionally, the qualitative responses from learner questionnaires provided a supplementary set of data that fitted within the coding and analysis framework. Examples from both datasets are laid out below, with commentary on their relatedness to the themes of each category. While qualitative learner data provides few thematic

variations within the larger categories, their responses fit within the five broad categories for coding.

Regarding learner questionnaires, relevant coded themes from open questions have been incorporated with findings from managers, while closed responses are presented at the end of each section in a graphed format to illustrate learner viewpoints on each of the five categories as a comparative aspect with managers' views. In line with the five categories, responses provided very strong indications from learners regarding agreement with the four social capital elements, and agreement with common statements from managers on how REAPs operate. Responses were relatively even across the three sectors (see Figure 11). It is noted there is a higher level of respondents from the schools sector at 42%, relative to 28% from the early childhood sector and 30% from the adult sector.

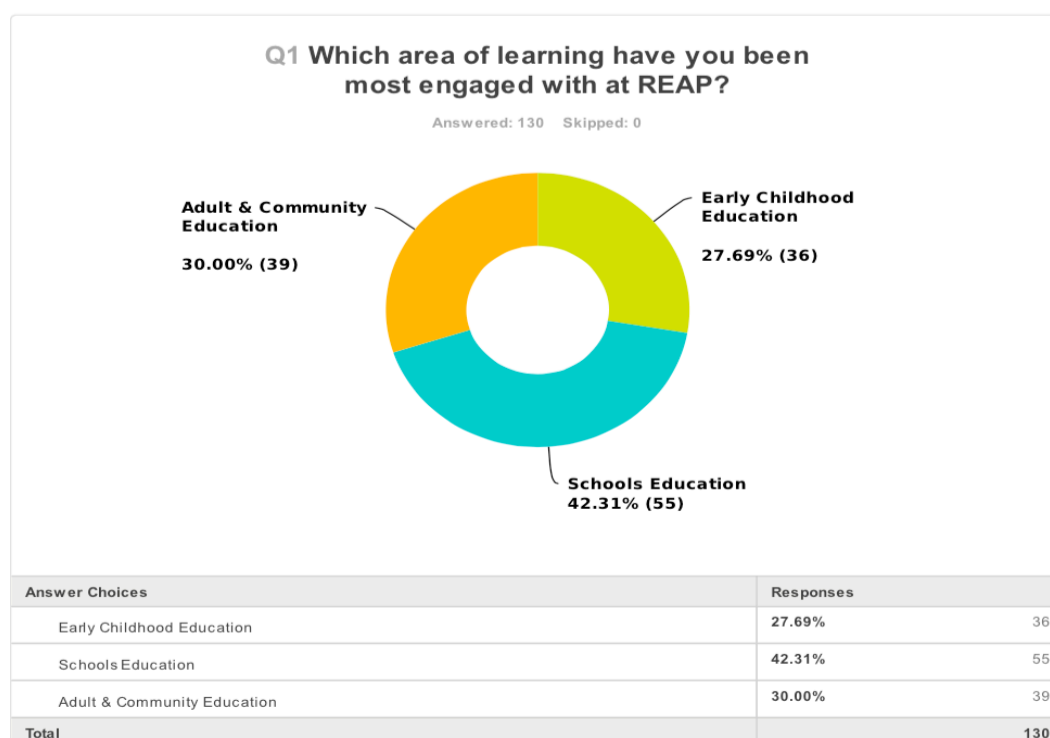


Figure 11<sup>22</sup>: Learner questionnaire respondents by sector

<sup>22</sup> Reported % for Figures 11- 17 reflect returned survey total for that question, not the distribution total.

The range and depth of data allows for multiple salient examples under each theme. In order to keep the findings both manageable in size and credible, a focused approach is applied in each of the sections. This means a singular lengthy quote is used to demonstrate each theme, allowing the reasoning and intent of the participant to come through clearly. This also reduces the potential for researcher bias during analysis. Because of the variation in responses within each theme, all managers are quoted at least once under each of the five categories, with additional short quotations and key phrases used to support the longer qualitative samples. This includes data from learner responses, which provide multiple examples under each theme (with the exception of the funding-related theme). There is strong similarity and agreement between manager and learner responses, with contradictory statements intentionally sought under each thematic analysis.

#### **Networks category.**

All REAP Managers related strongly to the notion of a networks-based approach. Each described multiple unique experiences that illustrated accessing, establishing, maintaining, and broadening existing networks of individuals and groups as part of their work. Five themes relevant to a network-based approach were identified in their responses:

1. Gaining and sharing local knowledge;
2. Collaboration and partnership;
3. Accessing connections (including use of multiple roles); and
4. Building personal and institutional relationships; and
5. Increasing social involvement (including reduced isolation).

**Networks theme: gaining and sharing local knowledge.** All managers were well informed of learner and community need through established local presence and knowledge. This included sharing that information in various contexts and networks to inform learning activities. The importance of local knowledge was illustrated by one participant who attributes her successful appointment to manage a REAP to local knowledge:

when I got the job I was told that it was because of my connect in, connections within the community and my knowledge of the community and my work in the community that was more attractive than the educational background. (M1)

Others echoed this experience, stating the importance of information gained from network involvement and "things we do to learning about our community, which is I guess meeting our community needs. It's essential that we do that because how else do we know our community and how else do we keep those networks" (M2).

Described experiences revealed a crucial focus on local knowledge to a number of related themes, most notably those of building trust, being responsive to meet need, and collaboration. In all relevant themes, the concept of gaining and sharing local knowledge underpinned an informed delivery model whereby staying current with needs and gaps in learning provision allows REAPs to best situate their own resources and response, as articulated by M5:

I would say [REAPs] have a really good understanding of the communities they work in. They spend a lot of time identifying gaps and not just assuming what the gaps are, so we do spend a lot of energy, you know, just with local information, on-the-ground information as well as national and regional data. We do spend a bit of time working out what the gaps are,

yeah, and I think that's the big difference from a lot of other organisations, you know, we don't take the community for granted.

Learner responses gave evidence from their lived experiences, with REAPs described in an information sharing role:

- A key agency in supporting and promoting educational opportunities in our community. (L4)
- REAP is a friendly service that supports, guides, provides information, and ensures all ECE Centres have access to what is out there in our sector. (L40)

Managers gave responses about the role of REAPs to access and share local knowledge with learners, partners, and funders - an espoused REAP strength across interviewees. Learners echo the role of REAPs as place to find information and promote varied learning opportunities, supporting managers' claims from a learner perspective. One learner (L18) reported a lack of communication from REAPs, where they had not received a follow up they expected. That same learner reported the learning as excellent and would reportedly still attend other offered courses.

**Networks theme: collaboration and partnership.** Each manager provided lived examples of working together with learners and other organisations as part of their work. Where accessing connections was described as part of the REAP approach, collaboration and partnership recurred strongly as a necessary way to provide services and support. Through working together with other agencies, REAPs see their informed role in learning responses is enhanced. In the words of M3:

[i]t's about connecting up. It's just knowing who all the agencies are. If they're not represented in your town, who does come to town? Who doesn't come to town and should come to town? It's building those connects with all those other organisations and bringing them in where required.

In terms of how collaboration and partnership operate within the REAP model, M5 talks about what would be lost without REAP in their region:

there'd be a lot less collaboration. I think we play a key role as a, as a, what's the right word? Not a conciliator or anything like that, but collaboration would really slow down and therefore networking would slow down. I think our, you know the forums we run where organisations come together, they play a really key part in our community – sure someone might step into the breach and do that, but just thinking off the top of my head I can't think of an organisation that would do that immediately. So, I think things would become a lot more siloed and people would work individually and of course the outcome of that is that, you know our whanau and our community wouldn't get the best available support and services because everyone would be working individually. So that, you know I do believe that collaboration would really slow down. I think we would have a community where you know opportunities wouldn't be as readily available.

The collaborative practice above is described as an embedded approach, reinforced by all participants, with REAPs "constantly look[ing] for partners, [as they] do very little stuff on [their] own" (M6). Learner views also provided consistent examples of collaboration and partnership in their experiences:

- REAP staff also work collaboratively with our Principals via our Principal's network to give children in our district the best possible opportunity. (L114)
- [How REAPs helped me]: Supported and modeled collaborative practice. (L4)
- [Ways REAPs contribute]: Partnerships i.e. Whanau Ora Day, First Aid Courses. (L50)
- [REAPs contribute by] partnering with groups so that they can find solutions to issues. (L97)



Collaboration was again a strong theme across both groups, with no contrary data points emerging.

**Networks theme: accessing connections (including multiple roles).** All managers described using personal and professional roles and relationships to inform REAP activities. This was emphasised particularly in regards to recruitment of REAP staff, where it was expected that staff make use of a range of roles in their work. Membership of advisory groups, boards, and forums are examples of formal networks and roles accessed by REAP staff. Likewise, community and interest groups, sports clubs, and marae roles were seen as informal networks. All of these were described in relation to accessing relationships within those networks in order to further development and delivery of learning activities. In explaining this expectation within the REAP approach, M3 stated:

you've got to understand that we're mindful that many of our staff whakapapa<sup>23</sup> to here, so we always, in a small community you wear many hats. So how you utilize that multitude of hats that we all wear, because we live in our communities and we also are involved in the, you know, whatever group we're involved with, whether it's the Arts Centre or the local kapa haka<sup>24</sup> or we belong to the Rugby Club or, you know, whatever it happens to be, you know. So how to utilize that local knowledge, those local connects is part of your role.

M5 supports with further examples of how accessing connections operates through connections and information sharing within networks:

so we have a lot of people involved in a lot of local boards. We have, we attend a lot of our local meetings so that's, you know the Greypower

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<sup>23</sup> Whakapapa is a Māori word, meaning family origins or history.

<sup>24</sup> Kapa haka is a traditional Māori form of performing arts.

meetings, the Safer Community Council meetings, we always have representation there. Our REAP runs Strengthening Families, so we have a monthly Strengthening Families network meeting, which often has 30-odd agencies attend, so that's a really good way to, you know, we have a meeting, everyone does a round, we have a cup of tea afterwards and that's the best networking. Yeah, so keeping our, keeping our stakeholders informed about what we're doing, asking them for advice is a great way to maintain relationships, you know, valuing their comments and letting them know that we value their comments.

Learners commented on the accessing of connections by REAPs in specific contexts:

- the personnel are vital to make the relationship work between school and REAP. (L5)

Across both managers and learners, accessing connections is a strongly referenced theme, with specific networks and purposes cited for their value in providing and supporting access to learning opportunities. No contrary views presented in the data around this theme.

***Networks theme: building personal and institutional relationships.*** In each of the six interviews, the concepts of social relationships and network membership were central to lived experiences of the REAP approach. All managers were able to clearly articulate relationship-based connections with individual learners and networks or groups as the core of their delivery model. In the experience of one manager:

that's what makes [our] REAP or any REAP really strong, is our relationships with people. [ [...] [Our tutor] will form a relationship with [the learner], and then when she's done that with three or four people, we will then provide the course, but if we run a course [before building the relationships], they're not going to come because they haven't got the confidence and they've left school because they didn't want a structure, and

so it's, it, the key thing is about relationships and for me that's a really important part of our staffing. (M2)

The above example provides a strong learner-centric focus in the context of providing learning activities, with the relationship with learners underpinning the perceived success or failure by the manager.

Each participant described intentional efforts to build these relationships, including: becoming involved with the community, establishing familiarity with local networks, establishing cultural awareness of the social groups, and building relationships with individual learners around their needs and interests. All of these efforts take place in the context of networks, both formal and informal. In the views of M1:

I think that one of the biggest things we do is become, being involved in networks within the community. [...] The formal networks are intentional [...] but out of those formal networks come the informal – you strike up a conversation with someone. There's somebody that you get on well with, particularly well with and you go and have a coffee with them. And they are the kinds of things that spread.

Another participant expressed these efforts when discussing what underpins the REAP approach:

Well I guess first thing's all our, all about relationships. It's about building those relationships, building that trust, building that rapport with key people in those communities. Who do you identify who's going to make that [activity] work in the local community. It's not [...] REAP coming in and doing stuff to you. It's about [...] REAP working alongside our community, and often it's the key people, so iwi – iwi have to be perceived as key people. [...] You don't go charging in [...] and tell them what you're going to do. You work alongside [...] and build that relationship. So how can we

tautoko<sup>25</sup>, how can we support you if you want our support you know. [...] There's nothing in it for us. We're not competing [...]. We want to help get alongside and if we can value and add something else, here we are. So it's building a relationship, building rapport, building the trust. Being culturally aware of working in those communities. You don't have to be Māori to work for us, but you have to be biculturally aware. You have to be able to see the world through not just your eyes, but through bicultural eyes. You have to see the world through the eyes of the people that you're working through. (M3)

The above excerpt provides clearly focused efforts to provide REAP activities through a relationships-based delivery approach. Learner perspectives also supported this theme when discussing how working with REAP impacted on their lives, as well as what they observed about REAP in the wider community:

- I have gained new skills and been able to learn a new language. I feel more confident and have made new connections in my community and surrounding district. (L78)
- [REAP] helped me make connections with other people. (L29)
- [I] developed relationships with both REAP personnel and the wider early childhood sector. (L69)

Across managers and learners, the building and utilising of networks and relationships is strongly evident. Where managers cite this aspect of a networks-based approach as central to their work, learners confirm network membership and activity in their experiences - both within REAPs and community wide. No views contrary to relationship building presented themselves in either sample group.

***Networks theme: increasing social involvement (including reduced isolation).***

For all managers, the concept of increasing the level of participation in either learning

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<sup>25</sup> Tautoko is a Māori word, meaning support.

or social activities was evident. This manifested in either experiences related to addressing rural isolation for learners or those addressing specific targets around education participation. There was a marked emphasis on the concept of engagement across the whole family, as well as wider whanau<sup>26</sup> and community groups, based on the lifelong learning/cross-sector approach inherent to REAP delivery. This connectedness was seen in terms of being able to impact on whanau learning needs having increased participation for a target group. For example, M1 noted:

we're getting more and more people wanting to be involved in Te Reo and the local, one of the local primary schools opened a bilingual unit two years ago and a lot of those parents are coming to our classes because they don't want to be left behind their children. So it's not the classes themselves the impact would be, but the effect that they have on the community.

This is a view shared by M6, who framed their work with Kohanga Reo<sup>27</sup> in terms of "not just that [they're] working with the children, it's also that the parents and the parents' needs and their aspirations, [they] understand those and [they] also work towards helping with their aspirations".

The emphasis on social effects was also evident in examples from managers where the social engagement was a stronger driver than the learning itself. As shared by M2 about the benefits for a high needs learner:

I think it's coming along regularly twice a week to class with a group of ten others, mostly young adults, males and females, so she's in a normal environment. Before that she was probably just sitting at home, watching TV so she wasn't socially stimulated. She's learning, using the computer, taking part in discussions and debates so becoming mentally stimulated I think and

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<sup>26</sup> Whanau is a Māori word, meaning family.

<sup>27</sup> Kohanga Reo is an immersive Te Reo Māori language early childhood learning environment.

I can't imagine that's happened, probably even at school she was probably put in a special class.

Learners describe REAPs in various ways, often aligning strongly to the notion of increased engagement and opportunity due to isolation:

- [REAP] as allowed our students to re-engage with education and in many cases to re-engage with mainstream education. (L13)
- A provider of relevant education classes in small groups that help support people in more isolated areas keep upskilled in technology and other areas. (L28)
- Provides educational opportunities for our staff and students that we wouldn't normally have because of our isolation. (L38)

Participation and social involvement operate in two forms for REAPs: providing an opportunity for participation in learning opportunities where they are not otherwise available, and providing broad socialisation and social stimulation through activities. Both types are cited by managers as targeted outcomes of REAP work, with learners confirming increased learning and social participation as an enabling function of REAPs. Neither group reported examples of REAPs increasing social isolation; one learner (L1) reported reduced access to professional development; and one learner (L34) reported learning being offered at the main REAP centre rather than the more rural townships.

Overall participants describe the REAP approach as one based strongly in local networks and relationships, both formal and informal. These are readily accessed in order to establish and share local knowledge, as well as inform collaborative efforts to fulfill the REAP mandate alongside partners (often through shared resources). All managers described experiences and a number of learner experiences reveal a

networks-based approach to activity. The table below illustrates the coded response rate for each theme across the managers and learners. These are viewed as a 'barometer' for which network themes are emphasised within responses, rather than a quantitative exercise. This is an important distinction for learner responses, as their coded comments were brief and lacked the depth and context of interviews.

Based on coded recurrence, the theme of 'gaining and sharing local knowledge' was the most often described aspect of the REAP approach to networks - it appeared 105 times across all participants (out of 390 networks-based codes). By comparison, 'increasing social involvement' was described least often, appearing 50 times. While there was wide variance in how often a particular theme occurred across managers and learners (i.e. some themes are stronger than others for particular respondents), responses clearly indicate the presence of networks-based themes in all participants.

*Table 11: Coded 'Networks' reference count from participants*

<b>Networks Themes</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>M5</b>	<b>M6</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>
<i>Gaining and sharing local knowledge</i>	18	8	40	2	10	10	17	105
<i>Collaboration and partnership</i>	12	9	27	6	16	6	6	82
<i>Accessing connections (including multiple roles)</i>	11	11	26	10	11	7	2	78
<i>Building personal and institutional relationships</i>	1	14	28	4	6	7	15	75
<i>Increasing social involvement (including isolation)</i>	2	4	6	3	4	6	25	50
<b>References to network themes</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>127</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>390</b>

Learners were also asked about how they have made use of networks as a result of their work with REAPs. Responses confirmed a moderate increase in networks, with 61% (79 respondents) accessing additional support or services, 48% (61 respondents) becoming involved in a new community activity, and 32% (39 respondents) joining a new group or club (see Figure 12). As these questions related to work with REAPs, this

suggests REAPs increase network usage and membership as a result of their work, and not just in the course of providing services.

