



## **An Exploration of a Variation of Achievement**

Submitted by

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## **Statement of Original Authorship**

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No parts of this thesis have been submitted towards the award of any other degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

All research procedures reported in the thesis received the approval of the relevant Ethics/Safety Committees.

Signed:

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Sue Jury

Date:

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## **Abstract**

In 2006, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) identified New Zealand as not only having some of the highest levels of achievement in reading but also, and of far more national concern, having some of the lowest levels. Thus, it was of little surprise that the New Zealand Ministry of Education set goals to address this concern. One of the outcomes of this particular national educational goal was the introduction of the National Literacy Professional Development Project (LDP), a project to improve student performance in literacy, particularly for those students who struggle with reading.

The purpose of this study is to explore why a collective of five schools participating in a localised and highly prescribed Literacy Development Project (LDP), experienced markedly different student achievement outcomes.

The following research questions were constructed from a synthesis of the literature and guided the study.

1. In what ways did the vision influence student academic achievement in LDP?
2. In what ways did professional learning influence student academic achievement in LDP?
3. In what ways did culture influence student academic achievement in LDP?
4. In what ways did leadership of change influence student academic achievement in LDP?

Using a symbolic interactionist theoretical approach to examine this case of variation in achievement between schools in the collective, a two-stage data collection process was adopted. In the first stage of the study, achievement data documents were collected and analysed followed by individual interviews with 25 participants

comprising principals, literacy leaders and teachers. The second stage consisted of four focus group interviews. Data were analysed using constant comparative analysis.

This study found four key areas of practice, implementation of a vision, provision of professional learning, leadership of culture and leadership of change affected the implementation of a schooling improvement project which in turn led to a variation of implementation and therefore the variation of outcomes in student academic achievement. Four theoretical proposition are advanced from this study.

The first proposition is that duality of vision (school/ project) impedes successful change. The second proposition is that professional learning models that encourage interaction and shared meaning-making enhance the improvement of academic results. The third proposition is that schools and systems do not attempt to introduce change without first reviewing the culture of the sites to ensure they are conducive to adopting the change. The final proposition is that leadership of change requires complex skills, focused not only on action but more importantly on the quality of personal and professional interactions.

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## List of Abbreviations

aRs	aSTTle Reading Score
aSTTle	Assessment tool for Teaching and Learning
CAPS	Concepts about Print
ERO	Education Review Office
ILP	Individual Learning Pathway
JSIF	Joint Schooling Initiative Funding
LDP	Literacy Development Project
LPDP	Literacy Professional Development Project
NCEA	National Certificate in Educational Achievement
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PD	Professional Development

PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLC	Professional Learning Community
PLL	Professional Leader of Learning
RTLIT	Resource Teacher of Literacy
SEA	School Entry Assessment

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

I work as a primary school principal in New Zealand and my interest is in school leadership that brings advancements in student learning. As a principal I was a part of a 5-year Literacy Development Project (LDP) that came about as a result of the provision of external funding targeted to improve educational outcomes for students in a small number of schools that were geographically close to one another. The funding initiative was promoted as a way to bring five school principals together to improve literacy in their schools. I was aware that, as the LDP was initially implemented, all schools had student literacy scores that were below the national average. Furthermore, the annual student literacy data for each of the project schools provided evidence that as the LDP was implemented, a variation in the results between the schools occurred where one school's results moved to above the national average, while the remaining four schools stayed below the national average. Thus, this project provides the focal point for this study. As a primary school principal in this area, I wanted to explore this project with a view to understanding the influence of principal leadership on student achievement following the departure of the project coordinator who was employed to implement the LDP across the five schools.

The research problem for this study is an unexpected variation in student academic achievement in literacy outcomes across participating schools in the LDP. Given that the demographic information remained constant across all of the participating schools, the leadership role of the principal provided an important influence upon the LDP implementation process. This study describes the influence provided by each of the respective principals so as to explicate those leadership practices that enhanced, hindered or constrained the implementation process.

To set the scene, in 2004 there was a general concern for low levels of literacy within the New Zealand context. In 2006, the internationally accepted Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) identified New Zealand as having some of the highest levels of achievement in reading while also having some of the lowest levels. It is not surprising that when this data became available, the New Zealand Ministry of Education set goals to address this unacceptable inconsistency. One of the outcomes of this goal setting was the introduction of the National Literacy Professional development Project (LPDP), a project to improve student performance in literacy, particularly for those students who struggle with reading.

Consistent with the belief that raising achievement and reducing disparity is not seen as solely the domain of classroom teachers, but also principals, the New Zealand Ministry of Education developed a Kiwi Leadership Framework (Professional Leadership Schooling Group, 2008) for principals in their role as educational leader, to guide the leading of learning. This framework is a powerful tool for all educational professionals as it drew on available research literature (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003) that addressed educational or instructional leadership theory. This literature described how school leadership positively affects teachers' instructional practices and the outcomes of this teaching, and thereby student performance (Ministry of Education, 2008).

Following a review of the literature, four themes were located that coalesced around the issues of principal leadership and their influence on student outcomes. Theme one, vision, explores the positive effect of an engaging vision upon the implementation of a new initiative. The vision is the initial concept explored as it is identified across the theoretical divide, as a key ingredient for educational improvement. Vision means that the individual, or group, has a clear understanding of where they should be with an action plan on how to

get there. The impact of the vision is in terms of defining what it is that is desired to be achieved.

Theme two, professional learning, scrutinises the research literature on the influential role of a professional learning community (PLC). Here the assertion is that an effective professional learning communities has the capacity to sustain the learning of professionals especially during times of change. It also explores the notion of quality teaching and, whilst no single definition of a PLC has emerged from the literature, a wide range of lists of essential characteristics and traits is evident. While all of these traits and characteristics are part of the jigsaw, it is clearly evident in the literature that the most important and influential factor in improving student achievement is quality teaching (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008; Rivkin, Hanushek, & Kane, 2005).

The literature reviewed under this theme also describes insights around pedagogy and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK). As this study is focused on student achievement outcomes, and the variation of these outcomes across schools, it was appropriate to this study to examine this concept while also considering the pressure of performativity (Bartos, 1990). Teachers in this study were required to become data literate in order to analyse the data collected in each school, and to collate and analyse the data across the cluster, so the final section explores the concept of data literacy and the culture of inquiry required for teachers to understand the data they are examining.

Theme three considers how culture is defined followed by an exploration of the complex nature of understanding the impact of culture. This theme goes on to investigate relational trust and its effect on the ability for people to change and grow in confidence. This theme also explores how collaboration affects the desire of teachers to work together to achieve a school's goals. This theme of culture concludes with a probe into the role of a leader in creating a culture conducive to continued improvement. This section of the theme

highlights what it is that leaders do and how staff perceive these actions (Schein, 1992). The literature also emphasises the inextricable link between a leader's effectiveness and their capacity to positively mould and develop the school's culture.

Theme four explores the leadership of change literature. While this literature provides many examples of processes, which enable successful change, it also identifies that too many change efforts still remain ineffective and disappointing (Fullan, 2006). To this end, this review explores the role of the principal as a successful change leader and illustrates how such change leadership is less about action and more about interaction (Moos, 2015).

While this exploration of the research literature illuminated a range of interrelated concepts of leadership and student achievement, it did not explicitly provide any clarification of the research problem. Therefore, this study seeks to answer the following research question

*What leadership factors are influencing the unexpected variation in student academic achievement in literacy outcomes across the participating schools in the LDP?*

## **1.2 Significance of the Research**

The disparity of academic achievement in New Zealand schools continues to be of concern. Performance in international tests consistently shows disparities in achievement across the population that are as large as, or greater than, the disparities internationally (May, Flockton, & Kirkham, 2016). In this study, I placed this problem in the spotlight by recognising the problem of achievement disparity across schools, and the influence of principal leadership upon this disparity. In this way, I am able to contribute new

understandings of the role of the principal and their part in raising student achievement within their school. Through this research, it is my intention to provide a way forward for those who develop, train and appoint school principals.

### **1.3 The Outline of the Thesis**

This thesis has seven chapters. I outline each chapter in the following sections to give the reader an overview of this research project.

Chapter One: Outlining the Research. In this chapter I outline how the thesis is structured giving an overview of each chapter concluding with identifying the significance of the research.

Chapter Two: Defining the Research Problem. The context for this research study was Valleyside (pseudonym), an area that encompassed 8 schools. The schools in this area underwent a merger in 2003 where fourteen schools became eight schools. The schools were allocated funding through this process with the proviso that they were to develop a project which would enhance the educational achievement for all eight schools in the area. As a result, the LDP was developed and instituted from 2004 to 2008.

Chapter Three: Review of the Literature. In this chapter I present a critical outline of the relevant literature concerning this problem. As I synthesised the literature on leadership, four themes were generated: vision, professional learning, culture, and leadership of change.

Following this review, the sub research questions were identified and justified.

These sub research questions are:

1. In what ways did the vision influence student academic achievement in the LDP?
1. In what ways did professional learning influence student academic achievement in the LDP?

2. In what ways did culture influence student academic achievement in LDP?
3. In what ways did the leadership of change influence student academic achievement in LDP?

Chapter Four: Design of the Research. The epistemological stance of constructionism was adopted for this study as the research questions seek to “understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 2000, p. 118). Constructionism asserts that human beings generate meaning as they engage within their context. That is, knowledge is not created, but constructed. Interpretivism was adopted as the theoretical perspective as a way to provide insights for this study as it is concerned with “revealing the personal perspectives behind empirical observations, the actions people take in the light of their perspectives and the patterns which develop through the interaction of perspectives as well as actions over particular periods of time” (O’Donoghue, 2007, p.21). Symbolic Interactionism was adopted as the lens to inform the theoretical perspective of this study as it generates a better understanding of the everyday lived experience of the principals, literacy leaders and teachers in the study and how they create meaning within the various contexts in which they work. This lens allowed the researcher to use the three tenets of symbolic interactionism to understand 1) the meaning individuals attached to the project, 2) how they were able to understand that others may have held different meanings, and 3) how the social interaction allowed them to create shared meaning.