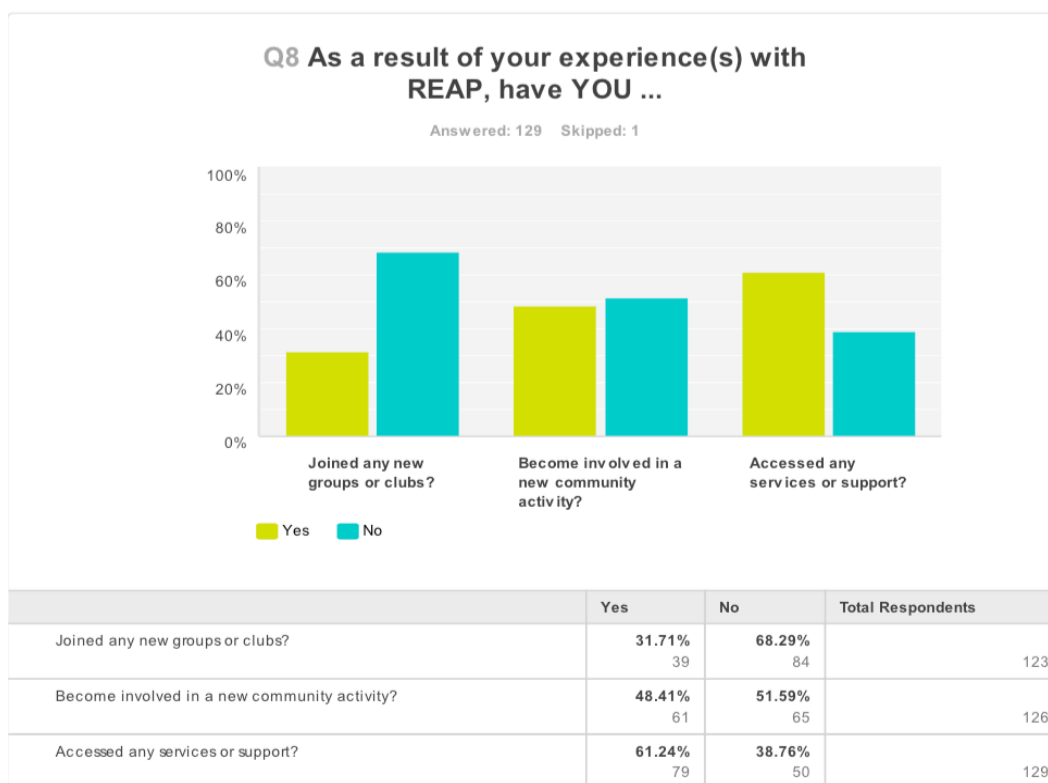


Figure 12: Learner network increase resulting from REAP experiences

### Trust category.

All interviewed participants related strongly to the notion of trust as part of their working efforts within REAP. Descriptions of relationship building, accessing connections, and collaboration were almost always underpinned by the concept of trust. Social expectations of behaviour, mutual obligations between partners, and reciprocity in relationships were evident in all respondent experiences, with common themes identified as:

1. Credibility, reputation, and profile;
2. Responsiveness and meeting needs;
3. Inclusivity and being non-competitive;



4. Establishing trust and expectations; and
5. Flexibility and adaptability.

**Trust theme: credibility, reputation, and profile.** As the strongest theme within the trust category, credibility, reputation, and profile were recognised by all managers as meaningful to how REAPs operate. The way in which REAPs are perceived was described as directly related to how well REAPs are able to connect within various networks. Lived experiences revealed credibility - the accumulated trust based on previous engagements with REAPs - affected how readily REAPs could be accepted by community groups. M2 suggests "it's the staff we have and their ability to know their community, to be well respected within their community" that allows REAPs to take on development work. Again related to connections and relationships, the work of REAPs is described here as dependent on being known in a positive light and having a positive reputation. As M5 states, this notion of reputation related to the integrity of the REAP and how it operates with trustworthiness in a community setting: "and the trust thing too is about, it comes back to those relationships and that open dialogue and sharing information [...]. So that's the trust thing and that really flows through to [our] integrity as well". In this case, the manager describes trust in terms of intentional sharing and direct action. Relatedly, M6 raises the issue that inaction around reputation and profile can equally have a detrimental effect. In one case they describe working on the assumption the community knew who their staff were and the role REAP played as they went about their activities, only to discover that was not the case:

So we began to realise that [...] we needed to be actually have a face. [...] And a name had to be important. [...] [O]nce you have a name, your credibility is everything [...] [s]o we've, we work very hard to maintain our credibility. (M6)

Evidence of REAP credibility was best reflected in learner responses. Learners gave strong qualitative feedback on REAPs and their credibility through positive comments around delivery, staffing, and approach:

- I have always found the personnel involved in running REAP's activities to be very professional dedicated people who go that little bit further to ensure everyone's needs are met. (L3)
- I just wanted to say again how amazing REAP is! (L4)
- They are a hard working professional group of people who are very supportive of rural education needs. (L20)
- The staff are superb to work with and nothing is ever a problem. (L40)
- They give you the choice and everyone is so friendly and helpful. (L46)
- Great personnel who are so easy to approach and talk with. (L56)

While varied in their context, many learners (51 out of 130 or 39%) were motivated from their experiences to provide a positive comment on the reputation of REAPs at the end of the questionnaire. Activity-specific feedback, experiences with named personnel, and the community role of the wider organisation are all examples of how learners fed back on the credibility of REAPs.

***Trust theme: responsiveness and meeting needs.*** Following on from flexibility and adaptability, the end goal of those aspects of the REAP model were almost always couched in terms of responsiveness and meeting needs. The ability to meet needs based on what is known about target groups, learners, and communities was described as vital to REAP work (and is reinforced in the literature around REAP principles and why they were established). M1 described these principles in action, with some crossover with other trust themes in previous sections:

[T]his REAP has always had the philosophy if there a need in the community and no one else was doing it, or capable of doing it, we would pick it up and then hold on to it until such time as there was somebody else capable or better or, and if there was something came along that we were given the opportunity to take on board, but we didn't feel that it met the needs of our organisation or that there was somebody else in the community, we wouldn't compete with another organisation over a contract for example, if we thought they could do it better.

Both the responsive philosophy and the non-competitive attribute come through in these statements. These aspirational views are shared by M6 who explains "REAP's model is about us being responsive, it's about [...] embedding our work in our community, it's about understanding that we have to work both from the bottom up and the top down".

The importance of responsiveness is made tangible in several examples of project work, whereby REAP managers explain the value added of supporting things which are seen as gaps (also part of a later section):

I think [it's important] because it makes us responsive to the community needs. Maybe an example could be it's been identified our community workers [locally], of which there's probably about six, the need to have a parent educator that could come out to our rural areas because rural people are missing out on this parenting educator. And that's quite an innovative thing, request, because there is no one out there like that so we get ourselves involved in a discussion with the community workers and other like-minded organisations [...]." (M4)

In this case, a missing or inadequate service is responded to collaboratively to meet the need identified. Learners strongly support this responsive notion given their feedback on REAPs:

- They are a fantastic organisation, listening to the community's needs, requests and doing their best to fulfill those requests. (L21)
- The instructiveness of the staff during certain events that show they are willing to also do what the learners do. The creativeness of their deliveries that help people learn and not sitting and writing for hours. (L36)
- REAP takes the time to see what people would like and then go about making it happen, i.e.: they listen to the people and deliver on their needs. (L38)
- REAP listens to the people and often ask what is it they want, then try to provide that service. (L39)

One learner (L34) reported that REAP could "put more effort into finding out what needs the community has" - a point related to their reported comment above around poor information sharing.

***Trust theme: inclusivity and being non-competitive.*** Connected to the theme of credibility and profile, managers consistently commented on the notions of inclusivity and being non-competitive. The former is described as various efforts to ensure learner comfort to participate in learning activities, most often articulated around anonymity. This is particular to high-needs learners who may not wish to be identified. Three managers articulated that being able to come to REAP where multiple services were offered was part of this inclusivity, where learners were aware they could approach REAP for assistance without fear of being labeled for their needs. Other times, cultural inclusivity was referenced where second-language and migrant learning was undertaken in a shared, celebratory environment. M1 describes this in terms of a cultural shared dinner to acclimate new learners in the area with each other and

services, where M2 cited adaptive learning support staff who ensured all learners felt supported and comfortable to engage.

The effects of inclusivity were equally described in applied terms. Below is one of several examples that demonstrated how the approach of inclusivity was intentional to ensure engagement and progress with learning:

I think that REAPs are essential to learning because we can break down barriers. [...] They [learners] want to be there because the people who are helping them are non-threatening. [A]gain I go back to they may have had a bad learning experience in their school, we don't treat it like a school. [A]nd the excellence looks like results – NCEA credits, achieved, tick. We celebrate those as well, you know when they achieve some credits. (M4)

The learning is described as able to progress due to the inclusivity and non-threatening nature of the learning environment.

Going beyond the learner, participants also consistently referenced the notion of neutrality in the community, the ease by which REAPs could be approached to deliver and/or collaborate given their trusted ability to enable learning without competing with fellow organisations. One manager, M3, talked explicitly about collaboration and the notion of REAPs being non-competitive within a collaborative model:

[Collaboration] it's a term used overly generously at times and what people fail to understand is that REAPs should not ever be seen as a competitor, and it's not an issue for us. In some of the other REAPs in some of the other areas have, that do have other providers that do compete and you can understand that in some regions there are communities that have people with a number of contracts and that's their bread and butter and that's their kai<sup>28</sup> on the table and they jealously guard them and will not collaborate because they see that sometimes we're trying to take over, so there's issues

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<sup>28</sup> Kai is a Māori word, meaning food.

around that stuff. We constantly put ourselves out that we're here to collaborate. We have no fear of us competing. We're happy to do stuff with your learners at our cost. We don't have an issue with that. Our role is to meet need and make a difference. We don't need necessarily to see it as outputs for us. So it's about being able to work with that stuff.

Multiple managers espouse the non-competitive feature as a point of difference for REAPs that provides great leverage in responding to community need without ulterior motivations or goals. Learner experiences provided support for the inclusive and non-threatening approach of REAPs, focusing more on the inclusive factor as non-competitiveness would likely be more observed by partner organisations. Learners describe REAPs as follows:

- A welcoming activity for me to take my baby. Non-judgmental feeling, really nice. (L32)
- It is a very people friendly organization that is highly respectful of individuals without prejudice of any form. (L49)
- It reaches and helps a wide range of people from many different walks of life. (L50)

Overall managers and learners both emphasise inclusivity as a component of trust present in REAPs. Only managers made explicit commentary on non-competitiveness, with no contrary comments revealed for this theme.

***Trust theme: establishing trust and expectations.*** Examples of lived experiences within REAPs given across all interviews illustrated the reliance on trusted relationships. This was described in terms of fostering openness and buy-in from learners, REAP staff, and partner organisations in order to ensure participation in learning activities. Often participants cited the need to make use of a key local individual or relationship to provide an opening for the trusted relationship to be

grown and allow delivery to take place. M4 revealed this to be the case for a long-term programme in a community where previous collaborations failed. In their words, "we had to build their trust and slowly we started getting more information from them. From that group it built into a new phase and the tutor that we had over there [...] she's the key to it". The trusted relationship allowed further trust building to take place and expand throughout the community group - an enabling effect for learning activity.

All managers demonstrated an awareness of the importance of trust and fulfilling expectations to sustain relationships and community-based learning. At one point M6 described a situation where trust had been lost around a REAP venture with a particular local schools group, and the detrimental impact that had on participation in learning activities:

But at that point when those schools lost heart, they lost heart with everything and we, we would offer to run programmes and they just wouldn't participate, wouldn't do anything. So it's taken us years to, to rebuild that credibility with them. They never stopped participating but they, they did so grudgingly and, we just couldn't talk to them, they just, they went, terrible stuff happened in there. So, made us, really acutely aware that for us to be successful, we can only be successful if others want to work with us. (M6)

The effects of lost trust and credibility connect to both the accessing of relationships within networks, as well as fulfilling expectations that provide a foundation for future activities. M5 talked about working hard at maintaining trust in the sense that often things are promised by providers in a community, but the delivery doesn't come through:

So many times, you know organisations and particularly whanau and individuals in our community will be told something's going to happen [...]

and it doesn't and yet that's a missed opportunity [...] you know we work really hard at if we say we're going to do something, it's going to happen no matter what. (M5)

In some cases, the idea of fulfilling obligations to build trust could be seen in the light of supporting particular groups, which, as per the comment above, were described as having been let down by previous promises of support. One REAP experienced that in "trying to engage children to early childhood learnings, we're trying to reach hard to reach learners. Now that's not an easy thing to do either, but I think again, it's all built on trust" (M4). The notion of fulfilling expectations and maintaining trusted credibility extend into learner views in the sense that they were assured of REAPs reliability (as per learner feedback in the credibility theme). One learner was able to articulate the positive effects of these trusted relationships in action:

- [Regarding REAP services] Furthermore the service provides for both Kaiako<sup>29</sup> and Tamariki<sup>30</sup> and ensures the family of learners have strong reciprocal relationships. (L40)

Managers and learners describe trust as a foundation for functional relationships to enable learning. For both groups, trust is at work in REAP activity, and it is necessary to reach targeted groups with high needs. One learner (L17) reported lessened faith in their REAP due to a cancelled event and staff changes.

***Trust theme: flexibility and adaptability.*** In line with the responsive mandate of REAPs, flexibility and adaptability came through in all interviews as a core characteristic. In some cases, these notions were more implicit in the described examples of delivery, whereby the adapting process was not so much described in

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<sup>29</sup> Kaiako is a Māori word, meaning teacher.

<sup>30</sup> Tamariki is a Māori word, meaning child or children.



detail as the listening and responding aspects. This is reinforced by the experience of M1, who adapts their explanation of how REAPs operate and what they do to the audience:

So people that know don't need it explained, but and I explain it in a whole lot of different ways depending on the audience. For some people I'll say I work for a community education organisation. For some people I'll say I work for a, I will say almost like a community house where we have a whole lot of different activities and services out of our building. And other times I'll go back the old complementary and supplementary education support.

The description here illustrates an organisation and an operating model that adapts. This is supported by M2's discussion of REAP characteristics, at the centre of which is "listening to what people want. That flexibility of being able to meet those needs and I guess probably quite a lot of creativity in there as well".

Overall, REAPs are consistently described as being able to assess need first and respond second, furthering the notions of flexibility and adaptability in practice. This is inclusive of both activity content, as well as supporting partnerships:

We can work with anybody. And it's not that we don't work with early childhood and schools in isolation, how do we do that? You know whanau learning. How can we set up those things? Hapu<sup>31</sup> learning. You know a hapu wants, I think an example is a hapu they came to us and they wanted some IT skills. Everybody who wanted the IT skills had different need. They had, they didn't have a clue how to do that, they wanted to write to their kids overseas, they wanted to e-mail, they wanted to do whatever. Whole, but it's about here's, okay let's get a tutor who's flexible enough to go and spend a number of weeks with them and build those base skills that they want. And then as a result of that, okay, where to next girls? What do you want next? What's your, where's your learning journey? Working in the

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<sup>31</sup> Hapu is a Māori word, meaning wider or extended family.

adult sector, working on people's learning journeys, because people have never, don't have plans. They have some vague notion, never really thought about it. But it's unpacking that with them, having those, having that discussion, trying to work out where they want to be and looking at the steps they would need to go through. (M3)

This experience shows how the concept of flexibility applies holistically, not just to the delivery setting, content, and style, but also to the conversations with learners and the adjustable goals that are 'unpacked' throughout what managers describe as the learning journey. Managers are very clear that REAPs "don't come in with a big formal 'you must do it this way, you must do it that way' – [they] adapt to the learner's environment to how they might be reacting to [the REAP] going in there" (M4). That same manager shared how a tutor supporting a young mum's group with an early childhood crèche helped develop individual learning plans that allowed enrollment in Correspondence School while these mums became acclimated to family life and responsibilities. There was no pre-planning in these efforts, rather trusted relationships with an adaptable resource wrapped around the learners to progress their goals. By most managers' accounts there is an increasing struggle to work this way given funding constrictions of today (discussed in more detail under the emergent category), "[b]ut REAPs have a lot of room to move and meet needs as well as the Government's priorities, and also meet some local needs and [...] that's a real strength" (M5).

While few learners commented explicitly on the flexibility of REAP's efforts, some did articulate the approach and saw it as providing a positive contribution to the community:

- REAP offers a variety of options from hui, workshops, skills inside and outdoors, with something new each day. (L39)

- REAP is a vital agency in the local community in which they serve. REAP is flexible in its approach to fill the gaps and meet the learning needs within their communities. (L64)

Flexibility and adaptability were referenced by both groups. While examples were not as numerous as other trust-related themes, examples were highly detailed and strongly relevant.

Overall participants describe the REAP approach as one heavily contingent on trust and fulfilling expectations. The credibility and profile of a REAP based on previous engagement in the community is described as vital to the continued effectiveness of these organisations to fulfill their mandate, often alongside partners (as discussed within the networks category). All described experiences across managers and a number of learner experiences reveal a trust-based approach to activity. The table below illustrates the coded response rate for each theme across the managers and learners, more for comparative than analytical purposes.

Based on coded recurrence, the theme of 'credibility, reputation, and profile' was the most often described aspect of the REAP approach to networks - it appeared 105 times across all participants (out of 301 trust-based codes). By comparison, 'flexibility and adaptability' was described least often, appearing 25 times. While again there was wide variance in how often a particular theme occurred across managers and learners, responses clearly indicate the presence of trust-based themes in both groups of participants.

Table 12: Coded 'Trust' reference count from participants

<b>Trust Themes</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>M5</b>	<b>M6</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>
<i>Credibility, reputation, and profile</i>	15	7	17	12	14	10	30	105
<i>Responsiveness and meeting needs</i>	8	6	18	9	9	16	10	76
<i>Inclusivity and being non-competitive</i>	4	10	19	5	5	7	4	54
<i>Establishing trust and expectations</i>	6	8	11	4	2	2	10	43
<i>Flexibility and adaptability</i>	3	3	4	10	3	1	1	25
<b>References to trust themes</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>303</b>

To further consider the aspect of trust, learners were also asked broadly about how well they felt REAPs operated (see Figure 13). Responses confirmed REAPs as highly trusted organisations, with: 93% (120 respondents) rating REAPs as consistent and reliable (only 3 disagreed or strongly disagreed); 92% (118 respondents) rating REAP support services as quality (only 1 strongly disagreed); and 89% (113 respondents) responding that they would return for further services (only 2 disagree or strongly disagree). It is possible on the last point that some of the neutral response would not expect to return as their support may have been one-off professional development or targeted support. The one learner who strongly disagreed with the quality of REAPs services also provided qualitative feedback on a poor, recent experience with the organising of an event. This provides context to that outlier response given their dissatisfaction with the event outcome.

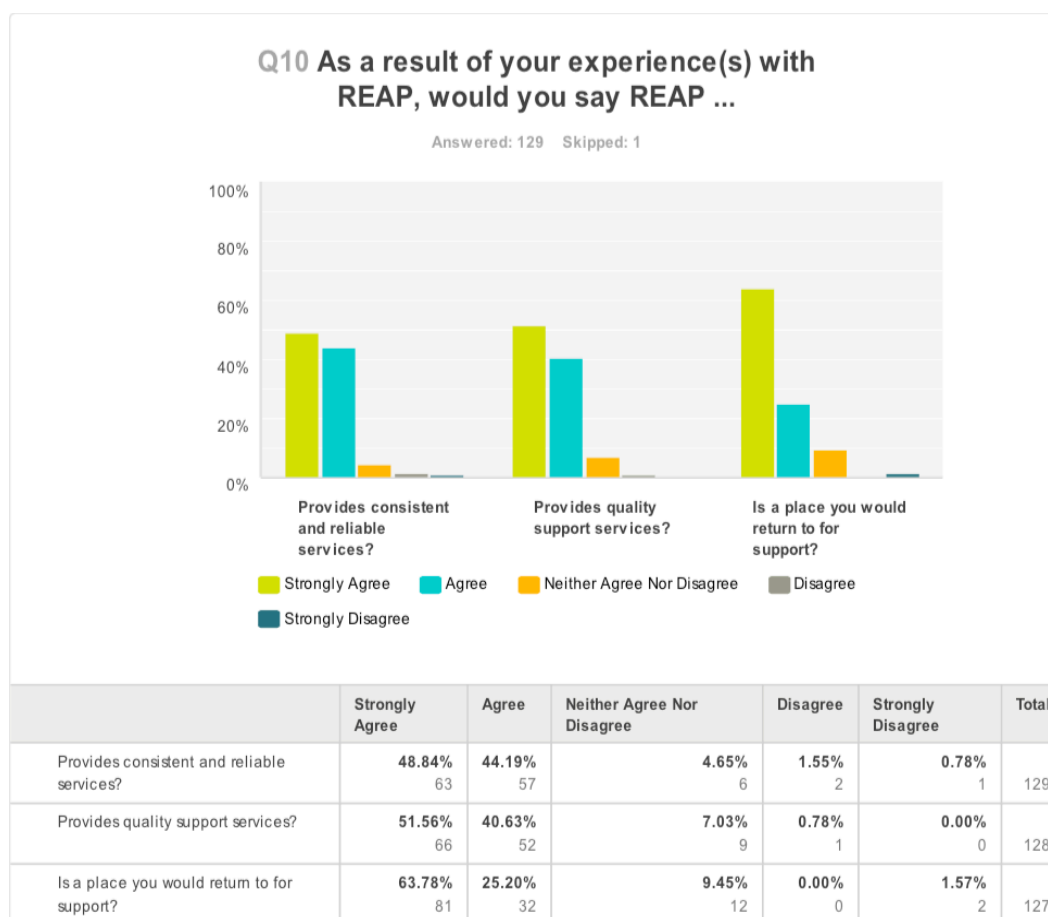


Figure 13: Learner rating of REAP service quality

### Social norms category.

For all interviewed participants, social norms and values featured strongly in REAP activity. In particular, managers described the notions of social and behavioural change as goals of learning. Responses suggest these goals are best achieved when based on aligning REAP activities to the context and culture of the learners and communities they were responding to in their work. Experiences revealed clear associations between the change and values-based motivations of REAPs, and the approach they took within trusted relationships and networks to facilitate those changes. This approach included a heightened awareness of various learner cultures, their personal identities, and how well groups fit expected norms. Themes in this category were:

1. Values-based action and role modeling;
2. Cultural awareness and appropriateness (including rural);
3. Changing behaviours, expectations, and viewpoints;
4. Identity, confidence, and sense of belonging; and
5. Sanctions against shared norms and values.

***Social norms theme: values-based action and role modeling.*** All managers revealed values-based motivation in the planning and delivery of REAP activity, with learners evidencing values-based changes in their experiences. Values-based decision making and role modeling of improved or ascribed positive behaviours was a consistent hallmark of descriptions from both participant groups. Some managers commented on these in terms of educational practice, with the view "a lot of education is mentoring or modeling [...] within your community" (M2). This was particularly emphasised around parenting education and life/goal planning topics within REAP delivery. Professionalism and values-based workplace commitment also featured heavily as an intentional effort by REAPs to demonstrate values in action and role model behaviours for community groups and partner organisations (related to the themes of credibility and non-competitiveness under the category of trust as well).