Case study methodology was adopted for this research because it enabled the generation of rich description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community (Bryman, 2008). The case, which is the focus of this research, is the unexpected variation of achievement across five schools that have implemented a shared schooling improvement project called LDP. The participants of this



study were principals, of which I as the researcher was one, literacy leaders and a range of teachers from the five schools involved in this study. Due to the nature of the community in which these schools were located identifiability was of concern and therefore it was inappropriate to name schools or principals.

Data gathering strategies included focus groups and individual, in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 25 participants from 5 participating schools. The data analysis procedure adopted was constant comparative analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). This process involved identifying, theming and coding of data. The process of data analysis was divided into two stages, the exploration stage and the inspection stage, which is consistent with Symbolic Interactionism.

Chapter Five: Case Study. In this chapter I present the data for each of the five participating schools. These data are presented in two parts. The first part describes the project expectations as perceived by the participants in each school. The second part describes the demographic data and also presents an analysis of the interview data that were particularistic to each school. This chapter also identifies five variations in practice across the five schools which are: 1. *Vision*— specifically, the congruency between the project’s mission and the vision of each individual school; 2. *Workload*—the variation of workload for teachers; 3. *Professional learning opportunities*—the variation in the provision of professional learning; 4. *Culture*—the variation of the culture across schools; and 5. *The role of the principal*—the variation in the leadership of change within each school.

Chapter Six: Cross-Site Analysis of the Case. In this chapter I present a cross-case analysis of the five schools in order to explore the themes identified in Chapter 5. It focuses on the leadership of the implementation of the LDP initiative. Four findings were generated from the cross-case analysis. The first finding was the role of vision in improvement initiatives. The second finding was the dynamic of professional learning. The third finding

was the leadership of culture which is open to new learning and change and the fourth finding is the capacity of the principal in terms of leading change. This finding suggests that a different focus of leadership was required for the successful implementation and sustainability of the change brought about by the LDP.

Chapter Seven: Discussion of Findings. This study is guided by four sub research questions; however, given the interpretive nature of this study it is not the intent to answer these questions definitively; rather, it is to develop propositions based on the four themes that emerged from the cross-case analysis. As a result, eleven propositions are advanced in this concluding chapter. Following this discussion, recommendations for further research are identified.

I invite you now to take this journey alongside me by turning to Chapter 2, The context of the study, where I commence detailing my research.

## **Chapter 2: The Research Problem**

### **2.1 Introduction**

As identified in Chapter One, the stimulus for this study was concern for the variation in achievement results in literacy across five schools following their participation in a Literacy Development Project (LDP). The purpose of this second chapter is to elaborate further on Chapter 1 by providing detail to help clarify the research problem underlying this study by exploring the wider educational context. To achieve this end, it was accepted that teaching to improve student achievement outcomes in literacy occurs within a number of interrelated contexts. These contexts are discussed in this chapter in the following sections. Section 2.1 begins with a discussion about the context of the study including a discussion of the historical context of the schools in the study. Section 2.2 focuses on the design and aims of the LDP as well as baseline data for each school. Section 2.3 displays an analysis of the end-of-project data along with the variation in achievement outcomes, which gave rise to the impetus for this study. The chapter concludes with the identification of the research problem, the research purpose, and the primary research question.

### **2.2 Study Context**

In the 1950s and 1960s the population of the region in which this study is situated in New Zealand grew very rapidly and many schools were built to accommodate this new growth. However, in more recent years the number of young people in the region declined. For example, in 1991 the total student population exceeded 3600 (National Census 1991) but by 2001 this enrolment was around 3100 (National Census 2001). At this latter time the region had 10 primary schools ranging in year levels from Years. 1–6 and 1–8; two intermediate schools that had years 7 & 8; and two college schools that had years 9-13.

Importantly, the Ministry of Education undertook a review of schooling provision within the region as a result of this expected decline. This review estimated that in 20 years' time there would be only approximately 2000 students across all schooling levels. "It could be argued that this Ministerial review of schooling provision reflected a concern for the cost of maintaining underpopulated schools. Based on the long term predictions after the 2001 census, the review recommended the need to reduce the number of schools in this region. Closing schools, as an option, was not supported by the local community so a decision was made to merge schools as a way to ensure that each school's heritage endured to some degree. Merging schools was a new initiative in New Zealand and merger guidelines developed as the process unfolded. Essentially, merging schools meant students from each school would begin in a new school environment with a new school name. Also, the merger took into account the location and size of the schools to ensure a fair and accessible coverage of schooling across the region. This process was intended to allow for a smoother transition and the creation of new school cultures. The purpose for this was to ensure that students from one school were not 'swallowed up' by another in the process of change" (Jury, 2009, p 152).

As a result of this Ministry of Education review of schooling in the region where this research was conducted the decision was made to merge:

- two colleges to form one high school;
- two intermediate schools to form one intermediate school; and
- six primary schools to form three primary schools, two of which are discussed later as Schools A, and D.

There were two primary schools that were not impacted by these changes and these are identified as School B and C in this study. A further two schools were not part of the

Ministry of Education review of schooling but only one of these schools is included in this study and is referred to as School E.

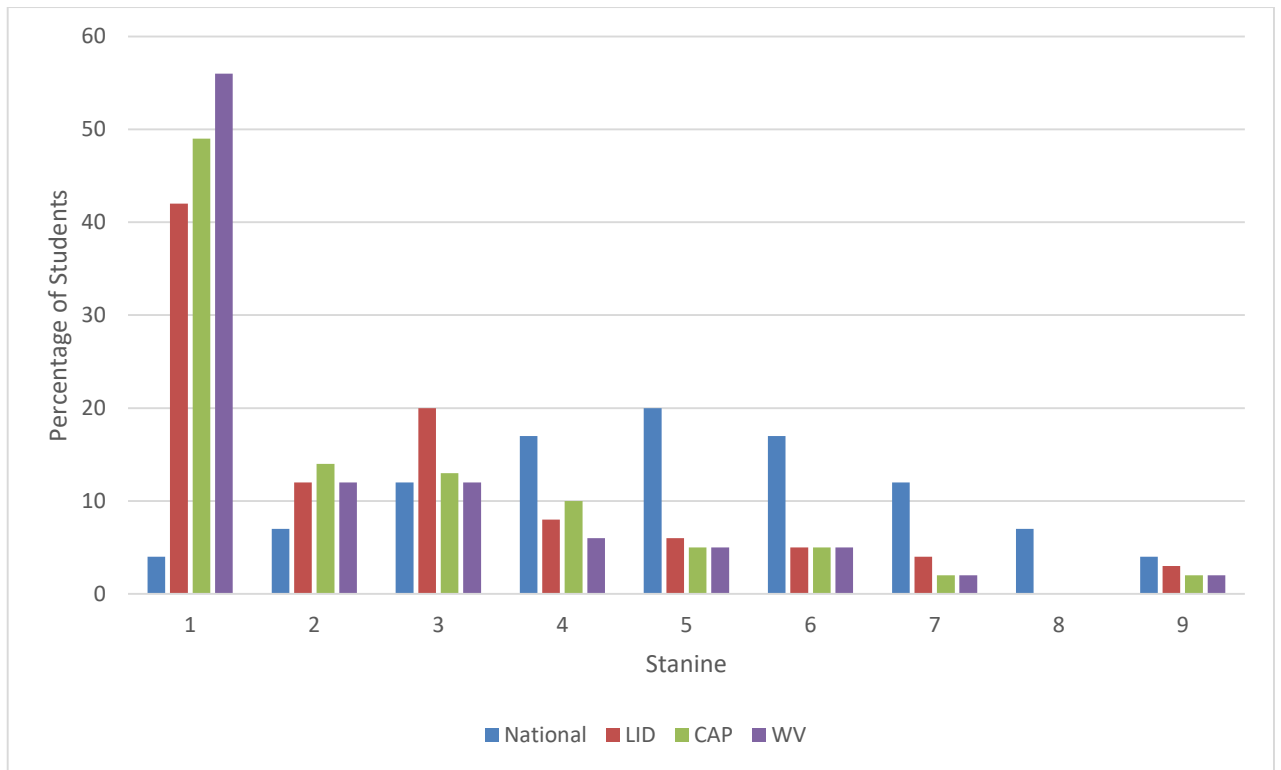
As part of this merger process, financial assistance from the New Zealand government's Joint School Initiative Funding (JSIF) scheme was made available to the schools within this region to develop property and create opportunities for enhanced educational outcomes. This funding was based on a per student capita formula and was designed to "allow the co-operative development of projects for community wide multi-school initiatives for the improvement of education achievement within the community" (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 5). The five schools that are the focus of this study accessed funding from this JSIF scheme through the cooperative development of the LDP described in this study. Herein these schools are respectively referred to as Schools A, B, C, D, and E and together these are called 'the cluster'.

### **2.3 The LDP Design**

Essentially, the funding from the JSIF scheme was allocated to the principals of the cluster schools so that they could work together to improve student achievement outcomes in literacy. The forming of this cluster was a significant movement for how these five schools worked together. There had always been collegiality amongst these principals; however, this collegiality did not venture past the local management issues of the region's schools. The concept of cluster was defined by these principals as a group of schools willing to learn and work together for the enhancement of all students within these particular schools. More specifically, the principals of these cluster schools agreed to develop the LDP by using the funds allocated through the Joint School Initiative Funding scheme to improve achievement outcomes for students in the region. To this end, the cluster employed a project co-ordinator to facilitate the uniform leadership, development and implementation of the LDP across each of the five schools.

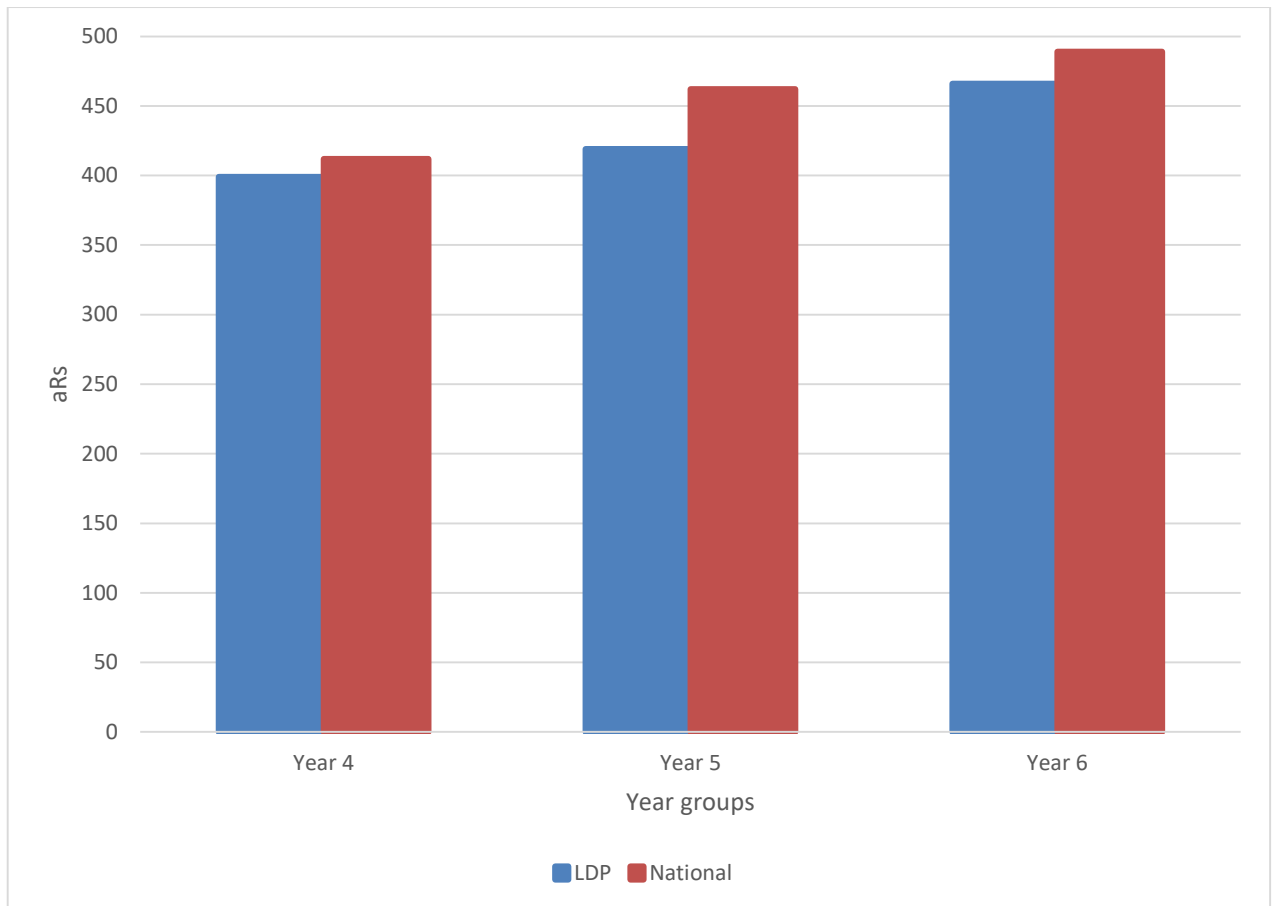
The decision to focus the cluster project on literacy was based upon the outcome common to each of the schools gathered from achievement data identifying the areas of greatest student learning needs. The gathering of these data was initially a challenge as each school used different tools to assess achievement within their respective school. An exploration of how the group could measure across school data resulted in the decision to introduce nationally standardised tools. The tools selected by the group were the School Entry Assessment (SEA) and the Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) for reading assessment.

The SEA test identified each student's ability in three specific dimensions; letter identification (LID), concepts about print (CAP), and written vocabulary (WV). Each dimension produced a raw score, which was used to calculate an overall stanine rank. Stanines are from 1–9 where students in stanine 1–3 are identified as critical where *critical* is defined as needing urgent and targeted intervention in order to prepare a child for continued success. Students in stanines 4–6 were identified as achieving at expectation and those in stanines 7–9 identified as achieving above expectation. Figure 2.1 below shows that high percentages of students in Schools A to E enter school in the critical stanine band in relation to their achievement in the three domains of the school entry assessment. In Figure 2.1 Their scores are compared to the national norms in 2004 and these follow the traditional bell shaped curve.



*Figure 2.1.* Baseline cluster data, School Entry Assessment compared to national stanine norms in 2004.

The reading assessment from Year 4 to Year 6 was undertaken using the Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (asTTle). This tool was designed to assess a student’s reading ability. The result of this assessment is an asTTle Reading Score (aRs). The scores of all students across the five schools were collated, and means were calculated and compared to the nationally normed mean reading score for years 4-6 as defined in the asTTle Manual (2004). The schools combined data is identified as LDP in Figure 2.2 below. This was the first nationally normed test used within the schools in this study. The decision to use this tool was driven by a desire to gather reliable and standardised data to inform the direction for the project.



*Figure 2.2.* Baseline cluster asTTle reading mean scores compared to national mean scores in 2004.

Figure 2.2 displays the asTTle Reading Score (aRs) on the vertical axis and the year level groups on the horizontal axis. This figure shows that each year group mean for the cluster was achieving below the national mean in reading.

Following an analysis of the schools' data, the decision was made to create a project to focus on the development of literacy practice and improve student achievement outcomes across the region. Thus, the Literacy Development Project (LDP) was created. The definition of literacy in terms of the LDP was a focus on either reading or writing. Schools were able to choose reading or writing as the vehicle they preferred to use to improve literacy outcomes for their cohort of students. It was an expectation that improved literacy



pedagogy would be transferred into classrooms to focus on reading or writing with a view to an improvement in student outcomes across the domains of reading and writing.

The LDP was introduced in each of the five schools in 2004 for five years, with the agreed four main outcomes being improved student and teacher objectives as evidenced by:

- improved student achievement;
- improved teacher content knowledge;
- improved transfer of literacy pedagogy into practice; and
- development and support of the implementation of professional learning communities.

**2.2.1 Improved student achievement.** Beyond the overall aims listed above, the project identified three specific objectives to be linked to improved student achievement. The first objective was targeted at students starting school with an expectation that by 2007, 95% of children would have attended preschool. The school's initial intake data identified that many students did not attend preschool regularly prior to starting school. The second objective was that by 2007, 90% of all students in Years 1–4 would be reading, comprehending and writing at or above the national mean.

**2.2.2 Improved teacher content knowledge.** The focus of this aim was to assess teachers' level of literacy content knowledge. This assessment was undertaken through the use of a scenario assessment. The scenario was developed using a fictional classroom reading or writing lesson. The testing involved the teachers being asked to identify the level of effectiveness of the practices in the fictional lesson. Based on their responses, levels of teacher content knowledge across the schools within the cluster could be assessed and gaps targeted to ensure that teachers had the necessary content knowledge for the teaching of literacy.

**2.2.3 Improved transfer of literacy pedagogy into practice.** Once a clear picture of teachers' content knowledge levels was identified, teachers were then assessed through observation of their practice in the teaching of literacy. Observation was seen as necessary as it was thought that there might be discrepancies between what teachers knew and what teachers did in the teaching of literacy. Independent observers undertook standardised observations (Jury, 2009). The observation data were to be first shared with each teacher on an individual basis. Next, their data were standardised where individual data was collated and shared within and across schools in the cluster.

**2.2.4 Development and support of the implementation of professional learning communities.** PLCs in each school were established and the newly appointed Project Co-ordinator facilitated meetings allowing each school to undertake this process with some level of individuality (Jury, 2009). In these PLCs, teachers shared their data to engage in collaborative analysis of it, and also shared their instructional practice with a view to deepening each teacher's own content and pedagogical knowledge.

Moreover, it was accepted across the cluster that an important benefit arising from these PLCs would be that the teachers would become adept at examining student data. This understanding acknowledges that the success of the LDP was dependent upon each teacher having a common understanding of how to analyse the collective assessment tools including the school entry assessment and asTTle reading and writing assessments. The data these assessment tools produced formed a large part of the professional learning for the region and consistent with the established literature (Earl & Katz, 2005). Hence, it was assumed that the PLCs afforded the most effective means for ensuring that each teacher became adept at examining and accurately interpreting student data.

Although the LDP began as intended, the LDP co-ordinator left in the early stages of its implementation to take up an international role in project management. As a result, the

continued implementation of the project became the responsibility of the respective principals to implement. This was more complex for Schools A and D and E as they were also dealing with the complexity of being the resultant schools from merging schools but this was not the case for Schools B and C. Whilst some students and teachers in Schools B and C moved between schools, there was minimal impact for these schools in comparison to Schools A, D and E. It is each principal and their leadership team's response to this challenge that is the focus of this study. While literacy was the focal point of the LDP, how each school principal, in consultation with their leadership team, enacted responsibility for implementing of the LDP is examined in this study. Arguably, this focus on leadership will provide important insight into why there was a variation in achievement in student literacy outcomes across the cluster schools at the completion of the project.