Others described how "value statements help us, when we are weighing stuff up" around providing balanced educational experiences across the lifespan (M6). Described as having a link to a role modeling approach to community programming, maintaining core values and principles were described as essential to fulfilling the REAP model. All managers commented on the positive team environment or ability of staff to see beyond the monetary value of their work. In all but one case, managers were explicit in discussing how a values-based approach to the work was a defining

feature of REAPs (in line with the non-profit, community-based environment). Furthermore, these statements each alluded at some point to the recruitment and retention of appropriate staff within REAPs. The 'fit' within the REAP organisation was mentioned in most interviews as a key factor to 'get right' when looking for the right people to undertake the work. More is said about this in the last social norms section around sanctions.

The importance of valuing the work and role modeling for learners was described by M1 as implicit in the REAP approach - to the extent that the intent of change is more important than the specific activity or topic being learned:

But I think it's about what they represent, not so much the actual activity or event, but the fact that the *Music in Movement* [course] allows young mums who might be isolated at home, to get together and talk to other mums and they see some role modeling of how they could play with their kids and play a song and dance around the house and not feel stupid. So it's all those, it's not the actual activities, but the consequences of those activities within the community.

The shared environment where learners can experience their situation as relatable to others, helps to overcome aspects of disengagement and isolation (part of the networks-based approach already discussed). The value is described here in terms of opening the door for personal change resulting from role modeling and values-based activity. Learners support this view in their feedback on the result of their engagements with REAP:

- My son now sees learning doesn't just happen at school. (L78)
- Supported and modelled collaborative practice. (L20)
- Got my daughter interested in learning again. (L115)

Much like the responses around identity and confidence, there is rich evidence from both managers and learners that REAPs take values-based action and role modelling as part of their work. Where managers comment on the subversive nature of educational engagement leading to role model behaviours, learners confirm these changes through their own experiences and positive comments of REAPs.

***Social norms theme: cultural awareness and appropriateness (including rural).***

Responses within the social norms category heavily incorporated aspects of cultural standpoints of learners and communities. REAP work was described as both becoming aware of and tailoring appropriate responses to the cultural context of the group of learners being supported. In some cases, this specifically referred to indigenous culture, around Te Reo and tikanga Māori, where in others it reflected other cultural identifiers, such as youth culture or rural culture. In some cases, these efforts were implicit, for example where M5 described how "we've really shifted focus and we're working with a lot more young people and really increasing our reach into the Māori community and so when we're working, you know with different cultures [...], we work closely with the Iwi". They went on to say they were mindful of the two Iwi in the area, and so REAP activity was inclusive of input from both to maintain positive relationships.

In a practical sense, this aspect of the REAP approach is described for its potential to effect larger cultural-based change within the whole community. M1 described an experience where culturally based learning resulted in increased practices of tikanga Māori throughout their town:

We now are doing a lot of Te Reo classes [...], we have too many teachers in early childhood involved in them, but that's fine because that's professional



development. Now the waiata<sup>32</sup> group is being asked to sing at community events, to open when there's a building opening, they're being asked to do a blessing and provide the cultural awareness and cultural significance, which five years ago in [our community] nobody would have even bothered having a blessing when a community facility was being opened. Nobody would think about having a powhiri<sup>33</sup>, but these things are happening now and I put that down to the encouragement that we have given through our classes.

In this example, a culturally relevant approach is described in terms of the impact from providing an appropriately contextual learning activity. Members of the community were able to experience and access the new skills at play locally, and make requests for changes in cultural practice based on those available skills.

The above example illustrates a responsive model where requested cultural learning expands into other spheres of community activity. It also relies on aspect of appropriateness, or fit for the group. An example from another manager demonstrates that without the consideration of appropriateness, a culturally contextualised learning activity may do more harm than good:

We, working with our Pacific community and they'd come to us to ask us whether we would help them organise an English programme. We cast around and decided that the best way of doing it was to, by the people for the people, type of ideas, so we went out and found a talented, young Pacific woman who could run the programme for us. And after the first session was run the people who had come to us in the first place came back to us and said "we don't want the tutor to come back", and we eventually got to the bottom of the problem, they said, "we want a Māori or a Palangi, because we feel ashamed. We felt shame because we are older than, than our tutor and we feel ashamed that we, we should know, but we don't and a

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<sup>32</sup> Waiata is a Māori word, meaning song.

<sup>33</sup> Powhiri is a Māori word, meaning a formal ceremonial greeting.

young person does know". So for us that was a really interesting experience for understanding the learners from the learner perspective. (M6)

This experience shows how assumptions of what fits within culturally situated learning, e.g. facilitating cultural topics with a pre-determined tutor with a specific cultural fit, may not be the best response given the appropriateness of other social factors in the learner group. In this case, the shame of not knowing what is seen to be essential knowledge for an older Pasifika person worked against the learning outcome.

Learners shared positive outcomes gained from their appropriate cultural learning experience:

- I did a NZSL (New Zealand Sign Language) course, which contributed greatly to people engaging with the Deaf community. (L23)
- Enhanced skills, improved knowledge of local issues, improved understanding of Māori community. (L68)
- Furthered my thinking and understanding of culture and historical impact on today. (L89)
- It has made me look differently at my native language. (L106)

Comments like this one demonstrate how learners are aware of social and cultural growth alongside the skills they gain. As reported outcomes, both local issues knowledge and understanding of the Māori community may allow learners to become more involved socially. Where these social outcomes are culturally aligned, it supports REAP activities enhancing both cultural awareness and appropriateness. There were no negative or contrary views reported on REAPs' work in a cultural context.

***Social norms theme: changing behaviours, expectations, and viewpoints.***

Responses clearly showed a strong aim and objective to ensure changes not just in skill, but also (and by some accounts more importantly) social competencies and

behaviours. Managers saw REAP activities as ways to make a difference with learners (particularly those who had unsuccessful experiences with learning previously). Managers described a desire to "change their [learners'] thinking to help them through that process [of change]" (M4) and ensuring activities result in "really positive outcomes for learners" that can be measured (M6). Using established relationships to support at-risk learners in abusive life patterns, M2 explained that education "will stop that cycle of abuse"; that if the tutor "sits in the home with the parents or with the parents and the children and looks at how they can change some of those behaviours".

Other examples demonstrated less intensive approach to behavioural change and focused more on exposure to widened peer groups and reinforcing shared experiences to put learners at ease with their own situation. The impact is seen in terms of shift in viewpoint rather than tangible or direct skill development, as described below:

I think some of the things like we run a little support group for parents of teenagers and it's an opportunity for parents to get together and talk about their teenagers' behaviour and they suddenly realise that they're not alone and that it's not unusual that their 14-year-old daughter that won't speak to them and only speaks in grunts is actually fairly typical. And so they're quite, they are life changes because when the next 14-year-old comes along, Mum's not tearing her hair out and screaming and yelling because she knows that it's just a phase that they're going to go through. So, and I mean they may seem little things, but they do impact greatly on families and some of the youth programmes that we run too are, I believe, quite impressive.  
(M1)

These examples illustrate a strong social orientation to the learning activities, with social aspects emphasised as part of a change process. As described by M6, "I think

the REAP model's about, I think the REAP model is about working with people. Not doing, not doing stuff to people. I think the REAP model is about. It's about a process of change". The result is demonstrated in learner responses to how REAP has impacted on them:

- They haven't just supported me ... they have changed my life! (L4)
- It has made me a better parent and also provider of education to our playgroup parents. (L62)
- It has given me the courage and opportunity to progress my learning as an adult to get a better career. (L100)

Expanding on the theme of role modeling, explicitly changing attitudes and behaviours is discussed by managers as a clear goal of REAPs, while the examples from learners above confirm this goal in action. Each of the learner examples demonstrates self-reflective behaviour representative of shifting point of view or future behaviour - a strongly positive finding for this theme.

***Social norms theme: identity, confidence, and sense of belonging.*** Another consistent experience in the REAP approach within the context of social norms, was that of building identity and developing personal confidence in learners through community based learning. This was made explicit in some cases by the described sense of belonging enhanced in learners who participated in REAP activities. In one case, M1 described the benefits of working with alternative education youth to get them coordinating events, where the REAP saw as a result that involved youth "are becoming proud of who they are and the role they have in the community and they're the, they're our future". This is echoed by M4 who saw students they support through school-based transitions "feel like they now have a sense of belonging".

The efforts that underlie an approach to build confidence and identity is described in terms of the support and activity tailored to learners in the responsive, flexible REAP model:

Because we're really strong about building those base learning blocks, particularly for adult learners who've fallen through the cracks. If you haven't got them, you can't start, it's a sense of hopelessness. It's a sense of alienation. How can you move, you can't possibly move forward, it's just hopeless. You can't see where to start, literacy and numeracy is crap, you don't know what to do. How do you build those blocks? And you know there are other people in the school system recently who have left school and they've got a few Unit Standards<sup>34</sup> here and there – they don't mean a tin of fish. Because they're all in isolation and nobody used their brains at the school or whatever and tried to see a connect and I have to say to be fair schools are getting much better at that these days. But there wasn't the connect so they have disparate units all over the place. (M3)

In this example, M3 saw great significance in ensuring there was relatedness between the learning achieved and the learner's personal goals or aspirations. The specific activity of planning Unit Standards achievement based around learning needs such as literacy gave the context to a larger, more aspirational aspect of the learning process. By their account, REAPs "work with others [...] to give them the opportunities to, to grow their lives in new ways" (M6). In more than a few cases, REAP learners were able to articulate this value and change in confidence:

- REAP to me, has been the stepping stone to get me out of a huge rut. Before I came in contact with reap I had [n]o ambitions or direction in my life. I was a failure at school and thought my life was going nowhere. I was approached by reap at my Playgroup, a lovely lady [...] informed me about there plans to help young mums get their NCEA. And my life has

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<sup>34</sup> Unit Standards are nationally recognised learning units that contribute to formal qualifications.

been upwards since then. I started studying and have never look backed. In the time I have been studying with help with reap I have completed my NCEA Level 1, nearly Level 2 and am starting on level 3 work. I have also set goals and they have done so much to help me find direction and decide what to do with my life. I am so grateful for this opportunity. I know I couldn't have done this without there support. (L14)

- They went above and beyond helping me find direction and talk to people who could help me shed some light on my future. They have given me confidence to do something to better myself, for me and my kids. (L13)

Both of these examples from learners strongly support the aspirational goals of REAP work described by managers. Evidence suggests clear alignment between the intent to build confidence and identity through learning, and the self reported outcome of these things from learners' perspectives.

***Social norms theme: sanctions against shared norms and values.*** The final theme within social norms, core to a social capital framework, is that of sanctions - negative behaviours applied to members of a group who do not share the majority's values or expectations. While this theme was present throughout responses, it was not a strong thematic trend in the data. Managers tended to describe sanctioned activity in terms of organisational cultural and fit within REAPs, as opposed to experiencing sanctions in a community-based context. Learners demonstrated sanctions in terms of judging REAPs poorly based on an activity that did not go well. In both groups, the concept of sanctions is illustrated as a negative or pitfall for those who do not fit a set of in-group criteria or who default on social expectations (refer to critics and pitfalls section of the conceptual framework chapter).

In line with the strong values-based themes found previously, managers situated sanctions around finding staff who could fulfill a values approach in line with how the REAP defined it. In the words of M3:

being able to get to the right people is huge. And some of us in small communities, we are surprised that the expertise and skills around us and so that you know, it's that, to have the skills or the potential to grow those skills is one aspect of the role, the other huge aspect of the role is the fit. And you ain't got the fit, you ain't going to be here, because no matter how good your skills are, if you can't fit, if you don't get it ... I remember talking to a staff member way back when she, she couldn't understand how, it was just all too loose for her. She couldn't understand how you could operate like that. For us, we got it. We had to be flexible, responsive.

In this case, sanctions are applied pre-emptively against potential REAP workers who may not be able to situate themselves inside the organisation's approach to community learning. M4 shared a similar view, stating "if they don't want to be here and they don't want to go out and deliver then go and work somewhere else [...] we [have] got long serving staff members, you know. Hopefully it's because they enjoy what they do". In another context, M6 described a negative experience within REAPs where "some REAPs become quite entrepreneurial and at, to the extent that they were going out and looking for contracts even if they didn't fit within a REAP model", which was seen by other REAPs to be about self interest rather than community need - an approach M6 explained to be "very un-REAP-like".

In another example, one manager was able to share an example where sanctions were considered by the REAP in a community context. Related to cultural appropriateness, their REAP was facilitating a course around the pronunciation of Māori place names. M5 shared that "we want to do that really carefully because if we

chose the wrong person to tutor that course, we would get a backlash from a certain sector of our community". Their experience reveals an awareness of the potential for community-driven sanctions against the REAP if the cultural content is not delivered well - an example of how social pressures guide the decision making and responsive processes of that REAP. Learners did share feedback in some instances where poor experiences with REAPs shaped what could be seen as sanctioned responses to survey questions:

- I understand REAP is going through changes at the moment and these have affected my answers as we haven't had the access to professional development that we have in the past. (L1)
- REAP could put more effort into finding out what needs the community has in regards to courses and communicate and promote this through online media as a lot of people (like ourselves) don't get the daily newspaper. (L34)

These responses illustrate how learners can apply sanctions to REAPs for not fulfilling expectations, much as managers implied sanctioning prospective employees for not fitting the REAP model.

Overall participants describe the REAP approach as one strongly geared towards values-based action and role modeling for learners and communities. The need for REAP workers and activities to reflect shared values and social norms in decision making, as well as the need to consider learner values is described as pivotal for REAPs to be able to provide appropriate learning activities, with a focus on social and behavioural change as the end goal. Many managers' and some learners' experiences reveal a social norms and values-based approach to activity. The table below illustrates the coded response rate for each theme across the managers and learners.



Based on coded recurrence, the theme of 'values-based action and role modeling' was the most often described aspect of the REAP approach to social norms - it appeared 79 times across all participants (out of 271 social norms-based codes). By comparison, 'sanctions against norms/values' was described least often, appearing 18 times. Responses indicate the presence of social norms-based themes in all participants, though for some (e.g. Manager 5) the presence was weaker across all themes.

*Table 13: Coded 'Social Norms' reference count from participants*

<b>Social Norms Themes</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>M5</b>	<b>M6</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>
<i>Values-based action and role modeling</i>	13	10	19	16	6	10	5	79
<i>Cultural awareness and appropriateness</i>	6	3	31	7	4	4	17	72
<i>Changing behaviours, expectations, and viewpoints</i>	10	12	6	2	1	7	19	57
<i>Identity, confidence, and a sense of belonging</i>	1	10	14	2	1	5	14	47
<i>Sanctions against shared norms/values</i>	2	1	3	3	2	3	4	18
<b>References to norms themes</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>122</b>

Focusing on changed behaviours, attitudes, and perspectives, learners were asked about their relative changes resulting from REAP experiences (see Figure 14). Responses confirmed REAPs are influencers of behaviour and suggest they can act as the catalyst for change suggested by managers. Across respondents: 86% (107 respondents) reported applying their REAP-facilitated learning in a day-to-day context; 75% (94 respondents) reported changing their outlook or viewpoint on something as a result of their REAP experience; and 72% (91 respondents) reported a change in behaviour related to their new learning.

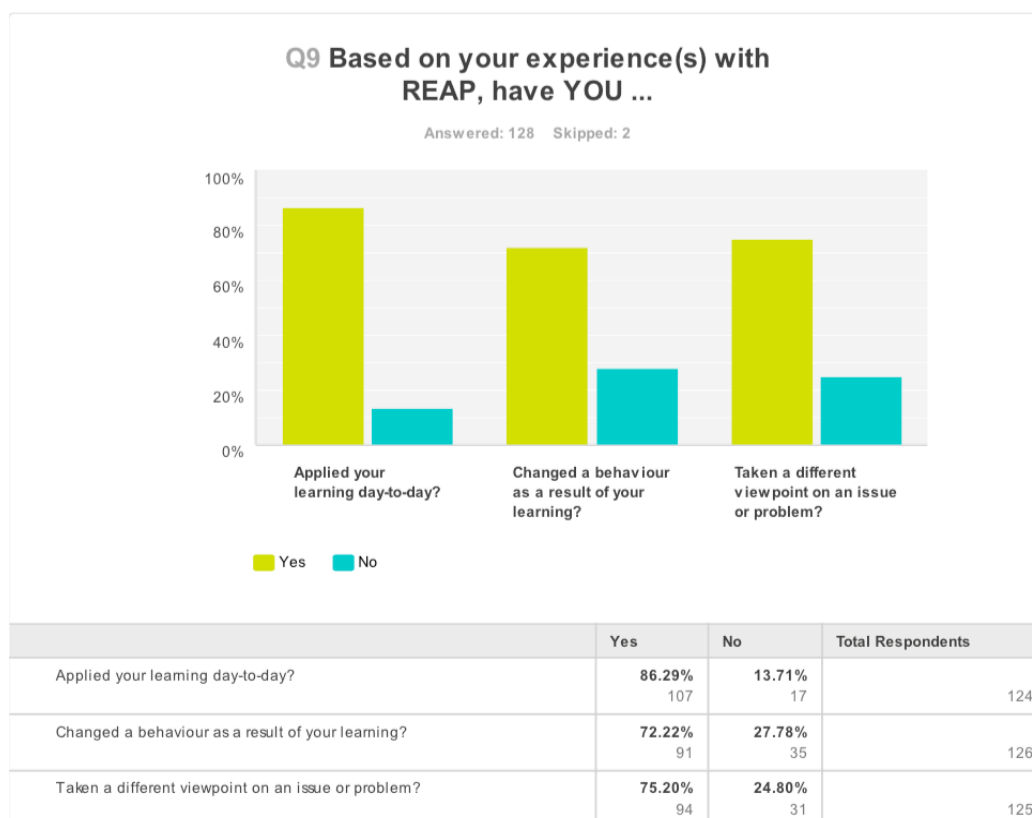


Figure 14: Learner reported changes in viewpoint and behaviour

### Brokerage category.

Respondents consistently described brokerage-based experiences as central to their view of the REAP model and activity. The ability to work collaboratively across sector and age groups with a shared purpose was seen as a great asset and unique feature of REAPs in practice. These efforts were illustrated by the regularity with which REAPs were approached to drive and lead collective efforts around learning and community development (with relatedness to themes of credibility and collaboration in previous sections). The responsive nature of REAPs to deliver learning activities that were not pre-determined, and with social and values-based goals in mind, revealed brokerage to be operating within REAPs in the following ways:

1. Bringing groups together and facilitation;

2. Engaging specified groups;
3. Leadership and coordination;
4. Social cohesion and cooperation; and
5. Gap filling (including complementarity/supplementarity).

**Brokerage theme: bringing groups together and facilitation.** In each interview, bringing groups together and facilitating activities were seen as a key function of REAPs. These were described as particularly useful to address shared needs, where bringing together multiple collaborators for a shared response and shared resources was necessary. M1 describes this as part of the established REAP approach over the years:

I think REAPs have always been really good working with other organisations and seeing sometimes that the solution, that they don't have the solution. [B]ut they can broker a solution with another organisation or even sometimes it's simply just making another organisation aware or another service aware of what is needed [...]. [S]o it's that whole just community mindedness and knowing what's out there. I think REAPs are extremely well informed about their own communities. I think that's all to do with the staff.

This example illustrates the ways in which local knowledge and networks can then be mobilised to provide solutions and learning opportunities. This is a feature supported by another manager's views on the facilitated aspect of the REAP approach: "any REAP really, facilitates educational opportunities and alongside that goes community development. So, it's a place that gives people an opportunity to develop and to grow and just to experience things" (M2).

The notion of facilitating came through strongly with all managers, focusing on the role of REAPs to engage from a broad, responsive standpoint in a way that enables

participation in the learning activity or group. Several diverse examples were given across respondents that illustrate the nature and scope of these facilitated opportunities, including youth groups, agency forums, community-led project teams, and individualised planning around prior learning experiences and future aspirations. Managers demonstrated an awareness of this range in potential areas of work at a community level, with a focus on the need to be flexible in a facilitated approach:

Almost deliberately we've employed great facilitators. We work really hard to get people to be great facilitators because we believe that the group of people [we're working with] has huge strength. [W]e strongly believe that our role is to enable people rather than to [decide for them]. [W]e don't have any predetermination about [the shape of the work]. (M6)

This manager went on to talk about the importance of being able to facilitate, in the sense that it creates opportunities for engagement and contribution for learners and community members not already present.