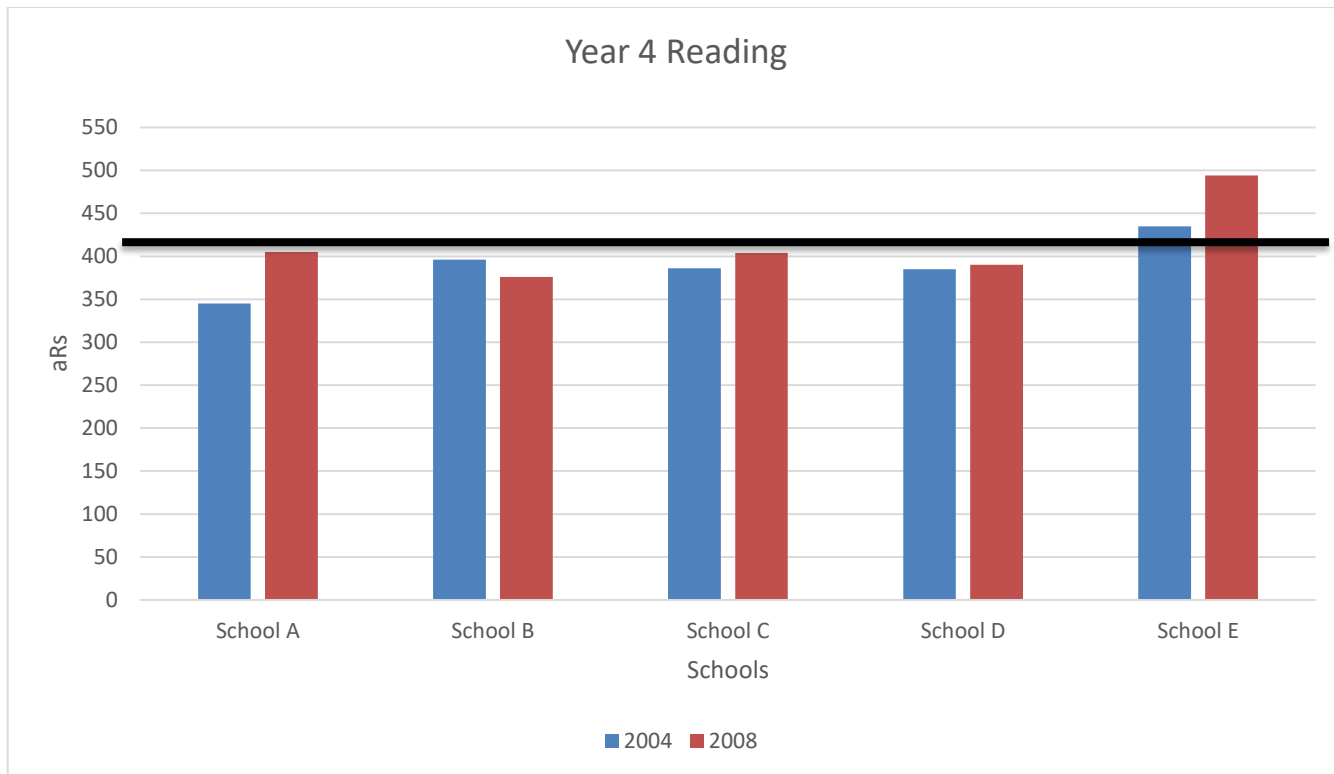
## **2.4 The LDP Outcomes**

This LDP lasted for five years and cumulative cluster data evidenced that there was some movement in literacy achievement levels across the cluster, however upon further analysis it became evident that all schools in the study did not achieve positive improvement outcomes. In this section, the results in both writing and reading for the LDP will be provided as Schools B and C selected writing as their focus with Schools A, D and E selecting reading. These data also compare each school's Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (asTTle) mean scores in both reading and writing to the national mean scores, which is the mean scores from the aggregated results of over 150,000 students in each of reading and writing. When asTTle scores are generated, they take into account the level of the questions asked. There are many possible different permutations of asTTle items, creating tests that vary widely in content, spread and difficulty. It should be noted that the means are based on the combined data from all types of asTTle tests within an appropriate

curriculum range. The mean scores were not re-aggregated during this time thus the means remained the same from 2004 to 2008.

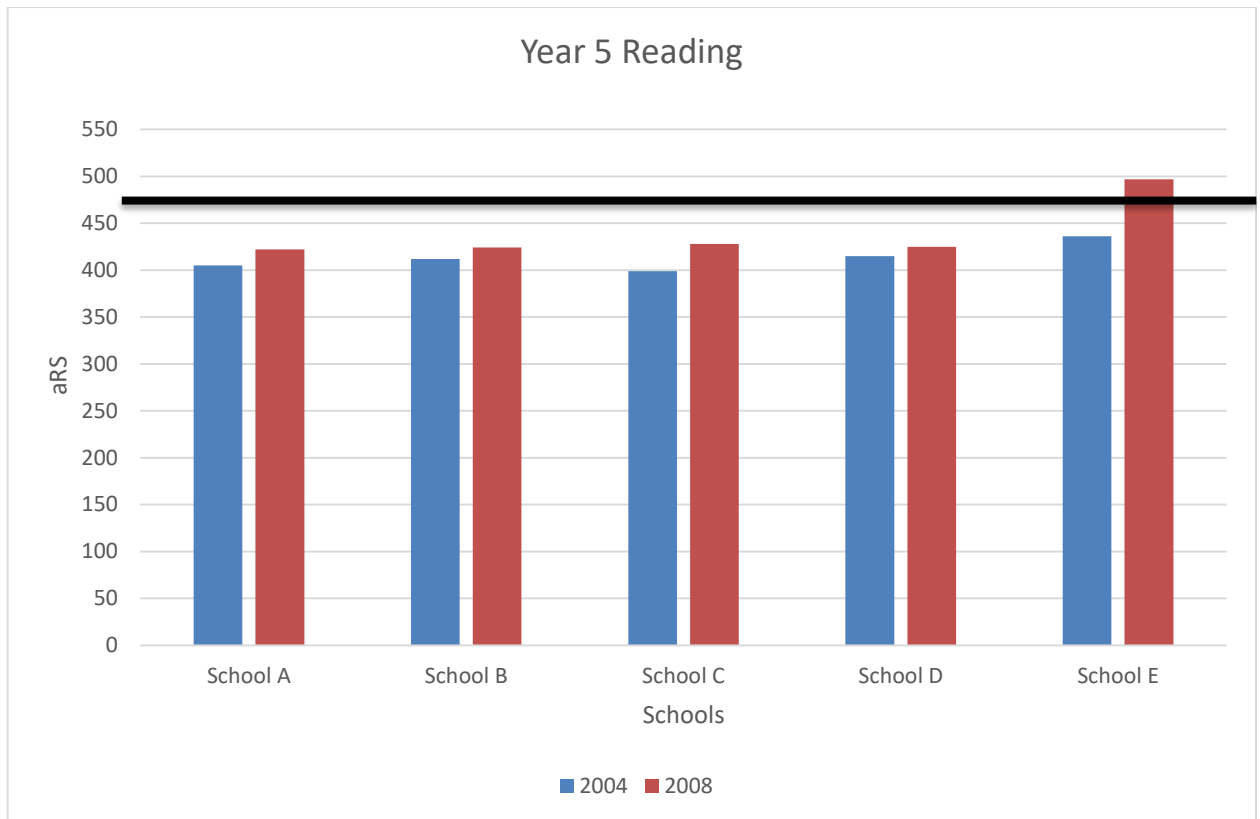
Figure 2.3 to Figure 2.5 display the Year Group Reading data comparing the start of project mean score with the end of project mean score in comparison to the national mean score. While the national mean remains constant throughout the period, the *average* band differs from year group to year group. In addition, the mean and average band is different for reading and writing.

Figure 2.3 identifies that four of the five schools began the project with mean scores below the national mean of 412 represented by the black line in Figure 2.3. The average band for this year group was 390 to 434 aRs. School A made progress towards the national mean and, at the conclusion of the project, sat in the average band. Schools C and D commenced and remained in the average band and less progress was made in these schools compared to School A and D. School B commenced below the national mean, but in the average band, and concluded the project with a lower score placing them below the average band. School E began the project with a mean score slightly above the national mean and just above the average band by the end of the project. Also School E Year Four reading results indicate that the students were well above the average band for all of New Zealand's year 4 students.



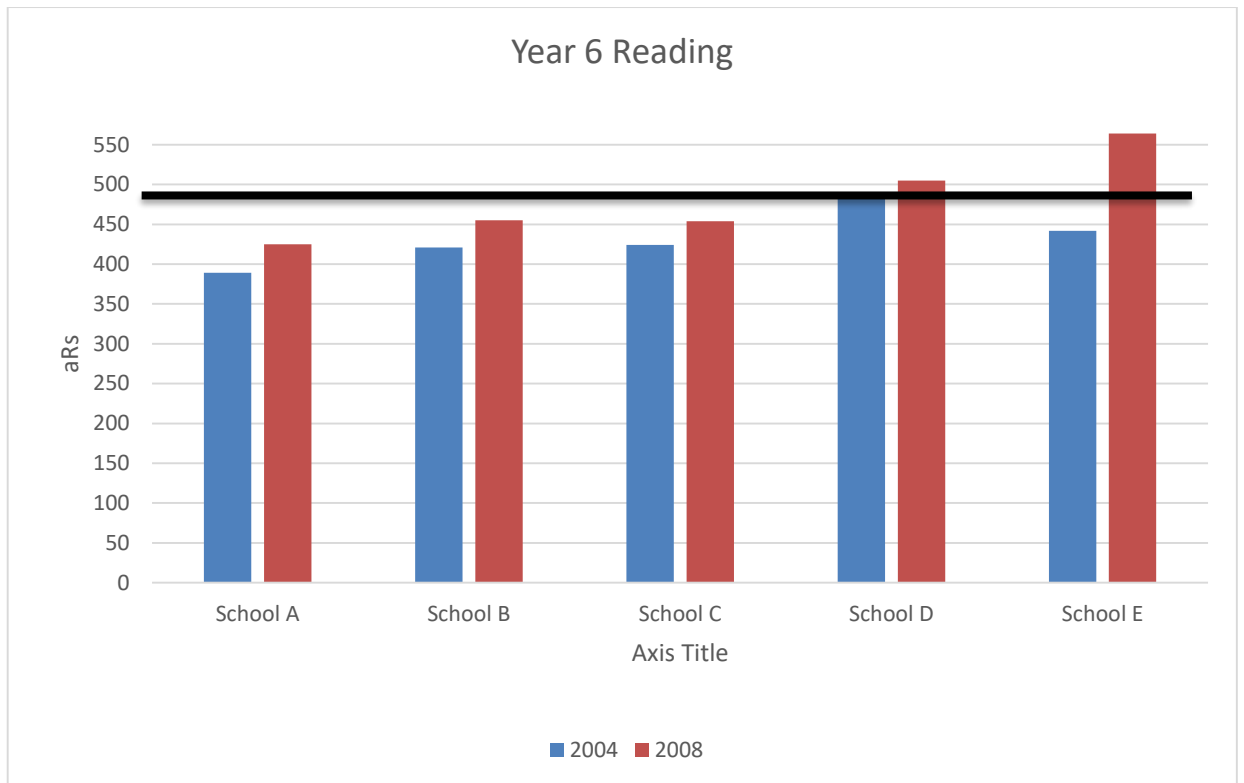
*Figure 2.3.* Year four reading progress data Schools A-E compared to national mean aRS score

Figure 2.4 displays that in Year Five all five schools began the project with means below the national mean of 462 and were below average band, which for Year Five is 435-489. Progress was limited for Schools A, B, C, and D and each school concluded the project with mean scores below the national mean and remained below the average band. School E concluded the project slightly above the national mean and in the average band, but was the only school to exceed the national mean for this year group.



*Figure 2.4.* Year five reading progress for Schools A-E compared to the national mean aRs score.

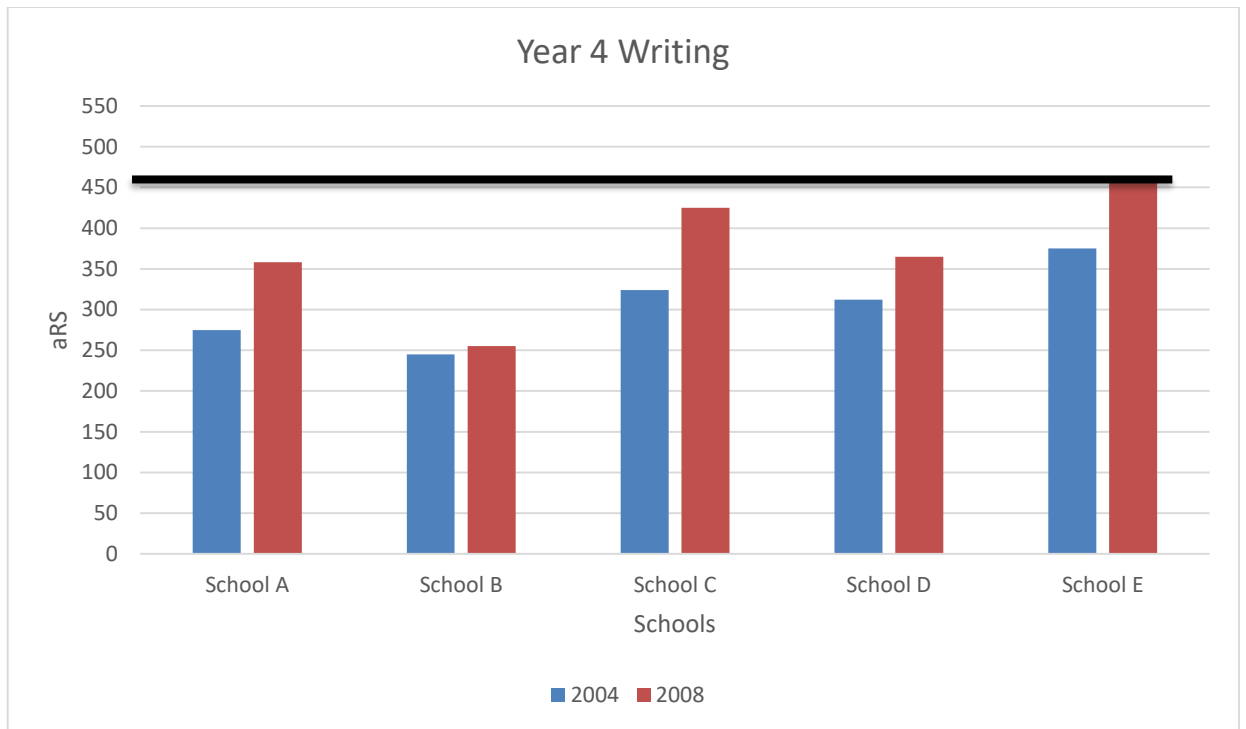
Evident in Figure 2.5 is that, in year six, Schools A, B C and E began the project below the national mean of 489 and in the below average band for Year Six of an aRs score between 464 and 514. Schools A, B and C made limited progress and, by the end of the project, did not achieve parity with the national mean for this year group remaining below the average band. School D achieved the national mean in 2004 and was placed in the average band, making small gains by the end of the project, thereby being positioned in the average band and slightly above the national mean. School E began below the national mean in the average band but, compared to the four other schools, made the most progress and achieved the highest mean to finish the project well above the national mean and above the average band. Schools A, D and E selected reading as their focus for this literacy project.



*Figure 2.5.* Year six reading progress for Schools A-E compared to the national mean aRS score.

Figure 2.6 to Figure 2.8 below display the Year Group writing data comparing the start of project mean score with the end of project mean score and the national mean score

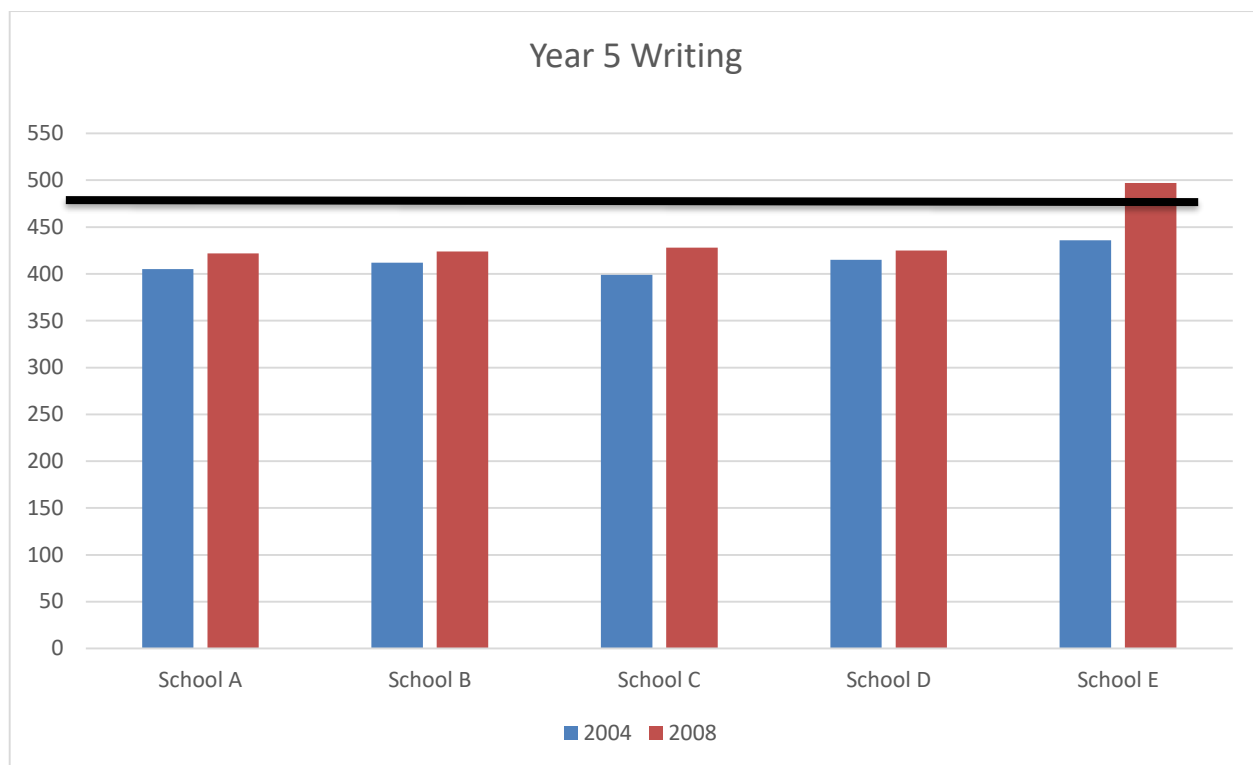
Evident in Figure 2.6 is that each of the schools began the project with scores well below the national mean of 454 and below the average band. The average band for Year Four writing is between 404 and 499. Schools A, C and D made positive progress in relation to their initial mean scores with School C achieving the closest score to the national mean and achieving in the average band. School B began the project with a mean score of 245 and increased this score by only ten points concluding the project below the average band. School E began the project well below the national mean and below the average band. This school made the greatest progress and was the only school to exceed the national mean with a score of 464 and concluded the project in the average band.