So we've worked really hard to say, I think you can only give voice by, by doing two things. One is by creating structures. The structures for those people who, whose voices haven't usually been heard and to sometimes create ways for people who, so you often find in a group you might have all the organisations present who could possibly be present but even so, there are some people who will never speak up during those meetings. They don't speak. It's not cos they haven't got something to say, it's often, this whole range of reasons why they don't, so how do you, how do you ensure that their voices and their views get built into what we do. So, I think with something that we've been really good at, I've got a range of staff who are expert facilitators. (M6)

In this way, brokerage is experienced as an enabling function for REAPs to provide learning opportunities and engagement, particularly with those who require support to

participate socially. Learners were able to experience and articulate this aspect of brokerage in their responses, accounting for what they have observed REAPs achieve:

- [REAP contributes by] subsidising a gifted and talented programme, which enables our more talented students to learn and mix with like-minded students. (L16)
- Has put me in contact with other like minded people with similar interests and created a supportive environment for learning. (L23)
- [REAP] brings people in the community together through learning. (L83)
- [REAP] is an organisation that has always offered diverse education across the age groups. (L98)
- Bringing together people of similar interests. (L109)

These experiences illustrate that from the learner viewpoint, REAPs do not simply put people together in the same room. REAPs' facilitated activities enable learners to experience shared environments where they are actively engaging with people of similar interests around skills and personal development. There were no comments on divisive or isolating efforts by REAPs reported.

**Brokerage theme: engaging specified groups.** Another clear theme for how REAPs deliver through a brokered approach was described in terms of targeting specific learners, groups, and communities. Engaging specified groups was described as enabling developmental and responsive delivery that meets particular needs around learning and social development. In some cases, examples were strongly tied to funding related factors (taken up in more depth in the emergent section of this chapter). Regardless of the driver, REAPs have developed an explicit ability to work with specified groups around learning and development. M1 supports this with the view that "we've just developed a niche for working with young people and [...] anything in that area now get, like directed towards us and that's good". Again this reinforces the

importance for credibility and collaboration in practice, whereby referrals for support work for the target group are entrusted to the REAP.

In other examples, REAP managers clarified that it was through "community networks and connections that [they] find the hard to reach people" (M2). Given the lifelong learning mandate and presence across all sectors, managers had many experiences of working with specific learner groups. M3 discussed a current collaboration to engage all early childhood centres in their area to drive a collective approach to engage families in early years learning. Likewise, M4 shared an example of "making a difference" specifically for young mums by utilising local networks and established profiles to support school leavers; "that led to some conversation that [the REAP] could actually provide them with an opportunity to work towards NCEA credits". The list of targeted groups throughout managers' experiences is extensive, with infants and toddlers, educators across the three education sectors, family members (particularly young parents and grandparents), and staff of partner organisations among the most prominent.

Several identifiable target groups were referenced in questionnaire responses, demonstrating specific groups within REAP activity:

- Having REAP's involvement in these areas is a huge benefit in this rural district and in particular many of our attendees are quite elderly, though have very alert minds, and enjoy & appreciate the opportunity to keep brain function going strongly!! (L31)
- [REAPs] help at risk students improve literacy and marginalised students to obtain help with driving theory testing (Learners Licence). (L53)
- Helping parents/caregivers with strategies to help with their children. (L69)

These responses (like those of young mums or school teachers in previous sections), reflect learner groups with specific demographic features and learning needs. REAP activities are explicitly named to benefit these specified learning groups, as other themes have highlighted specific groups previously. No contrary views were raised, and the notion of engaging wide ranging specified groups can be reinforced by the inclusive examples provided under the trust category.

**Brokerage theme: leadership and coordination.** In terms of the effects of prolonged brokering and connectivity in networks, the REAP approach was strongly experienced as one that provides leadership and coordination of activities across communities. M4 describes their REAP in this light: "we have good relationships with members of the community, and we are continually networking. We take leadership roles within in the community. We're often invited to be part of new initiatives because we have proven that we are accountable". All managers were able to share experiences where their REAP was strongly involved in leading community projects and learning activities. These included clustered professional development for educators, youth social engagement activities, community facilities and civics-based projects, and cultural consultation (explicitly marae-based for one REAP).

Amongst examples of activities led and coordinated by REAPs, was respondents' awareness that REAPs needed to temper leadership efforts against the community development and self-determining goals underpinning their work. M5 explains further:

So an example of leading a community of learners is us taking the lead in a lot of areas, so not dominating, there is a very fine line between doing this and excluding people, but taking the lead and being collaborative around bringing educational opportunities to our community. [...] We are also in a leading role in our community, we want to make some of those support

agencies that help us achieve our goals, we want to strengthen them, so we're talking about increasing their capacity and, you know, the capability mentoring thing's a great way to do that. We've been doing that and I think a lot of REAPs have been doing that for some time.

In this light, the facilitating role of REAP is described as a means to develop skill and capability amongst partner groups, as much as specific learner groups in the community. These efforts are described in relation to the desire for REAP to not be seen as a controlling force in spite of its leading nature. The determination and growth by M5's account is to be guided by those outside REAP, with REAP acting as the facilitator of or conduit for achieving those goals and capabilities. This experience of a leadership and facilitation-based approach is shared by other managers, where:

taking a leadership role in these organisations is not about just being effective and efficient, [... it] has to be built on strong understanding [...] of our community [... and] having the humility to know that in fact often the community does know best and, and that leadership often is, is harnessed and, actually harnessing those energies in a positive way.

While managers described awareness of sharing responsibilities in leadership and community development, learner responses showed a stronger recognition of the coordination aspect around what REAPs do in the community:

- Coordinating school based activities across a cluster of schools. (L87)
- [REAP] is an amazing co-ordinator who facilitates many networking groups throughout our vast region. (L123)
- Coordinate events such as schools kapa haka festival. (L125)

Jointly, responses from managers and learners support the leading role of REAPs in communities to provide activities for varied groups and purposes.



**Brokerage theme: social cohesion and cooperation.** There were consistent descriptions of the effects of brokering activities, namely in the form of social cohesion and cooperation within groups around learning activities. Responses dovetailed into those around values-based and role modeling, building on an increased sense of belonging that results in more cohesive actions in communities. M5 discussed spending a lot of time with new learners to the community who need to become orientated with facilities, services, and networks. This is seen as an unpublicised REAP service, helping to embed people into the community so they can take part in it. In one case, M2 explains the end result and value of their community-based learning:

I think probably a lot of it is that socialisation, [...] belonging to a community. And helps them in a relaxed way, you know sort of that friendly, open environment. [...] [A]s I left a lady said to me yesterday [...], she said "I'm just new to this town and I'm so pleased I came. I've met people and I'll definitely be back next year and it's just been, it's so good and motivating". So I think often that's our role at REAP is actually to motivate people.

Other respondents translate this motivation as increased community activity, ultimately stemming from a sense of shared ownership and community identity. An example of this in practice is shared by M3, who talks about what increased social cohesion looks like:

Building a community garden, being responsible for setting that up. Teaching some base horticultural skills, you know, what can come out of that? Getting, you know, a whanau to work with the neighbor because they've got a lovely space for a garden, but they haven't or go and work together and do it over the road and share the produce. Just looking at opportunities and it's, sometimes it's just about, it's not even, it's not formal learning, it's just a sense of wellbeing, it's a sense of belonging, it's a sense

of whakawhanaungatanga<sup>35</sup>, it's a sense of community caring, it's a sense of support, it's a sense of belonging to this part of the world. And maybe I haven't got the nicest state house in the world, but it's our place.

In a community development sense, this is a clear goal for REAPs alongside the skills growth that comes with the learning activities themselves. This is seen to add value to the community by further encouraging participation and fostering shared goals through mutual relationships, often centred around key networks.

One manager described what can happen when key networks that contribute to social cohesion or cooperation are removed - in this case the local school:

What had happened is the school had disappeared in that community, the school had closed and so all the things like welcomes and farewells [...] stopped happening in that community and that community had no structure. [...] [T]hey had no school committee [...] [or] Board of Trustees <sup>36</sup>[who]used to do that stuff you know. So, the community had a loss of structure and how it, how it operated. [W]hat we found when we went there, what they told us they wanted, in fact what they actually really needed to do was to find a way to rebuild relationships in the community. So, we began to run programmes and fun stuff like, ah, we did some hard stuff and all sorts of stuff. [...] The stuff behind it actually wasn't the art, it was actually getting to know each other and learn, learning to trust each other again. (M6)

The facilitated learning is seen as a vehicle for building relationships and trust, with the longer-term goal of improving social connections and cohesion again. Learners were able to share viewpoints that reinforced the notion of cohesion and cooperation, by sharing what they saw as the role of REAPs:

- REAP is an important part of our [local] community that provides the glue that sticks us together. (L2)

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<sup>35</sup> Whakawhanaungatanga is a Māori word, meaning relationships or personal connection.

<sup>36</sup> Boards of Trustees are the governing committees of schools and organisations.

- The weekends pull people together to socialise and learn new everyday living tasks. (L20)
- Made life in a small community easier. (L115)
- They run courses for people in the community so that they can upskill themselves [...] to make individuals stronger and wiser [...] so they can be part of the wider community and contribute. (L122)

Managers and learners alike uphold the notion that REAPs provide cohesion and connectedness as part of their active role. By providing learning opportunities that facilitate relationship building and trust, a shared sense of community ownership is experienced. Both groups of respondents see these features as improving the quality of relationships and the quality of life in their communities. Divisive social commentary was absent from both participant groups.

***Brokerage theme: gap filling (including complementarity/supplementarity).***

One of the unique uses of terminology that presented itself in both respondent groups was that of filling gaps or complementarity and supplementarity, taken together to mean adding on to or extending existing learning and development opportunities. In the words of M3, REAPs are here "to add value [...] to complement [...] to supplement". These include the notion of gap filling - taking up services and support that are identified as partially or wholly missing. These notions were raised throughout responses as a means of guiding the responsive scoping of REAP activities, underpinned by the non-competitive and collaborative themes already discussed. Managers describe quite simply that a REAP "provides services and activities in the community that aren't happening and possibly wouldn't happen if [the REAP] weren't [t]here" (M1). That same manager went on to say they sometimes describe REAP as "complementary and supplementary education support" which emphasised that gap-

filling concept. Other managers reinforced this notion by describing REAPs as organisations that "help fill the gaps in rural areas", whether that be sharing options around early childhood, schools, or adult learning, or providing support and learning around essential services (M4). Again a diverse range of examples was provided, including the provision of early years learning workshops, parenting education, professional development for rural educators, IRD or state service information (at times in conjunction with those services), tertiary pathways planning, and others.

One example illustrates both a gap filling approach, as well as a cross-sector approach, with a REAP manager explaining how working with a student who has left school can result in planning and enrolment for further learning for the student:

Someone needs to sit down with you with those Unit Standards and see what you can do with that group, pulling that stuff together. What are the gaps? And how can we fill those gaps? And you can't go to most institutions and say "I want to do this Unit Standard and that Unit Standard and fill this gap so I can get this certificate" or whatever it happens to be. So it's a gap. So who plugs the gap? REAPs can plug the gap. And REAPs don't have to be registered PTEs, REAPs can get alongside one of their local schools and use their accreditation systems. It's about being creative and building relationships with the schools. (M3)

The example is given with the clarification that this is a learner group that often no one in formal learning will take responsibility to support and transition. Thus it is seen as a critical space for REAPs to operate. At times, learners were able to see this in action and articulate the value of REAP operating in this way by:

- Providing supplementary education opportunities to students and School staff that mitigate the isolation from opportunities available in more populated areas. (L60)

Echoing the supplementary language used by managers, learners supported the role of REAPs as one that adds value to existing community efforts. Where services or information is missing, managers and learners saw REAPs responsively filling gaps.

Nearly all participants provided experiences that demonstrated the REAP approach as one entrenched in brokerage as a means to facilitating and enabling learning activities across the lifespan. Respondents recognised REAPs as leaders, coordinators, and gap fillers, able to engage with particular learning groups with relative ease given their longstanding community networks and trust. Both managers and learners described experiences that revealed a brokerage approach in REAPs. Based on coding, the theme of 'bringing groups together and facilitation' was by far the most often described aspect of the REAP approach to brokerage - it appeared 79 times across all participants (out of 228 brokerage-based codes). By comparison, gap filling (including complementarity/supplementarity)' was described least often, appearing 27 times. Although frequency continued to vary across themes, responses clearly indicate the presence of brokerage-based themes among all participants.

Table 14: Coded 'Brokerage' reference count from participants

<b>Brokerage Themes</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>M5</b>	<b>M6</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>
<i>Bringing groups together and facilitation</i>	8	13	11	3	4	12	26	77
<i>Engaging specified groups</i>	5	1	8	7	4	2	22	49
<i>Leadership and coordination</i>	6	4	8	1	8	12	5	44
<i>Social cohesion and cooperation</i>	3	5	4	1	4	4	11	32
<i>Gap filling (i.e. complementarity and supplementarity)</i>	3	3	6	2	4	7	1	26
<b>References to brokerage themes</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>65</b>	<b>228</b>

In order to add a further perspective to the brokering role of REAPs, learners were asked about how REAPs operated in a connective sense (see Figure 15). Responses reflected the brokering role of REAPs, with: 95% (122 respondents) reporting REAPs as playing a role bringing groups together (1 strongly disagreed); 93% (119 respondents) reporting REAPs bringing groups together around a common purpose or values (0 disagreed); and 92% (118 respondents) reporting REAPs as collaborators (2 disagreed). It is possible the neutral respondents did not feel they had directly observed enough of the collaborating or organising efforts of REAP activities to comment. Again, those who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the brokering ability of REAPs also provided qualitative feedback on a poor, recent experience with an organised event.

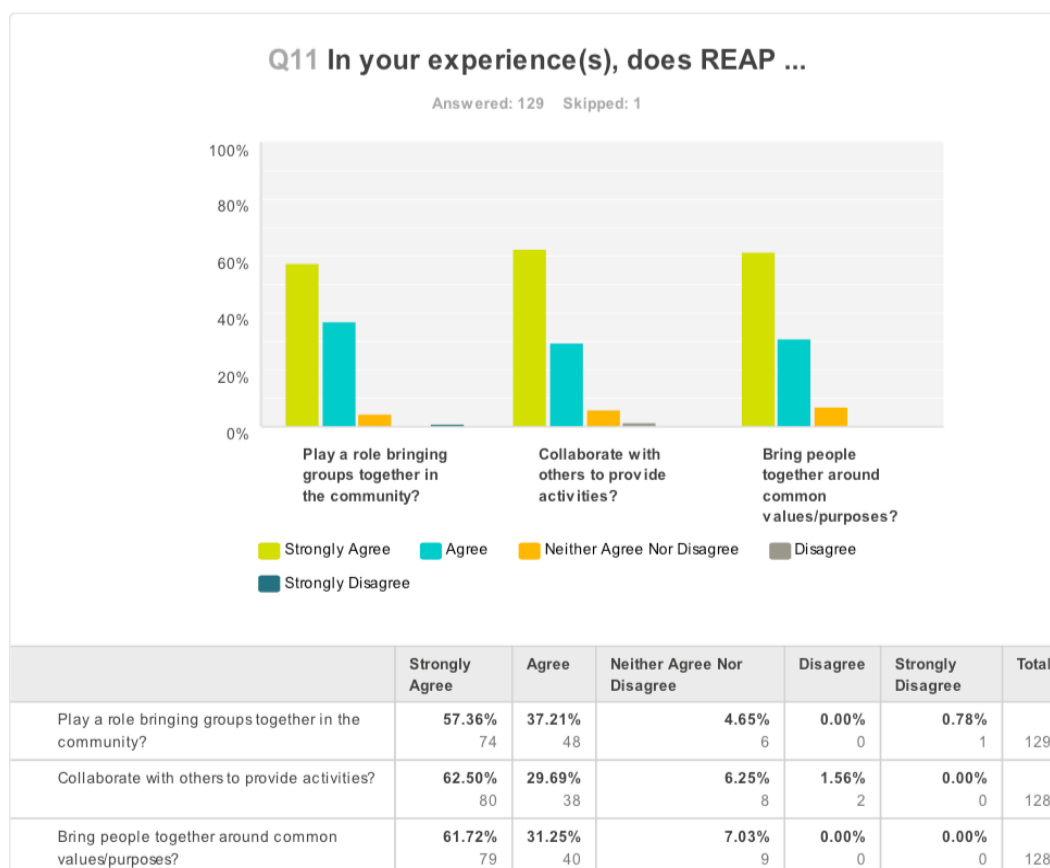


Figure 15: Learner reported REAP brokerage activities

**Emergent category.**

Across all interviewed participants, four other themes outside the deductive Template Analysis tool emerged. While most themes could be expected given the context and review of REAPs in the literature, it was valuable to see which emerged outside the four social capital framework elements identified from the literature. This allowed for consideration of complementarity of the themes that emerged from inductive analysis with the findings identified in deductive analysis.

Data were analysed in multiple iterations against the four deductive categories to ensure broad capturing of themes and respondent language. Data were reviewed twice to ensure fit with the four pre-determined categories, and a further two times to check for emergent themes that were consistent across all interviews and learner responses. The inductive analysis produced four emergent themes (i.e. strong thematic language outside of the four explicit social capital elements justified in the conceptual framework):

1. Lifelong learning, knowledge, and skills;
2. Making a difference (including community development);
3. Funding tensions and government priorities; and
4. Innovation and finding solutions.

**Emergent theme: lifelong learning, knowledge, and skills.** Understandably, all managers and most of the learner data strongly supported a theme of REAPs providing lifelong learning, reinforcing this as process that underpins the REAP approach. This theme was present both explicitly in descriptions of core REAP characteristics, and implicitly in the range of lived examples of learning activities discussed by managers

across the early childhood, compulsory schooling, and adult and community education sectors.

All managers provided personal accounts of REAPs as lifelong learning organisations, clearly reflective of the original mandate of the organisations. When asked to explain a REAP to someone outside them, responses included:

- while the focus is education, education doesn't have to be just schools and early childhood and Adult and Community Education, it can be everything. (M1)
- REAPs provide an opportunity for lifelong learning or facilitating educational opportunities across all sectors from early childhood schools and the adult population, right to the retired so it's that cradle to grave stuff that's sort of a cool expression. (M4)
- in essence REAP's role is probably unchanged in that they are there to serve their communities and assist right across all those three main areas of education before school, at school and after school. (M6)

In particular, the cross-sector link was explained in terms of reaching across families and communities holistically. M6 went on to say:

so you've got early childhood and you've got adults intersecting cos we, we work with families. We work with early childhood and schools cos they have brothers and sisters in schools and we got the transitioning schools, and the same with youth and the same with adults. REAP's don't look at early childhood per se or schools per se or after adult education per se separately. [W]e look at them I think dynamically and connected so we see all those circles as being interconnected. [B]ut they sit within the framework as being part of our community so I think REAP's role is being to try and keep that broader vision.

M3 gave a full description of lifelong learning within their REAP from early childhood through to adult education. This was used as a way to impart the potential and



strength of a lifelong model to meet need in a targeted, intentional way (such as through a lifelong science focus):

We want more people involved in STEM initiatives - science, technology, engineering and maths. Well, you can't say to 24 year-olds "Okay we want you to start getting involved in that stuff". How do you build that? [...] what do we do in the early childhood sector, what do we do in the schools sector, what do we do in the community sector? How can we build that so it's something that works its way through, so there are people coming through with a genuine passion to wanting to get into that sort of stuff. [...] Science is a great one [...]. [W]e have beach days for the early childhood sector. It's a huge event. We have all the, lots of kohanga who come and engage with us in the early childhood sector and the new entrant kids. [...] They'd make nets and little fish traps and do things and their parents. [W]e had koroua<sup>37</sup> involved and put a Māori kaupapa<sup>38</sup> around it. We do that stuff. That's science. It's science, it's building that passion and that love for that sort of stuff. So what do we do in the high schools? [...] We look at opportunities of bringing – who are the science people in our communities, who are the organisations, the businesses that are the strong science focus [...]. So we would use all those people and say "Get in here, you're the judges for the Science Fair. [Y]ou get in here and do that stuff." Let's, how do we work and build those connects with some of those people who are happy to share their knowledge, that we get kids into their factories and their places of work and having a look at seeing, looking at opportunities to see "Oh yeah, I could do that. I'd like to work for Fonterra<sup>39</sup>."