*Figure 2.6.* Year Four writing progress for Schools A-E compared to the national mean aWs score.

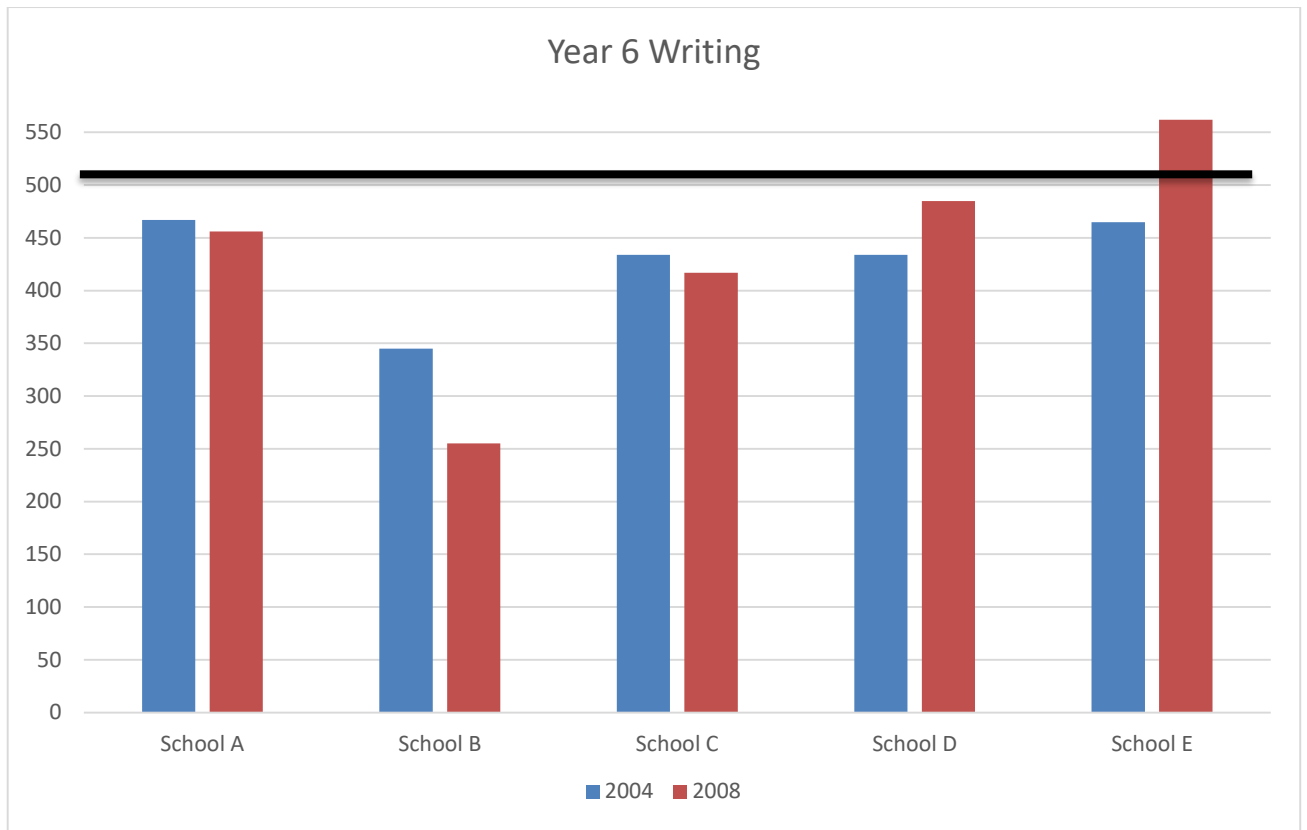
Figure 2.7 shows that in Year Five all schools began below the national mean of 482 and below the average band. The average band for Year Five is between 434 and 530 aWs. Schools A, B, C, D concluded the project below the national mean and below the average band. For all four of these schools the progress toward the national mean was minimal. School E began the project well below the national mean and below the average band. At the end of the project School E had slightly exceeded the national mean and achieved in the average band.





*Figure 2.7.* Year five writing progress for Schools A-E compared to the national mean aWs score

In Year Six all schools began the project with mean scores below the national mean of 504 and below the average band. The average band for Year Six is aWs scores between 460 and 548. Schools A, B and C reduced their mean scores over the duration of the project as displayed in Figure 2.8. School D made progress towards the mean concluded the project just within the average band. School E began the project well below the national mean and below the average band. At the conclusion of the project School E had exceeded the national mean score and again made the most progress to be above the average band. School B and C selected writing as their area of focus for this literacy project.



*Figure 2.8.* Year six writing progress for Schools A-E compared to the national mean aWs score

In summary, School E made gains from below the national mean to above the national mean in Year Five and Six reading and in Year Four, Five and Six writing. School D was the only other school to reach the national mean in Year Six reading. This was their most positive outcome. No other school reached the national mean in any year group in either reading or writing.

## 2.5 Defining the Research Problem

Despite the schools drawing their students from the same region, and being in the same decile range (3-4)<sup>1</sup>, the variation in improved outcomes across schools at the end of LDP is evident in the figures above.

At a glance, the exploration found that all schools within the region implemented the LDP initially with the guidance of the LDP coordinator and then by each principal in their own school after she left the project midway through the project. Each principal was then responsible for the implementation of the project and for the provision of professional learning aligned with the introduction of standardised testing instruments to be used cluster-wide to assess literacy achievement and identify needs within their school.

The research problem that is the focus of this study is that despite these five schools being closely located, drawing students from similar socio-economic status with schools' decile range, students from similar cultural backgrounds, being provided with a clearly articulated implementation strategy, and all schools receiving similar levels of professional support through the LDP process, some schools within the cluster appeared to produce higher levels of student academic achievement data while other schools in the cluster have produced lower levels of student academic achievement data. This variation in student

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<sup>1</sup> <sup>1</sup>The decile assigned to the school. Students from low socio-economic communities face more barriers to learning than students from high socio-economic communities. Schools that draw their roll from these low socio-economic communities are given greater funding to combat these barriers. The mechanism used to calculate and allocate this additional funding is most often known as school deciles.

Schools are assigned a socio-economic score based on five census derived socio-economic factors. The 10 percent of schools with the lowest scores are considered decile 1 schools, the next 10 percent of schools are considered decile 2 schools, etc. Decile 1 schools have the highest proportion of low SES students.

(<https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics/schooling/student-numbers/6028>)

achievement data as an outcome of the LDP as largely implemented by the principal of each school is the focus of this study. In identifying this variation, the research problem, purpose and primary research question for this study is provided.

**2.5.1 The research problem.** The commonly gathered data illustrates the existence of an unexpected variation in student academic achievement in literacy outcomes across the five participating LDP schools. Given that the demographic characteristics remained relatively constant across the cluster schools throughout the research period, this unexpected variation illuminates the influential effect of the idiosyncratic change leadership practices enacted by the respective principals as they assumed responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the LDP.

**2.5.2 Research purpose.** The purpose of this research is to explore the leadership factors that influenced the unexpected variation in student academic achievement outcomes in literacy across the five participating LDP schools.

**2.5.3 Research question.** What leadership factors are influencing the unexpected variation of student academic achievement in literacy outcomes across the participating LDP schools?

This clarification of the research problem and purpose of this study provided direction to the next stage in this research study, the review of the literature presented in Chapter 3.

## **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to explore the unexpected variation in student academic achievement outcomes in literacy across participating schools in LDP. As discussed in Chapter 2, these five schools had participated in a five-year schooling improvement project in literacy from 2004–2008 and drew their students from the same cultural and socio-economic community such that each of these schools is located 2 km apart at most. In order to gain a more informed understanding of this research context, this chapter describes the learning gained from a thorough review of the research literature detailing the factors that impact on improving primary school student achievement when implementing an improvement project.

To this end, this chapter commences with an exploration of the role of the vision when introducing and implementing a new initiative. The vision is the initial concept explored as it is identified across the theoretical divide as a key ingredient for educational improvement. Vision means that the individual (or group) has a clear understanding of where they should be with an action plan on how to get there. The second concept investigated is professional learning. There is clear evidence in the literature that professional learning is effective when teachers are able to work collaboratively. An explanation of the PLC is therefore relevant. The PLC is characterised as an ideal vehicle to achieve student academic improvement. This review proceeds to inspect PLC literature highlighting the dimensions of a PLC and the implications of the PLCs on teacher practice. Given that an important aim of a PLC is to enhance teacher practice, Section 3.3 explores the issue of quality teaching, including the concept of pedagogy. Next, the topic of student achievement, which is at the heart of this research, is presented and interrogated. Here the concepts of performativity, data literacy and a culture of inquiry are valid explorations in

the context of this review. The review continues with an exploration of culture and the complex nature of school culture, followed by an insight into the important role that leadership plays in shaping culture. This literature review then moves to further explore the nature and practice of the leadership of change with a particular emphasis on understanding the implications for the principal as change leader.

As an outcome of this literature review, the final section of this chapter identifies four sub questions which guide the remainder of the study.

### **3.2 The Role of Vision**

One of the initial steps a school or group of schools must take towards school improvement is to set a vision. The concept of “vision within the literature has a variety of definitions all of which include a mental image, a picture, a future orientation and aspects of goal and direction” (Mendez-Morse, 1993, p. 89). It is a “cognitive construct or a mental model, a conceptual representation used to both understand system operations and guide actions within the system” (Mumford & Strange, 2005, p. 122) It is not only a captivating image of the future that motivates participants to commit, it also encourages people to work and strive for its attainment (Manasse, 1986). While it is important to know what a vision is, it is also important to know what it is not and Nanus (1992) claims it is not a prophecy, it is not fixed nor does it constrain actions. Fullan (1992) also warns against “visions that blind and focus on an over attachment to particular philosophies or innovations” (p. 19).

Nanus (1992) also identified five characteristics he believed assisted with the development of a vision. The first characteristic is the need for the vision to attract commitment. When the vision is relevant it energises people. A vision has the role of being a conduit from the present to the future and challenges the status quo. The responsibility of the creation of the vision lies with the leader. Kantabutra (2010) defines vision as a mental model that a leader defines, given that it is “the actual model that guides the actions of

choices of the leader” (p. 38), however Fullan (1992) believes “visions can die prematurely when they are merely hollow statements developed by leaders or leadership teams and when they attempt to impose false consensus that suppresses rather than enables personal visions to flourish” (p. 20). Such leader-driven visions command compliance rather than commitment. When a vision begins with a leader’s personal concept it is important that the leader works with others to engage them with the vision to a point of developing a sense of ownership of the vision, moving towards a shared vision. “A shared vision is a vision that many people are truly committed to because it reflects their own personal vision” (Mendez-Morse, 1993, pp. 1–8). “Shared vision is not an idea...it is a force in people’s hearts...at its simplest level; a shared vision is the answer to the question ‘What do we want to create?’” (Senge, 2000, p. 202).

This perspective is also reflected by Kouzes & Posner (2008), who posit that if the vision is to be attractive to more than a significant few, it must appeal to all who have a stake in it. It is reasonable therefore to propose that only shared visions have the magnetic power to sustain commitment over time.

The role of the leader in this process is to articulate a compelling vision for the future and express confidence that together the goals can be achieved (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008). A leader who can call people to that vision, one who has the personal qualities which enables them to “open the space rather than occupy it—open the space in which people feel invited to create communities of mutual support” (Palmer, 2007, p. 135).

### **3.3 Professional Learning**

Professional learning is significant in the process of improving educator practice and providing new perspectives on an ever-changing profession (Marcinek, 2015, p. 1). “There is a large body of evidence that identifies design principles for effective, high quality professional development” (Bredeson, 1995). One such principle is that effective

professional learning is “collaborative and involves reflection and feedback” (Fraser, 2005). “Despite the identification of these principles content has remained consistent throughout time, instructional design, educational policy, and classroom tools and structures have been in constant change. Professional learning resembles a variety of unique threads that make up the fabric of an educator's professional career. Much like classroom learning, it should not be embodied by doling out information to be consumed and processed in isolation” (Marcinek, 2015, p. 1). Rather, school leaders who are tasked as facilitators of learning are encouraged to create opportunities for teachers to participate in professional learning communities. Findings from Timperley, Wilson, Barrar and Fung (2007) suggest that:

participation in a professional community with one’s colleagues is an integral part of professional learning that impacts positively on students.

The resolution of this apparent contradiction appears to be that if teachers are to change, they need to participate in a PLC that is focused on becoming responsive to students, because such a community gives teachers opportunities to process new information while helping them keep their eyes on the goal. (p. 19)

**3.3.1 The PLC.** PLCs have their origin in organisational theory and human relationships (Wenger, 2000). This beginning was through the development of concepts such as “learning Organisations” (Senge, 1990) and later on, communities of learning (Sergiovanni, 1994). The seminal work of Senge laid the foundation on which other researchers contributed over time. For Senge (1990), learning organisations are defined as organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (p. 3)



To adequately position future research on the PLC, it is important to expand on Senge's work by discussing the five disciplines that he identified as a way of discerning a learning organisation as distinct from an authoritarian organisation. Senge's (1990) first discipline is "Systems thinking and the essence of this discipline lies in a shift of mind seeing interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect chains, and seeing processes of change rather than snapshots" (p. 10). The second discipline is "Personal mastery is the discipline of continually clarifying and deepening our personal vision, of focusing our energies, of developing patience, and of seeing reality objectively" (p. 11). The third discipline of "working with mental models starts with turning the mirror inward; learning to unearth our internal pictures of the world, to bring them to the surface and hold them rigorously to scrutiny" (p. 12). It also includes the ability to carry on "learningful" conversations (p. 9) that balance inquiry and advocacy, where people expose their own thinking effectively and make that thinking open to the influence of others. The fourth discipline is shared vision. This enables people to clearly see what it is they intend to achieve and how this is able to be undertaken within the organisation (p. 12). It shares the goal and engages people in the fulfilment of that goal. The final discipline is team thinking and "This involves taking time to talk, to share ideas and question models and practices" (p. 13). These disciplines are not intended to be isolated models of behaviour; rather, they are a whole new way of thinking about learning within a system. Not surprisingly these disciplines led to the identification of the dimensions of the PLC which informed the ways schools began to address the issue of learning as an organisation or community (Hord, 1997).

**3.3.2 Dimensions of the PLC.** Hord (1997) argued that the PLC needs to be facilitated within the context of the culture of the school. Most important is that PLCs do not involve isolated groups of teachers working to achieve a common goal unless connected

to the rest of the school community. In order to make it perfectly clear what a PLC is, Hord (1997) detailed the dimensions that are necessary for the successful implementation of a PLC. They are:

- supportive and shared leadership;
- shared values and vision;
- collective learning and application of learning;
- supportive conditions and environments; and
- shared personal practice (pp. 14–21).

Subsequent research identified a sixth dimension that seeks to ensure that PLC's focus on results evidenced by a commitment to continuous improvement (DuFour, 2004). This led to the realisation that unless schools know their current achievement status they are likely to provide programmes that may or may not meet the achievement needs of their students. The discussion did not end here. Researchers continued to contribute to research on the PLC, in parallel to DuFour's work with many additional attributes of the PLC being added. For example, Morrissey (2000) contributed four key themes and five actions to highlight the understanding of PLCs. The first key theme suggests that a PLC is not a thing; rather it is a way of operating. The second identifies that change requires learning and learning motivates change. The third theme advocates that when staff work collaboratively within professional learning communities, continuous improvement becomes an embedded value. The final theme explains that professional learning communities exist when each of Hord's five dimensions are in place and work interdependently. The five actions Morrissey (2000) proposes that make professional learning communities most successful are:

the role of the principal, a culture of collaboration, commitment from all staff, the presence of a catalyst and the use of a critical friend. In schools

where these five actions were evident schools were able to improve outcomes for students and sustain these improvements over time. (p. 23)

Continued research meant that our understanding of the PLC continued to evolve. In particular, the concern that PLCs were being seen as another reform initiative led Fullan (2006) to provide a clearer explanation of the purpose of the PLC to assist with sustainability, effectiveness and most importantly, improved student results. It

- ensures children learn by addressing the questions, “What do we want each child to learn?” “How will we know when they have learned it?” and “How will we respond when a child has difficulty?”
- promotes a collective purpose for learning through a culture of collaboration—professional dialogue
- focuses on results—identifying current levels of achievement, establishing goals to improve, working together to achieve goals, and providing evidence regularly on movement towards goals (p. 10)

In 2006 Fullan wrote of his concern about the rapid spread of the term “PLC” that to his mind was not backed by a deep understanding of the concept. He believes that the “term travels faster and better than the concept” (p. 10), where he points to signs of some groups participating in PLCs without deep learning and without being aware of the need for this learning. Secondly, people can treat the PLC as another innovation where there is danger in seeing a PLC as a programme as it can be dumped if the going gets tough or if new innovations arise. Thirdly, PLCs can be miscast as transforming the culture of one school when they need to be part of creating multi-school cultures. This assertion from Fullan expressed the belief that “in order to transform schools we must look beyond the single school and participate in lateral capacity-building across schools” (p. 10).

Ongoing research contributed to discussion on the PLC, with researchers calling their identified attributes of the PLC “disciplines” (Senge, 1990) “dimensions” (Hord, 1997), or “key themes” (Morrissey, 2000). Each set of attributes were actions and ideas designed to both inform and assist schools with the implementations of PLCs. This implementation process in turn has implications for teacher practice.

**3.3.3 Implications of PLC on teacher practice.** When the notion of the PLC was first introduced it challenged teachers as they had for many years worked in isolation by operating behind closed doors (Hord, 1997). This was particularly the case prior to the 1970s where it was normal practice for teachers to walk into their classrooms, provide the programmes they developed for their students without consultation with any member of school leadership or immediate colleagues. What they did in their classroom remained private and closed to all outside their classroom door. There has been considerable change to this process over the last 20 years with the development of PLCs as it has worked at deprivatising practice, giving teachers a chance to talk with colleagues and to challenge their beliefs and practices. Schools and school systems that set goals to deprivatise were directly and explicitly confronting the issue of isolation (Elmore, 2002). This was achieved by “creating opportunities for interaction between teachers and implementing inquiry-oriented practices while working toward high standards of student performance” (Morrissey, 2000, p. 32). In more recent research it is identified that in schools where teachers and school principals were able to share the ownership both for working and learning in the PLC, greater interaction and socialisation led to improved outcomes. In schools where there was less shared ownership and inquiry was an individual activity, socialisation and school interaction decreased (Schaap & de Bruijn, 2018) . Other research has identified that “teacher collaborative time” (TCT, Cobb et al., 2011) has “great potential to support improvement in teachers’ instructional practices” (p. 11). This research states that

time to collaborate is a necessary, though not sufficient condition, for instructional improvement. Teachers need to be engaged in activities that will support the improvement of their classroom instruction. This TCT is possible in the formal structure of the PLC.