Learners provided an equally wide ranging set of examples of lived learning experiences with REAPs across all sectors, describing what REAPs do:

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<sup>37</sup> Koroua is a Māori word, meaning grandfather.

<sup>38</sup> Kaupapa is a Māori word, meaning way of doing things.

<sup>39</sup> Fonterra is a large, international dairy company.

- Courses offered to members of the community from all walks of life getting people involved and active. (L1)
- Provides a space for Community courses and also actively promotes life-long learning. (L17)
- There are probably another 15 - 20 different areas REAP reaches and assists our community and all ages / levels. (L31)
- REAP encompasses the three learning sectors. (L72)
- Cradle to the grave educational support for rural communities. (L86)
- [REAPs offer] an opportunity to engage in lifelong learning. (L109)
- They run a variety of different courses in a variety of ways for all ages in the community. (L122)

In line with the expressed purpose of REAPs, the above demonstrates how managers and learners were able to provide extensive and rich examples of illustrating lifelong learning as a theme across REAPs.

***Emergent theme: making a difference (including community development).*** In addition to being mentioned as a context throughout previous sections, the theme of developing communities (particularly in terms of making a difference with REAP activities) was also prominent as part of REAPs approach throughout responses. Managers repeatedly described REAPs in terms of their purpose, as organisations that "facilitate educational opportunities and alongside that goes community development [...] a place that gives people an opportunity to develop and to grow and just to experience things" (M2). This was an explicit description across managers, who readily positioned their lived experiences with REAPs within the framework of initiating learning and developmental processes that result in community change. As M5 explained:

we're very focused on using education as a tool for community development. [I]t isn't exclusive to a certain part of the community or demographic or one ethnicity. [I]t's very inclusive [...] to the whole community. [W]hile we have these [government] priorities, the community still benefits from us improving some of those priority areas and, but we don't want it to be, I guess an exclusive, that only improves one sector.

The notion of improving the whole community comes through strongly, without reference to particular educational activities, outcomes, or curriculum. Community development is the focused goal or end result of the responsive learning in this context. M6 reiterates this by describing REAPs as "a catalyst for change in our community [...] and particularly in difficult areas". These statements are closely aligned with the values-based framework already described as inherent to REAP work. As M3 states, the purpose of REAPs is strongly developmental in nature:

It's about meeting need and making a difference. [T]hat's the mantra we chant around here. What's the need? How can we make a difference in somebody's lives to help them have an opportunity to move forward, to be able to grasp education, as a result of education or improved education outcomes for them have opportunities to make a contribution, firstly to society to their own community, to support their own whanau, to their own wellbeing, their own inner strengths and their other strengths they gain from confidence that they then, self worth, building up some qualifications and skills and experiences so they can feed their whanau, to put kai on the table. [A]s simple as that for many of our learners around our communities here.

Learner views around the developmental nature of REAP work support this theme, though to a lesser extent:

- REAP has a challenging pivotal role to play within rural communities and therefore should be able to access enough funding to continue and expand as the community needs are identified. (L15)

- [REAP] supports new community initiatives. (L25)
- [REAPs are] a holistic community learning and educational organisation. (L77)
- [REAP is] an organisation that connects on the ground level with communities and creates a bridge between a person skilled in an area to [an area] that needs that skill. (L112)

While this point also raises the issue of funding (addressed shortly), it also uses clear, strong language around the importance of REAPs to communities and the ability of REAPs to meet needs as they are identified. This articulates the developmental function of REAPs well and supports examples given by managers.

***Emergent theme: funding tension and government priorities.*** A further emergent theme was that of funding tensions and Government priorities within REAPs. In most examples, this theme was experienced in terms of the impact of targeted government priorities on the flexible and responsive nature of REAP work. Managers clearly articulated that funding requirements were increasingly focused on specific learner groups or types of learning activities, particularly around those who are disengaged from learning across the lifespan, and those whose initial learning was unsuccessful. M5 gave an example shared by other managers, whereby REAPs are increasingly "conscious [...] of aligning to Government priorities, but also aligning to community need". This is where the notion of tension becomes articulated - at the point of balancing Government priorities with community needs, the latter of which has been described as core to REAP provision since their beginning.

These requirements were expressed as having at least a minimal impact on the REAP model and responsive approach to community learning needs. As M1 explains, "there is now a bit of a tension between [community need] and what TEC and Ministry

[...] are starting to require;" and that the tension arises out of funding requirements that work counter to the REAP approach, which is about "doing things because we genuinely care or we feel it is a need in our community". That concept of funding tension is furthered in another experience, where both the strengths of REAPs, as experienced by M6, and such tensions continue to play out in a dynamic way:

I think REAP's are very special organisations. I think REAP's are very fortunate to be able to do the things that we believed were important and still believe that are important. [...] There's a tension between our belief in what's important for people and [...] Government focus. [G]overnment may have a focus on core curriculum but we certainly believe that the whole individual remains important so we have a very strong focus on fostering creativity, across the board [...] with our youth worker, our work with struggling people in ACE, in our schools, in our work in early childhood. [W]e have a strong emphasis on acknowledging the importance of creativity and the creativity being important to people's soul and their future. On the other hand, we also acknowledge [...] the Government's right to be strongly directive about what we do. So we try and get that balance.

This description is reflective of other notions of how the perceived tension of funding requirements is somewhat at odds with the characteristics of the REAP model found above. All managers demonstrated an awareness of having to continue to navigate this tension for the sake of progressing the values-based work of REAPs. Learners also experienced this tension in the sense that the role of REAPs is perceived at a learning level as contingent on funding alignment as much as community need:

- REAP has a challenging pivotal role to play within rural communities and therefore should be able to access enough funding to continue and expand as the community needs are identified. (L15)

- It is a wonderful service and I hope they continue to receive funding for the programmes and services they provide. (L22)
- REAP could do so very much more without the constant struggle for funding - give them more money and plenty of it. (L33)
- They are an incredibly valuable resource in our community who would be able to do more if they had better funding/more funding. (L41)

While the funding tension theme was clearly present, it is noted that other experiences and descriptions in previous themes emphasise the flexible and responsive mechanisms allowed within the REAP approach. Primarily the tensions appear to arise as specified criteria are introduced into that responsive model - a point made clear by four of the six managers.

***Emergent theme: innovation and finding solutions.*** The final emergent theme from the qualitative data showed a pattern around REAPs as innovators and contributors to finding solutions to community learning and cooperation. In many cases, examples were given whereby the participant shared an experience of trying something new for the first time in their rural area, often as the result of stretched or limited resources. M1 explained:

I think because of our funding we have been able to be innovative in that you can look for solutions and be flexible about how you meet the needs of your community and be responsive. [B]ut we don't have a lot of money so we have to look for ways that we can collaborate with other organisations or make use of what's already happening.

In this example, several themes are evident - flexibility, responsiveness, and collaboration. Several times examples of solutions were given, where the REAP would coordinate a response or manage a resource amongst several organisations. Some of these included sharing costs for a paid community position, coordinating information

and training around government subsidies that increase access to training or parent support services, or tailoring work skills programmes for difficult-to-engage groups of learners for the first time in a community.

Ultimately the flexibility and lifelong learning mandate of REAPs was espoused as the primary contributing factor to enabling these types of solutions. One manager explicitly names these factors, stating that:

we can move quite quickly. We're very flexible [...], so yeah REAPs -[we're] innovative creatures; we're willing to try new things and really willing to push the envelope and [...] want to be effective. (M5)

Some learners also described ways REAPs contribute through innovation:

- Partnering with groups so that they can find solutions to issues. (L97)

Managers and learners saw solutions and innovation as part of the REAP approach. While not explicitly in line with a social capital approach, the flexible and adaptable features mentioned earlier are named as enabling innovation in REAPs.

Overall participants describe the REAP approach as one which caters to lifelong skills enhancement, with a focus on finding solutions that result in developed communities. In many cases these are referenced in the context of funding, which is tied to Government priorities and can be counter to the responsive characteristic of REAPs. Respondents recognised the impact of REAP work in a broader social and developmental sense. Both managers and learners were able to consistently describe experiences that illustrated the interrelatedness of community needs and collaborative efforts to meet those needs through innovation. Table 15 illustrates the coded response frequency for each theme across the managers and learners as a rough guide to which emergent themes were emphasised within manager and learner responses.

Based on recurrence, the theme of "lifelong learning, knowledge and skills" was the most often described aspect of REAP - it appeared 107 times across all participants (out of 216 emergent non-social-capital codes). By comparison, "innovation and finding solutions" was described least often, appearing 18 times across all participants.

*Table 15: Coded 'Emergent' reference count from participants*

<b>Emergent Themes</b>	<b>M1</b>	<b>M2</b>	<b>M3</b>	<b>M4</b>	<b>M5</b>	<b>M6</b>	<b>L</b>	<b>T</b>
<i>Lifelong learning, knowledge, and skills</i>	1	18	19	4	2	9	54	107
<i>Making a difference (i.e. community development)</i>	3	7	11	11	10	9	2	53
<i>Funding tension and government priorities</i>	3	5	6	5	10	5	4	38
<i>Innovation and finding solutions</i>	6	1	3	2	3	2	1	18
<b>References to emergent themes</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>31</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>216</b>

Comparative questions asked learners to consider emergent themes identified across managers during early coding (which do not fully reflect the final, refined list of emergent themes in this chapter - see Figure 16). These questions mostly reflected the developmental role of REAPs, as described by managers. These themes were strongly supported by learners where: 96% (123 respondents) reported REAPs use learning to develop or grow communities (0 disagreed); 93% (119 respondents) reported REAPs are flexible in what they deliver (3 disagreed); 93% (118 respondents) reported REAPs know their communities well (1 disagreed); 91% (116 respondents) reported REAPs impact on social and community change (0 disagreed); and 89% (115 respondents) reported REAPs identify local needs and provide relevant responses (2 disagreed). Neutral respondents may not have felt they had directly observed enough of REAPs' efforts to comment. Disagreed responses were few, and often related to already mentioned poor REAP experiences specific to that individual.



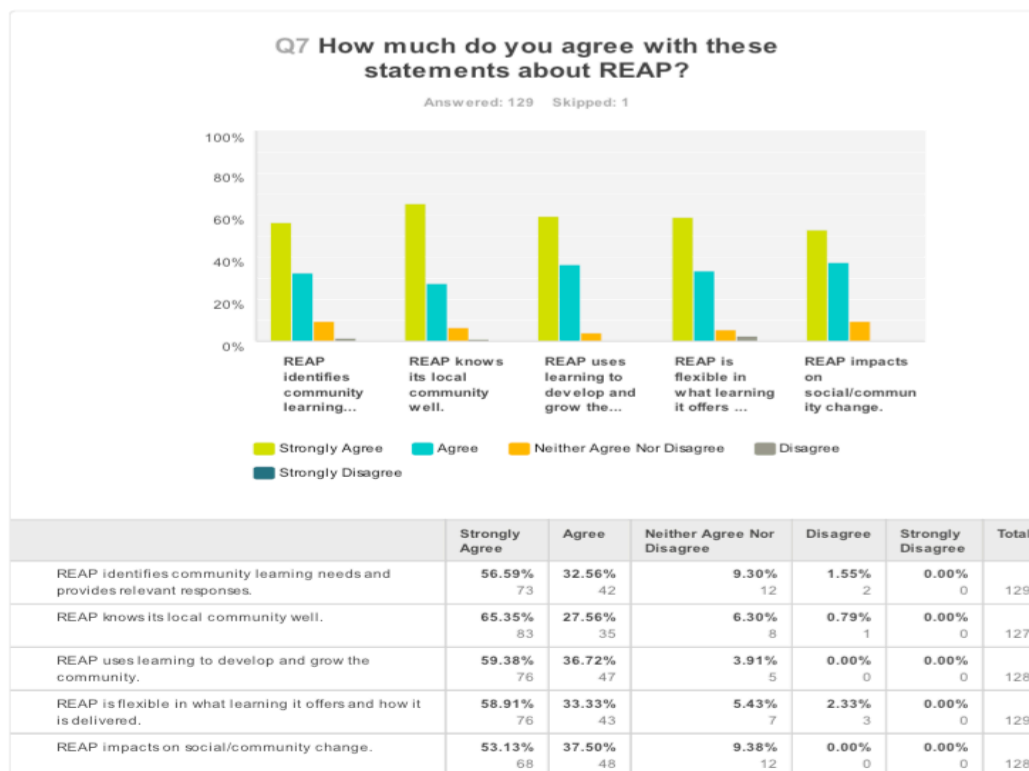


Figure 16: Learner views on REAP manager statements

## Integrated Thematic Results

The five categories were strongly represented in managers' responses. This trend was matched in learner questionnaires, both in terms of qualitative responses and comparative question responses. In terms of exploring the research question, the extent to which REAPs demonstrate a social capital approach in their work, the findings provide sufficient data to draw conclusions. Learners were asked a final comparative question about the four social capital elements (using non-social-capital terms). Results showed (see Figure 17):

- Networks: 98% (124 respondents) reported REAPs utilising relationships and connections in the community (0 disagreed);
- Brokerage: 95% (119 respondents) reported REAPs bringing together groups around similar needs (1 disagreed);

- Trust: 90% (114 respondents) reported REAPs as consistent and reliable in their provision (1 disagreed); and
- Social Norms: 74% (93 respondents) reported REAPs role modeling change in their community (2 disagreed).

Of the 128 responses, neutral responses and disagreements were minimal and no respondent strongly disagreed with any statement.

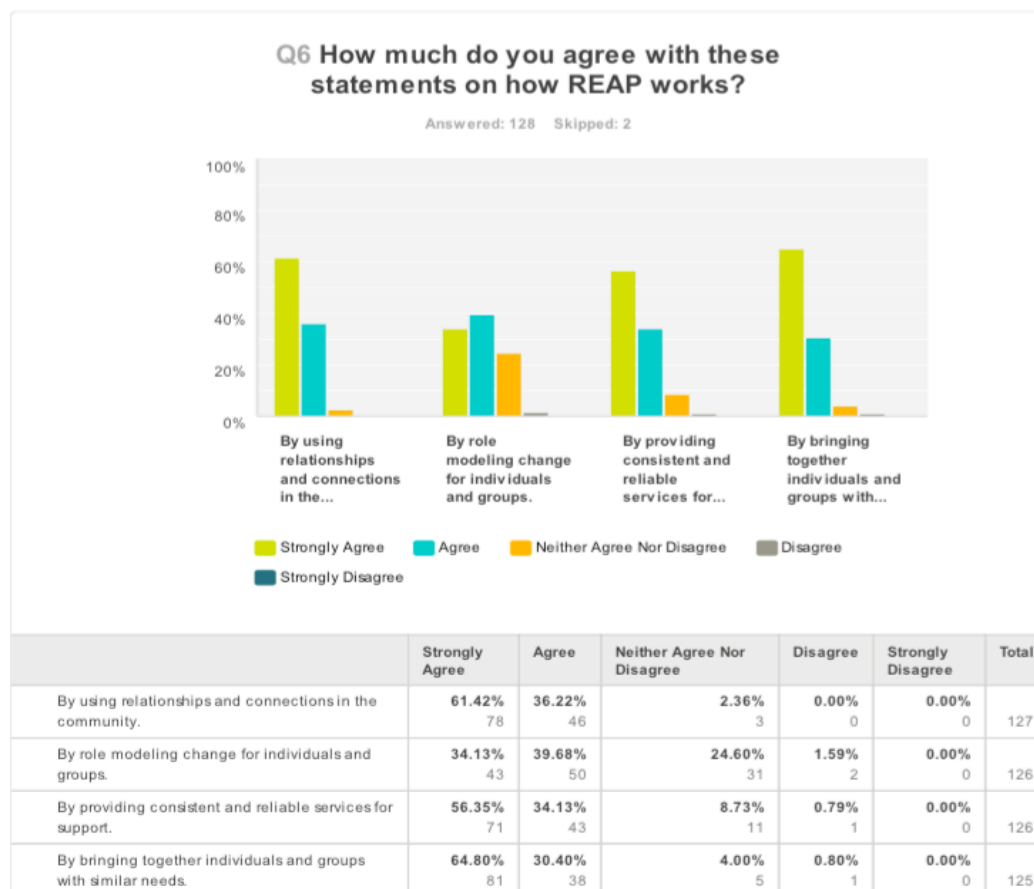


Figure 17: Learner responses to social capital categories

As a closing thought on findings, the Wordle below captures a visual representation of learner views on how REAPs operate in their communities. Many phrases are reflective of the language of the findings presented throughout the chapter.



## **Chapter 6 Discussion:**

### **Interpreting Experiences of REAPs in Action**

The purpose of this research was to explore the extent to which REAPs operate by a social capital approach in providing lifelong learning for rural communities. The findings supported a strong presence of social capital in how REAPs go about their role. Both managers and learners experienced all four key elements of social capital (networks, trust, social norms, and brokerage) in a range of ways. In many cases, experiences linked themes within and between these four key elements, which is highlighted in various discussion points throughout the chapter.

Emergent themes outside the social capital framework reinforced the lifelong learning and community development processes within REAPs' work. The review of literature revealed REAPs' responsive approach has evolved with an increased focus on community development and brokering solutions to learning needs. According to findings, REAPs were heavily focused on furthering community and personal development for individuals by innovating solutions through lifelong learning of knowledge and skills. These efforts were described consistently within the context of adapting to changing pressures of government funding and policy - a recognised pressure point both within and outside REAPs. As a final point of discussion, managers and learners presented a noticeably positive consensus on REAPs and how they operate. These key points arising from findings are explored in this chapter:

1. Strong presence of social capital elements in REAP experiences;
2. Affirmed lifelong learning and community development processes;
3. Government funding tensions within the REAP delivery model; and
4. Strong consensus among participants on the positive attributes of REAPs.

### Strong Presence of Social Capital Elements in REAP Experiences

The answer to the research question – to what extent do REAPs demonstrate a social capital approach? – is clearly to a great extent. All four social capital elements were strongly supported by a range of themes in the data. Linking these four elements in REAP practice meant: utilising trusted relationships and wide networks, in order to ascertain values and identity-based goals for individuals and groups, so that learning activities could be brokered/provided for the social and developmental benefit of learners. Experience-based concepts were often interrelated, with relationships, trust and brokerage themes crossing easily, particularly for managers whose data was more in-depth and probing - something discussed later in this chapter. What follows is a discussion of each of the four social capital data categories (based directly on the four social capital elements from the literature), as they were experienced by REAP leaders and learners. Figure 6 from the conceptual framework chapter guides this discussion:

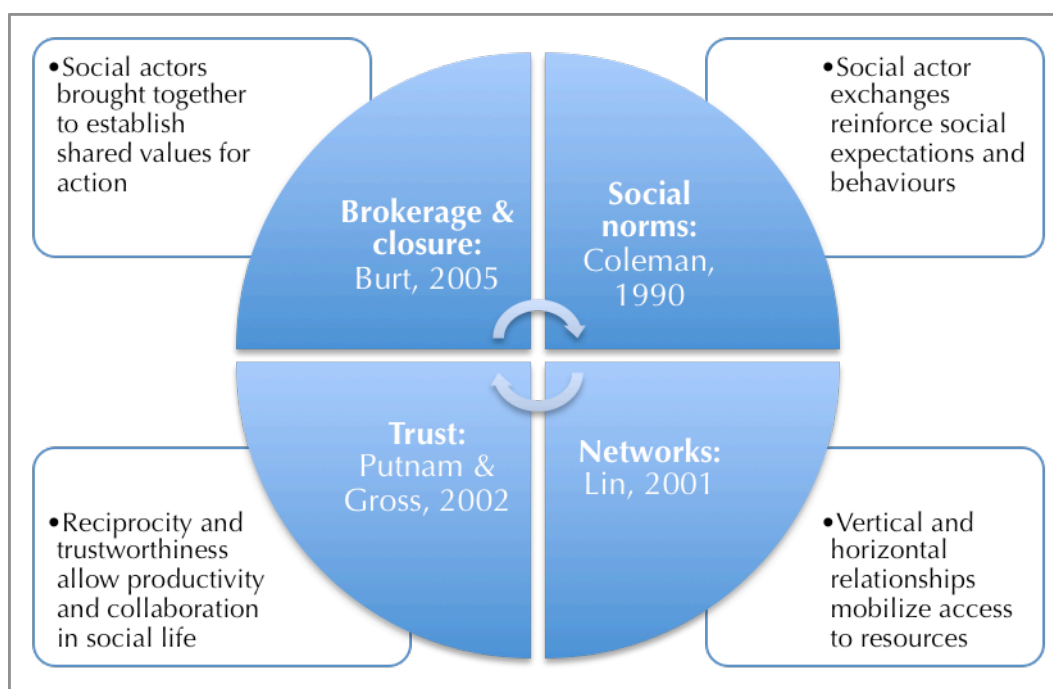


Figure 6: Components of social capital theory relevant to this study

**Networks in REAPs.**

While REAPs clearly demonstrated a multifaceted ability to build, access, and widen networks for learner benefit, the way in which they undertook these efforts appeared somewhat dynamic. REAPs were able to utilise their strong informal and personal relationships to subvert their institutional standing as NGOs and gain access to learner groups more readily (and with greater associated trust, discussed later) to deliver programmes. Stone and Hughes (2002) define networks as social structures in three ways: as informal ties between friends, neighbors, and workmates; as relationships between people in general or those in a shared civic/local group; and as institutionalised relationships between those in a relational, hierarchical, or power-based system. All three types of social structures are cited in lived examples of REAP activity, with both manager and learner responses emphasising personal rather than institutional relationships at the centre of facilitating activities.

This is significant in that it allowed REAPs widened opportunities to encourage participation through what Granovetter (1973) calls strong ties in social relationships despite their institutional standing. According to Granovetter (1973) strong social ties are personal friendships and associations, as compared to weak ties found in institutional relationships, where the former more readily generates trust and social participation for new group members, and the latter generates innovation. REAPs demonstrated through lived experiences of managers and learners that participation in learning activities was often instigated by personal connections of REAP staff or shared positive testimony of previous REAP learners. Although REAPs were clearly institutional in nature as NGOs, they stood out as heavily leveraging their personal relationships and informal networks within their communities to scope needs and

establish rapid buy-in to facilitate responsive activities. This buy-in also achieves what Nan (2001) refers to as persuasion over coercion. According to Nan (2001), individuals participate in a network when anticipating a personal benefit from the exchange. In the case of learners, being persuaded, rather than coerced, to participate in activities through personal relationships enhanced participation (and furthered aspects of trust, discussed in the next section).

In adapting to the type of social ties necessary to facilitate activities, REAPs recognised the immediate utility of their wide-reaching relationships. Local knowledge was a prominent feature, allowing REAPs to be fully aware of the individual and group needs that required attention (closely aligned to the responsive and gap filling aspects of REAP work found within the trust category). This meant REAP workers utilised multiple roles across communities to keep local knowledge up-to-date, as well as continually share this information for wider social benefit. In many cases this took the form of sharing information with agencies and Government Departments. This made REAPs well placed in their collaborative roles, where their local knowledge enhanced the shared goals of a whole-of-community approach to education (Ministry of Education, 2014). By widely accessing strong ties with personal affiliations through staff, as well as weaker ties through institutional and agency relationships in a collaborative setting, REAPs assured learners and partners of their trustworthiness – a related social capital element also acknowledged by Granovetter (1973).

For learners, REAPs increased social involvement beyond just the immediate learning activity. REAPs' intent was to provide a regular pattern of learning often lacking in those who had been disengaged from learning, for reasons of either access or confidence. This supported social capital outcomes from the literature where

educational attainment is positively influenced through increased expectations from network participation for different groups such as youth (Byun, Meece, Irvin & Hutchins, 2012), fathers (Ravanera, 2007), and parents (Croll, 2004). The sharing of experiences in social groups helped learners relate and normalise their views with those of other learners in their community - something that relates strongly to themes in the social norms category covered later in this chapter. Quality relationships with learner networks had a high impact on the success of extending social involvement. In many cases, learners attributed positive changes to behaviour, increased learning access, and improvements in skill and confidence, to the REAP staff member's engagement or commitment to the activity. This supported the confidence and identity-based benefits of social capital, which also align to Cote's (2005) notion that choice making and individual development are enhanced as a result of group-based learning. For both manager and learners, delivery was predicated on the element of trust forged in those relationships, which becomes the next point of discussion on social capital.

Networking aspects of REAPs were also the most complex in terms of how they were achieved. The number and variety of experiences reflecting relationships-based approaches to enabling learning support was extensive. This reflected Stone and Hughes' (2002) view that a variety of associations within and across networks strengthens social capital potential, which REAPs understandably reflect given the collaborative themes that emerged as part of how they operate. Equally, REAP findings supported Nan's (2001) points that persuasion is more effective than coercion within networks to form lasting connections. Managers recognised the need for encouraging rather than forcing participation through an informal approach to relationship building.



The benefits of network-based learning activities were demonstrated through planning that included learner input to ensure relevance and value, as well as through the stated positive outcomes and changes described by learners resulting from their engagements with REAPs. The result was REAPs' ability to (when necessary) bypass their institutional standing and access more trusting personal relationships where learners saw benefit in participation, rather than feeling institutionally obligated to REAPs.

### **Trust in REAPs.**

For REAPs, trust formed the bedrock of their ability to engage in their communities and carry out learning and development activities. Trust was related to the networks-based activity of REAPs, where existing REAP relationships (both personal and institutional) and prior REAP delivery impacted on the readiness of learners and partners to engage with REAPs. This aligns with the notion of trust as obligations within social exchanges, described by Coleman (1990), where social actors seek to satisfy their own interests by engaging with others in a social group. In order for individuals to fulfill obligations - learning and developmental ones in this case - those involved must expect that other members will hold up their end of the bargain. Local buy-in was cited repeatedly as part of the REAP approach through staff relationships and on-the-ground knowledge of genuine needs - to get others to *want* to be involved in learning and community activities. REAPs' extensive efforts to ensure their activities were relevant and built on trusted relationships highlights the centrality of trust to the REAP approach. REAPs' varied roles enhanced local credibility by allowing them to navigate and bridge separate networks, the latter of which (Burt 2005) suggests is best achieved through established trust. This feature also enabled REAPs to adapt the message of their services to emphasise the responsive and flexible nature of their work.

Over time as learner and partner organisation expectations were fulfilled regularly by REAPs, social exchange became more fluid and open and trust was either established or enhanced. This aspect came through as a key feature of REAPs, where established trust was used to bolster REAPs' ability to access networks and be allowed to offer opportunities to disadvantaged groups. The use of trust in social capital applied research has often demonstrated improved engagement with groups disadvantaged by socio-economic (Brisson, 2009), geographic (Roskrug, Grimes, McCann & Poot, 2010), or educational (Balatti, Black & Falk, 2007) factors. Again in a social capital context, trust is a form of generalised reciprocity, where people in a social setting act in a way that is positive or beneficial for others with the expectation that the favour will be returned (Putnam, 2000), where those benefits take the form of socio-economic, access-based, or educational improvement. REAPs emphasised following through on promises and expectations related to each of these three factors, in order to prevent missed opportunities to provide and/or augment learning activities. This credibility factor is essential for not just the personalised forms of trust above, but also to ensure institutional partnerships are successful to achieve shared learning and development goals for rural communities.

A significant point for trust within the REAP approach was the non-competitive and non-threatening features of their work, which sat alongside the notions of profile and reputation espoused by REAP managers. Related to the ability of REAPs to leverage both personal and institutional ties, REAPs appeared committed to sharing resources with partner organisations to ensure services were provided by those that best fit a particular need or learner group. Amidst shrinking resources, this is a considerable feature for REAPs to use to strengthen their collaborative and outcome-

focused efforts. Uslaner (2008) suggests this is because where institutional trust and credibility are concerned, economic equality and fair distribution of resources are strong precursors to generating trust at a social level. REAPs passing up contractual or financial opportunities where the need was better filled by another group demonstrated the kind of resource distribution on an institutional level that Uslaner (2008) mentions, where partner organisations benefited financially from REAPs non-competitive approach. Given the competitive funding climate of the day, REAPs appeared unusually altruistic in this feature, which holds them in good stead as genuine collaborators. In a collaborative sense, this also supports what Martucci, Goodykoontz, Selmer, and Morris (2009) say about mutual trust, where it is both generated and strengthened through collaborative activities and openness.

At the learner level, REAPs' demonstrated ability to respond to need through flexible means was a key illustration of generating trust through relevance and local knowledge. According to Coleman (1990), this approach is reflective of the aspects of mutual trust, where incentives are raised within a social group through favorable and consistent repayment of social obligations that strengthens trust over time. In a REAP context, the incentive for social participation was raised through the sustained relevance of the learning activities to that particular learning group. REAPs demonstrated adeptness at determining local gaps in learning provision for individual learners and groups to ensure that relevance. To achieve this, needs were assessed and responses tailored to the need, which fits Phillips and Pitman's (2009) responsive method of establishing need based on direct input from community members that takes their personal, cultural, and developmental needs into account. Learners reinforced this notion strongly, with REAPs seen as organisations that clearly listened to

community needs and provided relevant activities that addressed those needs. This was particularly salient for the high needs foundation learner groups, which were targeted for their lack in confidence and participation.

Putnam (2000) delineates thick (or strong) forms of social/interpersonal trust as more beneficial to groups than institutional (thin) forms of trust, often associated with organisations and governments. A key finding of this research is that the trust demonstrated by REAPs, according to manager and learner accounts, is more in line with thick (or strong) forms of social/interpersonal trust. REAPs seemed to innovate by bypassing institutional trust through emphasising staff relationships and community connections to develop responsive programming from a stronger position of social trust – which is inverse to the type of trust associated with REAPs as organisations given Putnam's (2000) definitions. This could be related to the infrequent mention of the term flexibility by participants, likely because the responsive and adaptive context has become second nature over 35 years and is implicit in the social relationships that determine activity. Overall this category suggested REAPs maintain a socially minded presence as organisations, explicit in wanting to be non-threatening for learners and organisations to build goodwill and buy in for values-based goals. This opens the door to influence action based on shared values, i.e. influencing social norms where there is established trust in the group.

### **Social Norms in REAPs.**

By providing activities that intentionally take personal and cultural needs and viewpoints into account, REAPs engaged with social norms in a way not previously documented. REAPs' influencing of personal growth and development through learning was often linked with identifying and building programmes around shared

values. Specifically, this took the form of shaping learning and development work around increasing learner confidence and ability to contribute in their local communities. According to Coleman (1990), norms are shared and accepted behaviors within a social group, where individuals act and are judged within a group based on their alignment to those norms. Norms can be both simple and complex, depending on the makeup and purpose of the social group, but ultimately reflect the values and viewpoints of that group.

For REAPs, social norms were often referred to alongside networks as the values-based motivations for delivery – that REAPs engaged explicitly to improve learner ability to fulfill personal goals and aspirations set within the context of their local community. This provides a complex form of Coleman’s norms, where in order to maintain the relevance of delivery already discussed, REAPs would need to continually assess and consider the values of each learner group for each activity. Shifting into a community development space, the norms and values highlighted by REAP work often reflected themes of identity forming and social cohesion. Following on from Putnam’s (2000) notion that specified norms determine acceptance within a social group, Chile (2007) outlined self awareness, sense of belonging, and shared goals as the basis for acceptance within a community development process. REAP activities reflected each of these types of social norms as developmental outcomes for learners, demonstrating both Putnam’s idea of increasing acceptance within a group, as well as Chile’s norms within community development.

In fact, one of the most revealing aspects of REAP experiences as they related to social norms was the level of influence learning activities had on confidence and identity, particularly through role modeling and values-based actions. Of significance

is that this insight demonstrates the more holistic lifelong learning process, adapted from Jarvis (2007) in chapter two to include his notion that lifelong learning is an integrative activity that is continually reforming individual knowledge, behaviour, and identity. REAPs intentionally aimed to increase learner ability to participate by initiating group-based and peer learning activities that facilitated shared experiences for learners to reflect on and connect to their own viewpoints, cultural needs, and learning aspirations – allowing Jarvis' integrations to become part of the learning process. This approach also allowed REAPs to connect learning with social cooperation, where Feinstein and Hammond (2004) observe that “engaging in the common pursuit of learning [...] appears to have all the ingredients for confidence building and raising social awareness” (p. 217). This study supports their contention. Self-improvement and increased confidence came through as a major focus for REAPs, where positive learning behaviours were normalised and reinforced through group-based learning activities. Youth pride and sense of self in the local community were referenced specifically, emphasising that while learning was the tool, the goal is more identity-based to improve confidence and social engagement.

Overcoming hopelessness through building base skills was another common motif of REAP efforts that reflected values-based motivations for REAP work, with the end result that the learners were able to better function in society. REAPs demonstrated building personal capacity through increasing self-determination, which is significant in that the enhanced ability to engage, self manage, and participate in personal pathways and development became evident. According to Cote (2005), social norms are often transferred through social structures (e.g. families) in the form of cultural values that ideally result in a strong sense of self and purpose, and allow

individuals to make choices and contribute to society. REAPs demonstrated this transference through social structures, with many examples of cultural learning impacting community practices and behaviours, having a flow-on effect into the wider community. This illustrated Cote's views on the connectedness of strengthened identity to strengthened contributions, where learned cultural knowledge from REAP activities increased understanding in cultural spaces and increased confidence to participate in cultural practices. Both Māori and Pasifika examples were readily available across REAPs, but youth, parenting, and rural cultures came through as well.

Both within and outside culturally specific delivery examples, REAPs aimed to change learner thinking and behaviours, to the extent REAPs work was often described holistically as a change-process model. Learners cited strong life-changing results in some cases, with effects central to not only their learning and behaviour, but that of their children as well. This was similar to wider literature (Roberts & Lacey, 2008; Teachman, Paasch & Carver, 1997) where adult learning levels in particular had seen several aspects of social capital networks explored as both a precursor to and outcome of educational achievement. Findings from REAPs also supported the collective social action outcomes set forth by Putnam (2000) as a fundamental aspect of a social capital approach. For REAPs, this again ties back to the notions of increased social involvement through networks, as well as increased social inclusion through enhancing confidence and belonging for learners to participate in and/or contribute to their wider community. First-time participation in group-based learning that led to involvement with community action or representative forums was a common example of REAP learning activities that led to social action.

Despite the widespread examples of values-based action with the REAP

approach, there were also related negative examples where such an approach demonstrated exclusion or sanctions. Sanctions are negative behaviours applied in social groups towards members who do not act according to the set norms and values of the majority (Coleman 1990). One of the key criticisms of social capital (Fine 2010; Field, 2000; Putnam, 2000), is that there is potential for individuals to be disadvantaged by a social capital approach. As the most prominent example, REAP managers demonstrated values-based decision making, often discussing whether staff members were best fit for the organisation and its model or whether an activity was a good fit for a particular learner group.

A frequent example showed that where staff did not align well to this culture, they were deemed not a good fit for REAP work. REAPs were aware of REAP-like characteristics by which staff and partners could be judged. This underscores the literature around sanctions, whereby Coleman (1990) describes that sanctions are carried out to maintain a strong shared sense of purpose and values in a group, making the group more effective in fulfilling its own interests. REAPs sought to maintain Coleman's type of values-based effectiveness by honing in on potential staff and partner organisations that aligned to their own purposes and approach. Specifically, REAP managers consistently made value judgments about partner organisations and their ability to meet need in the way that REAPs do (i.e. the preferred or quality way), again in line with Coleman's (1990) discussion on the role of sanctions. While not an explicit form of sanction, REAPs themselves were criticised in some learner responses, where they had negative experiences with REAPs and suggested REAP credibility was compromised, but they were few (4 out of 135) and were all directly related to dissatisfaction with a particular learning activity.



Overall REAP experiences exemplified social norms through values-based action and role modelling, as well as intentionally changing behaviours through learning. Specifically, REAPs enhanced identity and confidence through culturally relevant learning provision that encouraged social participation through group-based activities. By focusing on social engagement, REAPs played a role in bringing about collective action as a social outcome from their work, while exhibiting sanction-based practices to ensure the values that motivate REAP activity were consistent among REAP staff and organisational partners.

### **Brokerage in REAPs.**

REAPs demonstrated the ability to work with niche and target groups of learners, including youth, Māori, elderly, and others - particularly those classified as hard-to-reach in a learning sense. This is built on REAPs' mandate to fill gaps in learning provision or take learning further where provision has failed learners or been insufficient to meet their needs. Burt (2004) focuses on how connections are bridged between members both inside and outside those networks based on the structures and norms that shape those networks – a process he calls brokerage. This process recognises the unique makeup and norms inherent to each network. REAPs' efforts to influence social norms is enabled by their access to wide networks and credibility, which situates them uniquely to bring groups together around shared learning and development goals in both leadership and facilitation roles. When set alongside the networks and trust-based attributes already discussed, REAPs were well positioned to identify and act on the brokering role Burt describes – an attribute also identified in reviews of REAPs (Ministry of Education, 2007), although no details were discussed on how REAPs undertook that role. What was seen in the results of this research was that

REAPs increased inclusivity in learning activities by not pre-determining what activities would look like until the learner group was engaged. This is an emerging insight on brokerage as a practice feature of REAPs' flexible practices.

Where gaps exist inside a network or with members of another social group, Burt (2004) also highlights the role of brokerage to strengthen the network by closing those gaps. In a practical sense, REAPs created structures for community voice and took leading roles in some cases where those structures for engagement had been lost (such as the closing of a school). That approach was led by local knowledge, with a focus on engaging and connecting members based on the range of networks and relationships already discussed within the REAP approach. This also fits within Granovetter's (1973) example of effective community organisations to illustrate his concept of brokerage in action, where both strong and weak ties in networks contribute to closing gaps in networks. Burt (2005) supports this view by emphasising the role of social actors who can use their knowledge of networks to move across different types of strong and weak ties and close network gaps. REAPs demonstrated both Granovetter's (1973) and Burt's (2005) gap filling through their complementary and supplementary practices, where they added value to existing services, as well as provided opportunities where there was nothing currently. Castiglione, Van Deth, and Wolleb (2008), also emphasised the value of widened networks to enable greater bridging of network structures. REAPs achieved this by making use of their diverse networks across multiple sectors to navigate several distinct groups, in many cases bridging and connecting different groups as a result.

Burt (2004) also highlights the rich opportunity for innovation when brokering on the edge of structural gaps in networks. Because groups tend to be homogenous in

makeup, values, and viewpoints, the brokering role or agent is well placed to identify novel ways to integrate practices and viewpoints (Burt, 2004). Where examples from managers and learners discussed collaborative and gap-filling efforts amidst limited or stretched resources, innovation was used to describe these efforts. Innovation was also cited in examples of bridging social capital, where groups that would not normally work together or exchange were brought together through REAP activity. This reinforces the bridging social capital examples provided by Putnam (2000), and supports Burt's (2004) assertions around the potential for innovation at the coalface of brokerage.

REAPs demonstrated all four social capital elements, while revealing clear insights into how those elements further define REAPs' approach. Trusted relationships formed across both formal and informal networks provide REAPs with a rich capacity for local knowledge, which contributed to collaborative and responsive learning and development activities. These activities, informed by local knowledge and networks, also allowed REAPs to target and bring together specific learning groups around social values (including cultural) that influenced social behaviours and norms. These collective social capital efforts were the means to achieving the ends of lifelong learning and community development processes, which were also evident as part of the findings.

### **Affirmed Lifelong Learning and Community Development Processes**

Lifelong learning was the most prevalent emergent theme in the two participant groups, largely due to managers acknowledging the span REAP work covers, as well as learners providing sector-specific accounts of learning activities across all three sectors. While expected given the literature around REAPs' lifelong learning mandate (Arnott,

1996; Ministry of Education, 2007; Nash, 1982), aspects of personal and social development were expanded upon in this research – specifically demonstrating how skills and learning activities contributed to personal identity and social inclusion. This fits with the established premise that social capital influences the way in which people develop their skills, attitudes, and viewpoints across the lifespan, reflecting Field's (2005) description of lifelong learning as a process that incorporates life experiences as well as acquired knowledge. As per the discussion of social norms above, many of the examples categorised within the social norms themes provided genuinely reflective experiences where learners could either articulate their own integration of knowledge and experience, or where managers described this happening through their own experiences. These examples also illustrated the cooperative and cohesive attributes of lifelong learning, whereby socially acquired and practised skills throughout the lifetime positively influence how individuals integrate into their communities and look for further learning opportunities (Field, 2005). There is a significant connecting point between lifelong learning and social capital. The ongoing use of networks and experienced trust and social norms within those networks impacted on the learning process of individuals and whole communities. This connection reinforced lifelong learning as an integrative process for learners, where exchanges from experiences formed part of the learning process alongside skills specified in a learning activity.

REAP activities also supported community development processes as part of its approach, consistent with statements from REAP reviews (Arnott 1996; Ministry of Education, 2007; Rivers, Dewes & Drumm, 1990) about the growing community and social development features of these organisations. The responsive REAP mandate was foundational to the contemporary REAP approach, where personal and community

development goals were cited as central to activity planning. Learners provided lived examples of these outcomes from REAP activities in the form of having their own capability and that of the wider community enhanced through REAP work. REAPs demonstrated building individual capacity through skills as the first step to enabling the community development process, which fit with the working model Phillips and Pittman (2009) outlined: 1.) building individual capacity through skills, allows 2.) social capital to mobilise those abilities within social networks, so that 3.) community development outcomes can be achieved. This highlights an emerging aspect of REAPs' community development role and its strong connection with social capital, where REAPs' networking efforts were focused on gathering and making use of local knowledge in order to fulfill capability needs by providing relevant, responsive activities. This would then feed the ability of those individuals to contribute to developmental outcomes through mobilising their enhanced skills, confidence, and outlooks.

From a networks perspective, community development relies heavily on understanding the context and many social structures in a community - from individual concerns and experiences to group and community history and culture (Ledwith, 2011). While this is seen as a complex and multifaceted task, Ledwith (2011) goes on to discuss how the ability to relate to the issues and difficulties for individuals and whole communities empowers those being engaged. Again this was where REAP activities made use of its social capital features to fulfill community development goals – by accessing its many social networks (and local knowledge from those networks) to facilitate learning that reflected the personal and cultural needs of learning groups. This was evidenced further by REAPs' ability to bring groups together around shared

values, as well as target specific groups to address their issues and difficulties.

Relating to and valuing local knowledge and culture is a particularly strong point for REAPs, both of which Ife and Tesoriero (2006) describe as essential components of a developmental approach where social change goals are involved. Aspirational statements of managers about what they hoped to achieve with REAP work, as well as the positive affirmations provided by learners' lived experiences above, both evidence learning for social change within REAPs. In fulfilling a developmental approach, examples of REAP practice from managers and learners encapsulated the community development process. The notion of gap filling was based on Ife and Tesoriero's (2006) view that knowledge of local issues is necessary to develop learning solutions. For many learners, REAP activities had positive effects on self-awareness, identity, sense of belonging, and their involvement in collective learning and action. Chile (2007) lists each of these as part of good community development practice in a New Zealand context, and is further supported by Phillips and Pittman (2009), who see these identity and social involvement indicators as essential to building capability and bringing about social change through community development.

REAPs' activities reflected lifelong learning and community development processes in action, though with the added view of how specific aspects of social capital contributed to those processes. The affirmation of these two contexts for REAPs' work added value to explicating social capital elements: illustrating how trusted networks provided access to target learners with clear needs for increase skills and capabilities; highlighting the utility of a brokering role where REAPs can just as easily facilitate partners to provide learning and development services, which in turn enhanced trust with learners and other organisations; and emphasising the confidence

and identity-based attributes of lifelong learning and community development. Each of these examples demonstrated the highly connected role of social capital to these two essential processes, which provide an end-goal context to what REAPs were trying to achieve – namely lifelong learning and community development through a social capital approach.

### **Government Funding Tensions within the REAP Delivery Model**

The alignment of funded learning activities to Government funding is an espoused focus of the Ministry of Education to ensure more “precisely targeted” resources that achieve educational outcomes in schools and communities (Ministry of Education, 2014, p. 4). With Government targets for educational improvement becoming increasingly specific in terms of achievement (e.g. literacy, NCEA, and tertiary qualifications), it is not surprising that funding tension was the key emergent theme from manager responses. In fact, so prevalent were the effects of those funding tensions on a community delivery scale, that their impact was supported by learner comments. In cases where a specific sector of education was used to illustrate the point, ACE was consistently named for the Tertiary Education Strategy’s (see Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment New Zealand, 2014) focus on targeted learners (those with low foundation skills and whose initial learning was unsuccessful) and specified learning provision (e.g. foundation literacy, language, and numeracy skills including digital). Naming particular learner groups and learning topics in advance of provision was seen to be at odds with the broadly responsive and community development ethos of REAPs, where the expectation from funders was to leave needs unmet when not aligned to specific funding criteria. The arising concern was that where Government had increasingly pre-determined groups of need, both the

capability and profile of REAPs would become increasingly compromised.

While respondents did not discuss measureable impacts of those unmet needs, it was clear that the described tension stemmed from the values-based desire of REAPs to be inclusive and holistic in their educational support. While there seemed to be a strategic alignment of Government's educational goals to achieve economic, social, and community wellbeing through increased skills and productivity (see Ministry of Business, Innovation & Employment New Zealand, 2014; Ministry of Education, 2014; REAP Aotearoa New Zealand, 2015a), in practice some of the guidelines to implementing those strategies appeared fraught with difficulty under the REAP approach. Building provision from the starting point of selecting high-needs learners through filtering criteria, such as previous educational achievement or family engagement in the learning progress, requires additional effort and resource before the programming can be developed. This both depletes resources and counters the responsive REAP model where needs become secondary to engaging targeted learner groups. These targeted funding models that have taken hold in the long-standing core functions of REAP work in early childhood, schools, and ACE were seen as detrimental to community responsiveness in the long term. REAP managers specified that a loss in flexibility hindered their contributions to lifelong learning and community development. A loss of responsiveness would also negatively impact trust, networks, and brokerage aspects of the social capital approach, given their relatedness discussed above.

Specifically, implications of this tension are the potential deterioration of trust and credibility of REAPs as responsive organisations able to meet need. Where REAPs operate increasingly from an overt position of Government priorities and are seen as a



Government agent, their social trust, which has been established as essential to their ability to navigate and broker networks, becomes supplanted by a weaker form of institutional trust described by Putnam (2000). Were this more widespread among REAP provision, the ability of REAPs to access and navigate networks would be lessened because personal relationships were shown to be a primary lever for REAPs in gaining information and building trust. Potentially, this risk could increase over time, as the awareness of prescriptive services for adult learning becomes more widely known by the community being served. This counteracts the transactional benefits that establish trust in social groups that Coleman (1990) describes. As learner groups increasingly become aware that they do not fit Government criteria of the day, they would also expect REAPs to not be able to support their needs. Again, comments from learners in this research clearly indicate at least some awareness of this tension and its potentially detrimental impact on communities, often stating they were broadly concerned about loss of REAP funding and that with lessened REAP services the community would be further disadvantaged. While Government priorities weren't explicitly mentioned by learners, there exists an awareness that the transactional benefits for community members is contingent on REAPs meeting Government expectations. This notion is expanded in concerns from managers, who noted that the broad scope of need for adult learners included a number of groups and topics not prioritised by Government. For those learners who do not meet Government's criteria, little remains in REAPs' core services to advance their capability.

Tensions between Government funding priorities and REAPs' responsive approach across the lifespan suggested the need for a better understanding by Government of REAPs and their approach. REAP leaders and learners both recognised

the poor fit and potential harm of Government pre-determined learning criteria and that networks access, established trust, profile and credibility, bringing groups together, and collaboration could all be negatively affected. This is a critical issue to address given the strong role social capital elements have been shown to play in REAPs. These aspects allow REAPs to maximise their development of skills and communities to achieve growth and social change – goals shared with the Government strategies above.

### **Strong Consensus Among Participants on the Positive Attributes of REAPs**

A key finding that must be acknowledged is the near unanimous agreement within and between manager and learner groups on a number of things: 1.) strong support for all four social capital elements at work within REAPs; 2.) agreement by learners on the views of managers on how REAPs work; and 3.) exceedingly positive views of both groups on the attributes and contributions of REAPs. In order to increase the credibility of these findings, a number of considerations are set out below.

The primary consideration is that of insider research, where the researcher is deemed to have an intimate knowledge of and access to the subject being studied and begins the research with personal views or bias (Costley, 2010). Consequently, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2000), reduced objectivity and impartiality could explain the strongly positive findings. The mitigations described in the methodology were designed to reduce these risks, fitting within an interpretivist paradigm. Specifically, the inductive-deductive-inductive coding process that focused heavily on descriptions and thematic language from participants was seen as a considerable analytical effort. Combined with the use of long quotations to provide a fuller context for supporting data, these methods align with Hammersley (2000), who argues that the

conscientious researcher is bound to minimise the impact of bias on the research process through transparency. By applying Hammersley's (2000) notion of transparency to both analysis and the data, aspects of Crotty's (1999) approach to declare researcher assumptions are also addressed. This is employed where the researcher's views on REAPs' use of trusted relationships and bringing groups together are clearly presented in the introduction and conceptual framework chapters.

Self selection may be another factor influencing the strongly aligned and positive results for REAPs. While participants in both groups were derived from samples that were random, it is expected that those most interested in providing feedback would take part. Motivations for feedback as part of participation could equally have been positive or negative. This is considered in light of Nichols and Maner's (2008) views on demand characteristics (where participants may be responding based on what is expected of them more than their true experiences), and acquiescence bias (where learner respondents may have tended to select positive survey options), both of which have been considered. Within that self selection, the questionnaire response rate (addressed as part of data analysis within the methodology chapter) was low (15%) across the total of possible REAP participants. It has been acknowledged that a higher response rate may have produced different findings.

Overall, these positive results may have resulted from poor sampling or self selection of participants with positive views, and/or influence from the researcher to skew research design and data analysis towards positive responses. On the other hand, there may be genuinely consistent positive views of REAPs' provision. Given the social capital discussion above, the high use of trusted personal relationships and valued-based work across a rural community setting could produce a positive profile for

REAPs. This could be reinforced by their responsive work, where in addition to trust and credibility, the positive changes to confidence and behaviour shared by learners and the non-competitive approach of REAPs could have contributed to such a strong standing in their regions. In any case, both the researcher and supervisors continually challenged these findings in their discussions to ensure critical thinking and analysis throughout the writing process.

### **Chapter Six Summary**

Discussion of the findings presents a clear answer to the primary research question: to what extent do REAPs make use of a social capital approach to contribute to education in rural New Zealand? These efforts were supported by the enabling research questions on REAP characteristics, contexts, and social capital elements, answered in the literature review and conceptual framework chapters. Based on this distillation of findings, REAPs can be described as strongly operationalising the essential components of a social capital approach: REAPs access a variety of *networks* of learners and community partners, built on mutual social and institutional *trust*, that can be *brokered* to come together around shared interests and values, in order to reinforce or shift *social norms* within those groups and their communities. Emergent themes reinforced these aspects.

Several key findings emerged as unique to this study. REAPs:

- Made extensive use of formal and informal networks, prioritising social trust in conjunction with institutional trust to maximise trustworthiness, allowing learner participation to be achieved through persuasion rather than coercion;

- Utilised extensive trusted networks to maintain rich and up-to-date local knowledge about learning and development needs, to inform wider social benefit and collaborations;
- Established widespread credibility through a non-competitive and shared resource approach, seen as uncommon in the current funding climate;
- Flexed and adapted their programming to incentivise learning through relevance, at times leading to innovative and collaborative projects;
- Took a strong values and identity-based approach to learning, where confidence and identity were enhanced for learners to improve future choice making in learning and development;
- Demonstrated ability to enable learners to change behaviours through culturally relevant activities that enhance their sense of belonging, pride, identity, and motivation to contribute to their community;
- Worked with niche and target groups of learners, often bringing groups together around shared goals given their trust-based and flexible attributes;
- Innovated through their brokering role, by being able to access a range of groups, skills, and perspectives on behalf of individuals and communities; and
- Struggled to be truly responsive to learning and development needs under increasingly restrictive Government funding criteria.

From these insights into REAPs' approach, practical applications can be suggested for REAPs, Government, and community partners. These recommendations come as part of reflecting across the project as a whole and considering further research that should be undertaken to further findings about REAPs.

## **Chapter 7 Conclusion:**

### **Revisiting the Research Aims and Looking to Future Research**

This thesis set out to explore how REAPs operate as a policy solution amidst a rural environment, where resources are thinning and collaborations are increasingly essential to meet developmental goals for communities. To better understand REAPs' contributions as a partner in lifelong learning and community development, the series of research questions below examined the extent to which a social capital approach was evident.

#### *Primary research question:*

To what extent do REAPs make use of a social capital approach to contribute to education in rural New Zealand?

#### *Enabling research questions:*

What are the characteristics of REAPs as they have evolved over time?

What contexts do REAPs operate within based on their characteristics?

What are the key elements of a social capital approach?

Interviews and questionnaires were used as data gathering methods within an interpretive phenomenological methodology. These were grounded in a social capital theoretical framework and a constructivist epistemology to answer the primary and enabling research questions. The results answered the primary research question, with REAPs strongly demonstrating a social capital approach (whose aspects are identified in Chapter 3, answering the third enabling research question). These findings were presented in light of REAPs' responsive and flexible characteristics (taken from the first enabling research question) that contribute to lifelong learning and community development processes (taken from the second enabling research question).

## **Contribution to Knowledge**

As the result of this investigation, several contributions to knowledge have been made about REAPs and their approach, distilled into four key points. These key findings capture aspects of all four social capital elements, as well as emergent themes discussed in the previous chapter.

*Key finding one:* REAPs were able to leverage both social and institutional forms of trust across informal and formal networks respectively, emphasising social or thick trust in their work, allowing them to be viewed in a more personal and less institutional light. Coupled with their non-competitive approach despite scarce resources, this enhanced their credibility as community organisations.

*Key finding two:* Over time REAPs have increasingly demonstrated work that achieves community development ends through personal growth in learners. Values-based decision making, identity-focused learning, and a general focus on building confidence and capability in learners, further illustrate REAPs' contribution to holistic lifelong learning.

*Key finding three:* REAPs' extensive brokering role was more deeply understood than in references from the literature, with the gaining and sharing of local information critical to identifying gaps in networks and development needs. REAPs provided appropriate closure to those gaps through learning and collaborative activities. This gave rise to the high potential for innovation in those spaces where groups were brokered and bridged together.

*Key finding four:* Increasingly specific Government funding criteria, targeting particular learning groups or methods, was restrictive to the responsive REAP

model. Continued pre-determination of learning activities and participants suggested a potential for the deterioration of the trust and credibility of REAPs to meet local needs over time.

### **Implications and Recommendations**

The resounding implication of establishing a social capital approach for REAPs, is that they be better understood in terms of their full capability and potential to develop communities through responsive lifelong learning. Placing a social capital framework across REAPs, researchers and practitioners can consider both the outcomes achieved by a social capital approach within a community education context, as well as the deeper consideration of the constituent parts of that approach (i.e. the breadth and variety of networks, the means of establishing trust, the types of values associated with bringing groups together for common purposes in learning etc.). These considerations can be viewed as a process that connects the four social capital elements explored. In it, networks are necessary for access to create associations, memberships, and allow spaces for social exchange and function. Trust must then be established in order to be allowed to fully participate in and navigate those networks. Through those trusted exchanges, shared social values, attributes, and aspirations can be fully understood. This is done in order to inform and to enable brokering and connecting activities that solidify social groups and group-based action (in this case learning) that is reflective of shared goals - particularly for education.

Social capital's key elements speak strongly to both the collaborative efforts required to maintain development in rural communities, as well as the local knowledge and trust required to develop truly learner-centric activities that meet local need. Such an approach could be utilised by funders, partner NGOs, and agencies to



implement socially focused learning programmes in rural communities much more widely, while still maintaining a focus on the high-level, quality-of-life goals set by developed nations. Rural communities are often areas of isolation, poor health and low socio-economic status, with reduced access to higher learning and training opportunities. The potential of leveraging access to hard-to-reach or under-supported groups of learners and families in these regions via trusted REAP networks holds potential for improved collaborations and effectiveness in addressing social issues and improving learning opportunities and wellbeing. I therefore recommend that:

**Government** consider the flexibility and adaptability inherent to social capital practices when forming policy. Given the current review of the Education Act and the emphasis on whole-of-community learning, aspects such as networks, trust, social norms, and brokerage have a role to play in sector collaborations to achieve educational success for all. Both the Ministry and Education and the Tertiary Education Commission should be proactively approached through individual REAPs' regional relationships and REAPANZ's national relationships with those bodies to elaborate the practicality of social capital in action.

**REAP managers** more explicitly advocate to funders and partner organisations the flexible features of REAPs to achieve shared learning and development goals, as well as how their efforts to bridge gaps in networks of learners and partner organisations can lead to innovative practice through connecting up new people and ideas. This could particularly be applied in collaborative funding environments where new groups are brought together around the shared goals and values-based activities discussed above.

**REAP Aotearoa New Zealand** more clearly identify strong examples of social capital practice across REAPs to illustrate the collective ability of these organisations to: leverage different forms of trust through networks; emphasise confidence and identity as precursors to community contribution; and both provide and broker responsive activity to progress holistic forms of lifelong learning and community development. This could take the form of REAPANZ lobbying Government on the social benefits of non-targeted funding to highlight the detrimental tensions growing in the current funded model.

**Partner organisations** that contribute to lifelong learning and community development goals consider how their current practices make use of social capital features to maximise shared contributions to resource, given the increased collaborative environment of the day. Specifically, REAPs could work with local partner organisations to help identify activities that enhance shared goals of identity and confidence building in learners, based on local knowledge. This could also be extended into areas of identifying and addressing negative social norms across communities, where REAPs share their local knowledge of cultural and values-based norms within learner groups.

### **Further Research**

In terms of further research, with social capital identified as a legitimate descriptor of the REAP approach, each aspect could be examined more in depth to provide insight into the medium to long-term changes resulting from such work. Specific social norms within the identified themes in this research could be further explored through practitioner and learner investigations. Concepts such as identity, confidence, social integration/cohesion, and cultural context were all identified as

components of social norms that motivated both learners and REAPs to undertake responsive learning activities with meaningful intended outcomes. Investigations into the value and extensiveness of those concepts, as well as their reported success, would contribute to a widened understanding of rural lifelong learning in New Zealand. And as with one of the key contributions to knowledge, REAPs' brokering role holds potential for closely examining the conditions of and contributors to innovation and capability development, particularly where structural holes in networks are filled by groups and organisations which access a wide range of networks.

Equally, given the tensions discussed around funding requirements and their impact on the responsive model core to REAP functions, more could be done to understand the value of the REAP model to adapt funding expectations to encourage and enhance support agency collaborations, rather than restrict them based on funding criteria. Much has been shared from leaders and learners across REAPs that these organisations are values-based in their work and that meeting the unique needs of each learner or group supported is central to that work. Given the points raised around the heightened demand for new skills in an ever-changing and global society, the REAP approach is one which could serve those goals well. Furthermore, policy implications of increasingly restricted criteria for ACE learning deserve to be researched in relation to the potential contributions and impact of a social capital approach to learning in relation to the outcomes targeted by that sector.

Further REAPs could be accessed to widen the sample across rural New Zealand regions and elicit more examples of REAP social capital in practice. Additionally, the practitioner perspective may also provide further rich data on how REAPs operate within a social capital context. In particular, this could be useful to begin identifying

the types and breadth of networks used in promoting and delivering REAP services, as well as the factors contributing to successful brokering of groups and coordination/leadership of community-based learning. Results may further open doors for investigating the potential of social capital-based services within New Zealand, particularly those associated with human and economic capital as contributors to personal wellbeing. Further research specific to exploring the REAP approach in social capital terms could be focused on the practitioner level, a group not included in this study. Findings there may well inform best practice and further insights around networks, trust, social norms, and brokerage for REAP work.

### **Limitations and Areas of Improvement to Enhance Results**

Central to this study's limitations is the potential for researcher bias, as the project was carried out with a sole researcher with intimate knowledge of REAPs. This has been acknowledged and mitigations have been put in place in multiple stages of the thesis. It is noted that a collaborative investigation may have widened findings or altered interpreted data. A further limitation is that participants were self selecting and their views may not be representative. As a limitation, this relates to the key issue arising from the results where a very positive view of REAPs came through from both participant groups. An improvement-based line of questions for REAP leaders and learners around how REAPs could operate better might well have revealed insights into less positive attributes. Again, it is likely that the self-selecting participants in both groups were motivated to be part of the project based on positive REAP experiences. Anonymity of questionnaire respondents also prevented connections being made to specific REAP practices or regions for comparison.

A further limitation was that other people were potential participants with views that would have been valuable, but were not accessed for the study. Two suitable examples include focus groups of learners or frontline staff (e.g. coordinators) from each sector to allow more in-depth and probing questions as with manager interviews. Each of these additional methods would increase the richness of learner data and further allow exploratory questions on social capital elements in action. These are seen as improvements to the current study around the extent to which REAPs utilise a social capital approach, as opposed to separate and further research that would incorporate different lines of questioning.

### **Revisiting Presuppositions & Final Reflections**

Reflecting on the research process as a whole, I am mindful of the a priori thinking brought into this project. Given my own experiences with REAPs, I have declared my views that trusted relationships and bringing groups together around shared goals were REAP features prior to this research. What I have learned is that those aspects, while clearly reflected in the conceptual framework and the findings, are integral parts of a much larger approach. The relationship between trust and networks is complex and, as evidenced by participants in this study, requires close consideration of the makeup, history, and culture of each network engagement to be understood well. With REAPs contributing to such a wide variety of networks on a daily basis, there is much more to be articulated about the REAP approach than simply the notion of trusted relationships. The ways in which REAPs leverage their knowledge of communities to entice participation or provide opportunities for increased capability that enables local solutions by local people far exceeds the base notion brought forward by the researcher in the formative stages of this study.

The same can be said for the notion of bringing groups together, which I saw as a broad-yet-valuable facilitation role for REAPs. Again the reality expanded much wider than my presupposition, in particular with the way in which social norms emerged central to this work. The themes of leadership, collaboration, and engaging specific groups that supplemented my own views of bringing people together became intrinsically linked to a values-based approach. What became clear throughout the research process was that in order to bring about the personal and developmental change REAPs aspired to achieve, they needed to *deeply* understand the groups they brought together. The articulation of self, confidence, and identity as aspects of social norms within the defined social capital approach, was novel to my thinking and has again widened my preconceived views on this aspect of REAP work.

Equipped with a better knowledge of how REAPs operate, there is promise in addressing the rural education disadvantages facing our outlying communities. Not just in the work of REAPs, but also in the broader application of social capital means to achieve lifelong learning and community development ends with partner organisations and communities themselves. Being able to adapt to individual learners and develop their ability to continually seek out and self-sustain their learning is a hallmark of the future of education. Doing that in a rural environment of scarce resources will require working together to achieve shared goals – something the current consultation on New Zealand's Education Act states is a priority. Although the Act still lacks any mention of lifelong learning, there is an apparent opportunity to change that. Knowing the benefits of lifelong learning, as well as its connection to community development, social cohesion, and personal wellbeing, New Zealand could and should be looking for ways to enshrine the value of a commitment to education across the lifespan.

Examples of practice like those found in REAPs are an ideal place to start to examine how that commitment could be carried out across varied communities, keeping broad social benefits and collaborative methods at the forefront of such an approach to learning.

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## Appendix 1 – Interview Protocol for REAP Managers

***Exploring New Zealand's REAPs*****INTERVIEW PROTOCOL - REAP MANAGERS**

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

REAP Name \_\_\_\_\_ Years of Service \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you for being a part of this research exploring how REAPs work as unique learning organisations in New Zealand. Below are some open questions about your experiences with REAPs generally. The approach is very much experience driven, that is I want to hear about your personal examples and descriptions – there are no right or wrong responses.

The questions are intended to be open and at times I may ask further questions to get a bit more detail. The aim is to have a conversation that flows to get as much description as possible from your perspective. Later on your responses will help shape a questionnaire for a group of your learners to expand on themes from the interview, as well as capture their experiences.

*The interview will take about an hour. It will be as conversational as possible, but I've provided some broad questions that identify areas to explore about REAPs.*

1. How would you describe a REAP – what is it and what does it do?
2. Why are REAPs important - what contribution does your REAP make to its community?
3. What is an example of your REAP's vision **'INSERT'** in action?
4. Can you use examples to explain how your REAP achieves its guiding principles:
  - a. **'PRINCIPLE 1'**
  - b. **'PRINCIPLE 2'**
  - c. **'PRINCIPLE 3'**
5. Can you describe the characteristics of your REAP's approach to its work?
6. What characteristics have you experienced are consistent throughout REAPs and why?
7. How would you describe the REAP model to others – how do REAPs do what they do?
8. Is there anything else you would like to add that we haven't already covered?

Once again, thank you for taking the time to be interviewed for this project. Your support is greatly appreciated. I look forward to sharing the findings with you in the months to come.



## Appendix 2 – Questionnaire for Learners Including Release Statement

<b>REAP Learner Questionnaire</b>	
<b>REAP Survey Research Statement</b>	
<p><b>Kia ora -</b></p> <p><b>Firstly, thank you for supporting this research around REAPs. This questionnaire is brief and should take about ten minutes to complete.</b></p> <p><b>Please note that by accepting 'Next' and completing this survey, you are consenting to participate in this research. You are also accepting the terms of the Learner Information Sheet e-mailed to you with this survey link.</b></p> <p><b>Your comments will be kept confidential and any names you provide in your answers may be changed to prevent them from being identified with a particular REAP.</b></p> <p><b>Thank you again.</b></p> <p><b>Please answer the questions below based on your experience with the REAP in your area.</b></p> <p><b>While the first item is mandatory, if you do not want to answer any of the following questions for any reason, simply move on to the next question.</b></p> <p><b>* 1. Which area of learning have you been most engaged with at REAP?</b></p> <p><input type="radio"/> Early Childhood Education</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Schools Education</p> <p><input type="radio"/> Adult &amp; Community Education</p> <p><b>2. Please describe what REAP is to you.</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <p><b>3. What are two examples of how you have seen REAP contribute to the community?</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <p><b>4. In what ways has REAP impacted on you as a learner?</b></p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 40px; width: 100%;"></div> <p><b>5. What three words best describe how REAP works?</b></p> <p>1 <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/></p> <p>2 <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/></p> <p>3 <input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/></p>	

## 6. How much do you agree with these statements on how REAP works?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
By using relationships and connections in the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By role modeling change for individuals and groups.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By providing consistent and reliable services for support.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
By bringing together individuals and groups with similar needs.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 7. How much do you agree with these statements about REAP?

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
REAP identifies community learning needs and provides relevant responses.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
REAP knows its local community well.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
REAP uses learning to develop and grow the community.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
REAP is flexible in what learning it offers and how it is delivered.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
REAP impacts on social/community change.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 8. As a result of your experience(s) with REAP, have YOU ...

	Yes	No
Joined any new groups or clubs?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Become involved in a new community activity?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accessed any services or support?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 9. Based on your experience(s) with REAP, have YOU ...

	Yes	No
Applied your learning day-to-day?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Changed a behaviour as a result of your learning?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Taken a different viewpoint on an issue or problem?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## 10. As a result of your experience(s) with REAP, would you say REAP ...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Provides consistent and reliable services?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provides quality support services?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Is a place you would return to for support?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 11. In your experience(s), does REAP ...

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree Nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Play a role bringing groups together in the community?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Collaborate with others to provide activities?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bring people together around common values/purposes?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## 12. What else would you like to say about REAP that hasn't been covered in this survey?

**REAP Learner Questionnaire**

Thank you!

**Your answers have been submitted.**

**Thank you for support. Please note that a summary of the results will be available at your REAP later this year.**

Nga mihi nui.

Appendix 3 – Massey University Human Ethics Approval Letter, Application 13/05



**MASSEY UNIVERSITY**  
TE KUNENGA KI PUREHUROA

7 May 2013

Derek Morrison  
33 Puckey Avenue  
KAITAIA 0441

Dear Derek

**Re: HEC: Southern B Application – 13/05**  
**Exploring New Zealand's REAPs: Social capital and its value in rural education**

Thank you for your letter dated 2 May 2013.

On behalf of the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B I am pleased to advise you that the ethics of your application are now approved. Approval is for three years. If this project has not been completed within three years from the date of this letter, reapproval must be requested.

If the nature, content, location, procedures or personnel of your approved application change, please advise the Secretary of the Committee.

Yours sincerely

Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair  
**Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B**

cc Dr Linda Leach  
Institute of Education  
**PN500**

Prof John O'Neill  
Institute of Education  
**PN500**

A/Prof Sally Hansen  
Interim Director  
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## Appendix 4 – REAP Board Chair Invitation and Request to Access

[Date 2013]

REAP Board Chair

REAP Name

REAP Address Line 1

REAP Address Line 2

RE: Access to organisational documents and learner participants for REAP research project

Kia ora Board Chair

I am excited that your REAP's Manager has indicated a willingness to participate in a study exploring how New Zealand's REAPs contribute to rural education.

As discussed in the information sheet provided to the Manager, it is necessary to have access to a few things from your individual REAP in order to develop the research fully. I would like to formally request your permission to access three items for the following purposes:

1. Your REAP's current Strategic Plan as a document that articulate the mission, vision and values of your organisation. This information will be used to shape interview questions for your REAP's Manager around their experiences leading a REAP in the second stage of the study.
2. That your Manager be allowed to take part in a one-hour face-to-face or Skype interview around their experiences with REAP. The study's goal is to help articulate the REAP model – how REAPs contribute to learning in rural areas.
3. Access to a group of your REAP's learners who have engaged in learning with your REAP in the past five years. While you needn't provide direct contact details, it will be requested that your Manager forward an electronic information sheet and a web link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire on their experiences with REAP to a total of 150 learners – 50 from each of your REAPs' core areas (early childhood, schools and adult and community education).

These things will be essential to completing the research, so if you have any reservations about providing access to them, please ask questions. Should you decide you are not comfortable providing access for any reason that is fine. Please simply respond to me directly in writing ([ryanm@farnorthreap.org.nz](mailto:ryanm@farnorthreap.org.nz)) with your decision as soon as you are able so the above steps can be undertaken or alternative REAPs can be approached.

Sincerely,

Ryan Morrison  
Doctoral Candidate

## Appendix 5 – Research Project Information Sheet for Managers

**Exploring New Zealand's REAPs*****INFORMATION SHEET FOR REAP MANAGERS*****Introduction**

Kia ora, my name is Ryan Morrison and I am a doctoral student with Massey University's Institute of Education. I am undertaking a study on the Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs) across New Zealand to explore how they contribute to rural education. My research is informed by my professional experience in management of a REAP for four years and governance service with REAP Aotearoa New Zealand for two years.

This information sheet is provided to explain the research project and give you sufficient understanding to make a decision on whether or not you would like to take part in the study.

**A Bit About The Project**

The project aims to bring together information on REAPs and how they work from multiple points of view. Because little exists outside of REAPs to explain how these non-profits work – particularly in published research – I have begun with those who know best, using experiences and stories from REAP leaders and learners as the basis for understanding these organisations and their role.

The study will bring together REAP strategic and delivery documents to shape questions about REAPs. These questions will then be used for interviews with REAP Managers. This will give REAP leaders an opportunity to share their experiences and stories around REAPs and what they do. Responses can then be explored for similarities and differences to put to a sample of REAP learners. The learners will then provide further insight through a survey questionnaire.

This is a valuable opportunity to let those who lead and receive support from REAPs give a range of perspectives on how REAPs go about their work and contribute to learning in rural New Zealand.

**A Bit About Your Involvement**

Participants chosen to inform this research can be broken into two core groups: current Managers of REAPs and learners who have been supported by REAPs in the past two years. The targeted number of Managers/REAPs for this project is six. Given the researcher's role as a REAP Manager, his REAP (Far North) will be excluded from the project.

All REAP Managers will receive an invitation to participate via this information sheet. Should you signal interest by e-mail to take part in the study, a letter will be sent to your Board Chairperson (with a copy to you) requesting permission to have access to your REAP for this study's purposes.

So what specifically will be asked of you should you decide to participate? A few things, but overall the commitment of time will be kept minimal on your part. All in all, Managers should find they will spend between two and three hours in total on their participation. To give you a better idea of how things would proceed, should you agree to participate, the stages of involvement will be as follows:

- After signaling interest to participate, your Board Chairperson would receive a formal letter requesting access to your REAP, you and your learners;
- Your Board Chair would directly contact the researcher electronically confirming your Board's approval and agreeing to take part in the project;
- You would then return your consent form and a copy of your REAP's Strategic Plan to inform interview questions;

- You would take part in a one-off interview sound-recorded (should you consent) on your experiences leading a REAP;
- You would review a copy of your transcript from the interview and return any corrections and the release form to proceed to the researcher;
- And finally you would then forward an electronic information sheet and link to a Survey Monkey questionnaire to a number of your REAP learners. The target is 50 learners across the three core areas of learning (early childhood, schools and adult and community education) who have engaged with your REAP in the last two years to complete the questionnaire. So you would be e-mailing 150 learners in total.

The timeframe for these steps runs between June and September 2013.

### **Interview Procedures for Managers**

Interviews with participating REAP Managers will be conducted via Skype or teleconference. Managers will receive the interview protocol with an outline of the questions at least one week prior to the scheduled interview. These interviews should take approximately one hour and it will be requested that they be sound recorded only for transcription (this includes the Skype option). Managers will be given the opportunity to review the final transcription and make corrections.

Should participating Managers feel any distress or discomfort in being interviewed by the researcher who is also a professional colleague, the option of having an alternative interviewer conduct the interviews will be made available. Samantha Lafaiali'i a former REAP staff member and current Research Systems Officer in Queensland, Australia will be the alternative interviewer.

### **Data Management**

Transcribed data from the interviews will be used to look for similarities and differences in how Managers view REAPs. This data will then inform and be combined with questionnaire data from learners to draw conclusions on the REAP model as it is experienced. It should be noted that pseudonyms will be used for any excerpts, quotes and references to particular REAPs in the data. However, Managers should be aware that based on the content of their transcript it may be possible for their REAP to be identified. The researcher will make best efforts to minimise the opportunity for this to happen, but confidentiality is not guaranteed.

Once obtained all data will be secured in electronic format in a primary and backup location with both copies being password protected. Upon completion of the project, all electronic data and files related to the study will be archived with the researcher for up to five years at which time they will be deleted.

A summary of all findings from the project will be sent to participating Managers. It is intended that the full findings of this research be presented to REAP Managers, potentially in a conference setting and a meeting of REAP Managers. It is also hoped that the study will be submitted in part or whole to peer-reviewed educational journals and/or publications.

### **Participant's Rights**

*You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you do participate, you have the right to:*

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study (at any time before data analysis begins – deadline of 31<sup>st</sup> July 2013);*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *ask for the recorder to be turned off at any time during the interview.*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

Should you have further queries, contact information can be found below. I look forward to taking part in this exciting research together should you decide to go forward.

Sincerely,

Ryan Morrison  
Doctoral Candidate

### **Project Contacts**

Key contacts for this study can be found below should you have questions at any time:

*Ryan Morrison – Researcher  
Doctoral Candidate, Massey University*

E-mail: [derek.ryan.morrison@gmail.com](mailto:derek.ryan.morrison@gmail.com)

Phone: 027 361 6453

Or

*Linda Leach – Primary Supervisor  
Senior Lecturer of Education, Massey University*

E-mail: [L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz)

Phone: (06) 356 9099 ext 84457

Or

*John O'Neill – Secondary Supervisor  
Director of Research Ethics, Massey University*

E-mail: [J.G.Oneill@massey.ac.nz](mailto:J.G.Oneill@massey.ac.nz)

Phone: (06) 356 9099 ext 81090

### **Committee Approval Statement**

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/05. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).



## Appendix 6 – Consent to Participate in Research Form for Managers

***Exploring New Zealand's REAPs*****PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM - REAP MANAGERS**

I have read the Information Sheet and have had the details of the study explained to me. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I understand that I may ask further questions at any time.

Please mark the appropriate response below:

- \_\_ I agree to being interviewed by the researcher.
- \_\_ I would prefer to be interviewed by someone other than the researcher.
- \_\_ I agree to the interview being sound recorded.
- \_\_ I do not agree to the interview being sound recorded.
- \_\_ I wish to have my recordings returned to me.
- \_\_ I do not wish to have my recordings returned to me.

I agree to participate in this study under the conditions set out in the Information Sheet.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

**Full Name - printed**

## Appendix 7 – Research Project Information Sheet for REAP Learners

**Exploring New Zealand's REAPs*****INFORMATION SHEET FOR REAP LEARNERS*****Introduction**

Kia ora, my name is Ryan Morrison and I am a doctoral student with Massey University's Institute of Education. I am doing a study on the Rural Education Activities Programmes (REAPs) across New Zealand to look at how they support rural education. This sheet is provided to explain the project and give you enough information to decide if you would like to be a part of the study.

**Project Description and Invitation**

I am researching REAPs because only New Zealand has them – a place that supports early childhood, schools and adult education all at once. They are unique and very little has been written about them since they began 30 years ago. I have decided that the best way to get to know REAPs for a study is to talk to the people who lead them and those who get support from them.

The study will begin interviewing REAP Managers. Once completed, similar and different experiences in their responses can then be put to a sample of REAP learners – you – through an online survey to share your experiences.

The value in this research is to give the many different people who are involved with REAPs the chance to explain how REAPs work and contribute to learning in rural New Zealand.

**A Bit About Your Involvement**

You have been identified by your REAP Manager as a potential participant who has engaged in learning with that REAP in the past five years. The target for this study is 150 learners from each REAP – 50 from each area of learning: early childhood, schools and adult and community education.

The Manager of your REAP has provided you with this information sheet as the first step because you've engaged with their REAP around some form of learning. If you decide you would like to be part of the study, simply follow the link provided in the Managers' e-mail to proceed to the Survey Monkey questionnaire. The questionnaire will include questions on your experiences with REAP and should only take about ten minutes to complete. You will be able to stop at any time during the questionnaire should you choose to do so.

**Data Management**

Responses from your questionnaire will be used to look for similarities and differences in how learners view REAPs. These responses will be added to Managers' responses from their interviews to draw conclusions on how REAPs work. Questionnaires will be anonymous so any excerpts, quotes and references to your responses will not be connected to you. However, if you give details about a specific REAP activity it is possible that someone may know which REAP your response is connected to, although your name would never be used. Completion of the questionnaire implies consent to include the information in the research.

All data will be secured in electronic format in two locations with both copies being password protected. Upon completion of the project, all electronic data and files related to the study will be stored with the project supervisors for up to five years at which time they will be deleted.

As a participant, you will be able to access a summary of all findings of the project from your REAP. It is intended that the full findings of this research be presented to REAP Managers, potentially in a conference setting. It is also hoped that the study will be submitted in part or whole to peer-reviewed educational journals and/or publications.

### **Participant's Rights**

*You are under no obligation to accept this invitation. If you do participate, you have the right to:*

- *decline to answer any particular question;*
- *withdraw from the study (any time before data analysis begins – deadline of 15<sup>th</sup> April 2014);*
- *support from a local counselor or professional should participation in the research raise any personal distress;*
- *ask any questions about the study at any time during participation;*
- *provide information on the understanding that your name will not be used unless you give permission to the researcher;*
- *be given access to a summary of the project findings when it is concluded.*

Sincerely,

Ryan Morrison  
Doctoral Candidate

### **Support Contact**

Relationships Aotearoa  
<http://www.relationships.org.nz/contact-us/>  
0800 735 283

### **Project Contacts**

Key contacts for this study can be found below should you have questions at any time:

*Ryan Morrison – Researcher  
Doctoral Candidate, Massey University*

E-mail: [derek.ryan.morrison@gmail.com](mailto:derek.ryan.morrison@gmail.com)

Phone: 027 361 6453

Or

*Linda Leach – Primary Supervisor  
Senior Lecturer of Education, Massey University*

E-mail: [L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz](mailto:L.J.Leach@massey.ac.nz)

Phone: (06) 356 9099 ext 84457

Or

*John O'Neill – Secondary Supervisor  
Director of Research Ethics, Massey University*

E-mail: [J.G.Oneill@massey.ac.nz](mailto:J.G.Oneill@massey.ac.nz)

Phone: (06) 356 9099 ext 81090

### ***Committee Approval Statement***

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, Application 13/05. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the research, please contact Dr Nathan Matthews, Chair, Massey University Human Ethics Committee: Southern B, telephone 06 350 5799 x 80877, email [humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz](mailto:humanethicsouthb@massey.ac.nz).

Appendix 8 – Request to Audio Record Manager Interviews for Transcription

**Exploring New Zealand’s REAPs**

***AUTHORITY FOR THE RELEASE OF TRANSCRIPTS***

I confirm that I have had the opportunity to read and amend the transcript of the interview conducted with me.

I agree that the edited transcript and extracts from this may be used in reports and publications arising from the research.

**Signature:**

**Date:**

.....

**Full Name - printed**

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