The PLC can provide opportunities for teachers not only to consider their students' progress but to also reflect critically on their practice and, as a result, create new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learning (DuFour, 2004). It seems that the most essential factor in a successful school is that of connection. This connection may also involve a coaching model whereby an experienced teacher is able to coach a colleague in a way that allows that teacher to grow in skill and confidence. "It is a special and reciprocal relationship between at least two people who work together to set professional goals and achieve them" (Robertson, 2008, p. 4). When this relationship is successful it does not solely produce higher performance but rather is a story of transformation of both participants (Hargrove, 2003). Over time this role of coach develops into an agent of change both of self and other (Burks, 2010). It is identified that the most successful learning occurs when teachers find solutions together, resulting in their teaching more effectively in their own classrooms. In such schools, leaders take on the role of professional companions and engage in the personal and professional growth of themselves and their teachers (Degenhardt, 2013). Teachers work as team members with shared goals and have time allocated for professional collaboration (Boyer, 1995). In these schools, teachers are likely to be well-informed, professionally renewed, challenged and inspired and, as a consequence, inspire students (Boyer, 1995). This process is about building a community of learning, a learning culture—a PLC (Stoll, Fink, & Earl, 2002). When teachers become professionally renewed and seek out challenges they are willing to be more collaborative and reflective. This reflection becomes more commonplace and eventually leads to a willingness to open their classroom for colleagues to observe their practice. This change in

practice is challenging and can only happen when teachers are prepared to share their practice, concerns and ideas to improve their quality of teaching.

### **3.4 Quality of Teaching**

Quality teaching is discussed widely in the literature with no clear definition emerging. There is no common definition within the literature of exactly what constitutes high-quality teaching or a quality teacher. One useful example identified in one review of the literature comes from the Center for High Impact Philanthropy (2010):

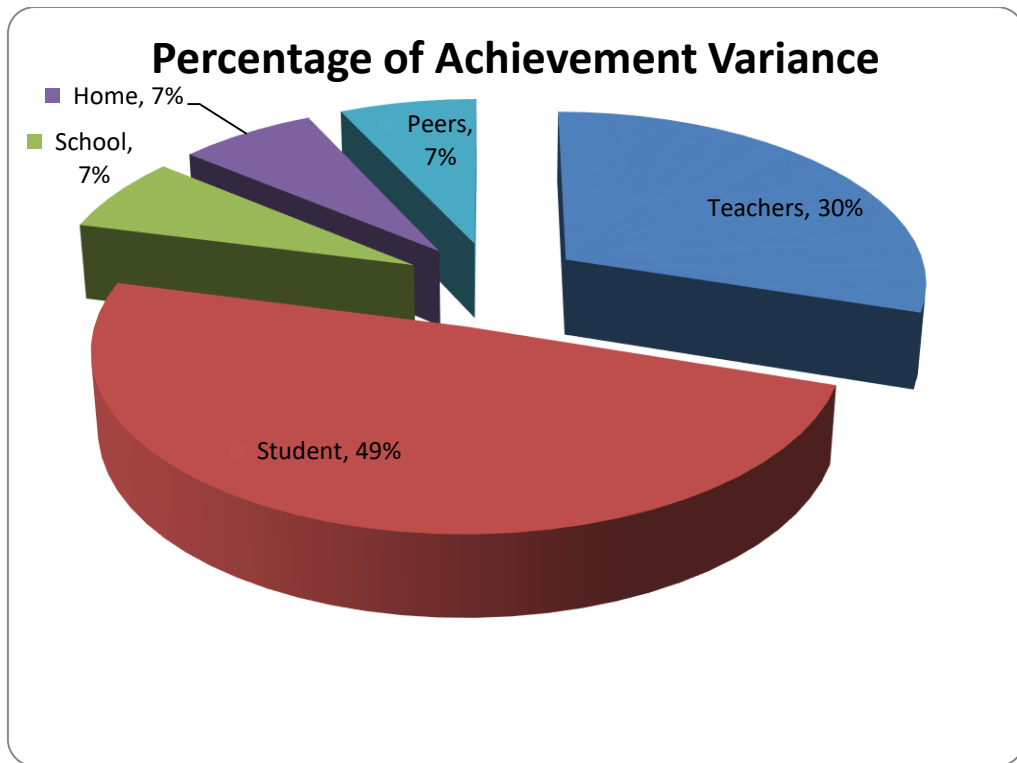
A quality teacher is one who has a positive effect on student learning and development through a combination of content mastery, command of a broad set of pedagogic skills, and communications/interpersonal skills. Quality teachers are life-long learners in their subject areas, teach with commitment, and are reflective upon their teaching practice. They transfer knowledge of their subject matter and the learning process through good communication, diagnostic skills, understanding of different learning styles and cultural influences, knowledge about child development, and the ability to marshal a broad array of techniques to meet student needs. They set high expectations and support students in achieving them. They establish an environment conducive to learning, and leverage available resources outside as well as inside the classroom. (p. 7)

There are identified, however, many characteristics of quality teaching. Ten clearly defined and research-supported characteristics are identified as:

- a focus on student achievement;
- pedagogical practices that create caring, inclusive and cohesive learning communities;
- effective links between school and cultural context of the school;
- responsiveness to student learning processes;

- effective and sufficient learning opportunities;
  - multiple tasks and contexts that support learning cycles;
  - curriculum goals that are effectively aligned;
  - pedagogy scaffolds feedback on students' task engagement
  - pedagogy that promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse; and
  - constructive engagement of teachers and students in goal-oriented assessment
- (Alton-Lee, 2003, pp. 5–6).

Whilst all of these characteristics are part of the jigsaw, it is clearly evident in the literature that the most important and influential factor in improving student achievement is quality teaching (Leithwood et al., 2008; Rivkin et al., 2005). While there are no silver bullets to ensure quality teaching, there are indications in the research literature as to some key influencing factors. These factors have been identified through a range of studies and meta-analysis of studies (e.g., Hattie, 2012). This literature identifies the variance of many influences such as what the student brings to the task, the influence of peers, the school climate, the teacher, and the home (Hattie & Timperely, 1999). These have been attributed percentages of achievement variance as seen in Figure 3.1.



*Figure 3.1.* Percentage of variance of influences on student achievement (Hattie & Timperely, 1999)

As can be seen in Figure 3.1, the highest percentage of influence is the student which accounts for 49% of the variance of achievement. It is what a student brings to the classroom that predicts achievement more than any other variable. The attributes that a student brings can include a desire to learn, a willingness to take risks, prior knowledge and an awareness of the value of education. This includes attitudes to learning and school that the family has and the support they are able to offer their child. Second only to the student’s own influence is the influence of the teacher with a 30% variance of achievement. “It is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in the learning equation” (Hattie, 2003, p. 9). This reinforces the notion that teachers are more influential than home, peers and schools.

With such strong evidence of the importance of high quality teaching for student success, “it is clear that every child needs an accomplished teacher, a teacher who has all the knowledge and skills necessary to boost their learning” (Berg, 2010, p. 194). Quality



teaching is complex and requires specialised knowledge and skills and is often referred to in the literature as pedagogy.

**3.4.1 Pedagogy.** Jointly negotiated and agreed upon pedagogy lays the groundwork for successful schools. Pedagogy is at times used as a synonym for teaching; however, its definition comes from the Greek word—*paidagogia*— meaning to lead a child. When viewed from this perspective, pedagogy is concerned with the relationship between learning and teaching (Loughran, 2010). This relationship is not limited to subject matter but rather to both content and process, and is recognised through intellectual challenge, support for learning, linking to prior knowledge, relevance of content and sensitivity to diversity, all of which extend learning beyond subject matter (Loughran, 2010). The level of pedagogical expertise a teacher brings to the role is a strong indicator of success in learning. This expertise has been identified as not being limited to practice but rather incorporates three sets of knowledge—knowledge for practice which focuses primarily on preparation for a role as teacher and is concerned with pre-service training. This knowledge is not relevant for this study; however, the remaining two forms of knowledge are important. They are knowledge in practice and knowledge of practice (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999).

Knowledge in practice is the *craft knowledge* teachers develop in the process of teaching. This craft knowledge dictates what teachers choose to teach and why and how they choose to teach it that way. It is this craft knowledge then that is able to assist teachers in applying teaching practices known to improve student achievement. Feedback, instructional quality, direct instruction, and remediation feedback are some of the practices identified in research as having the greatest effect on student achievement (Hattie, 2012).

### **3.5 Student Achievement**

Student achievement is the focal point of this research and an exploration of how this is able to be improved and sustained is pertinent to this study. This section explores the

role of the leader in terms of student achievement, a review of the concept of performativity and the need for data literacy to enable leaders and teachers to understand their achievement challenges and plan to address these collectively.

**3.5.1 Performativity.** Considering the focus of this study is improved student achievement, a review of international testing is relevant. Student achievement is often compared based on test scores from international assessments such as PISA and TIMSS. The international test score results lead many countries, including New Zealand, to regularly review educational policy. In the local context, student assessment data are also reviewed annually through the National Certificate of Educational Achievement (NCEA). Meta-analysis studies of these international and national tests focus on a narrow range of measures of student learning, often student achievement on test scores in numeracy, science or literacy. “There are of course many more dimensions to student learning and outcomes than those measured by achievement tests” (Duignan, 2009, p. 7). As a result, the shortcomings of international tests are being more widely recognised. For example, the OECD 2008, report, “The Search for Innovative Learning Environments” (Benavides, Dumont and Istance, 2008) highlights some major shortcomings of international testing that prevents meta-analysis research, stating that:

It should be noted that empirical research on the factors influencing student learning is conceptually and methodologically challenging. Student learning is shaped by a range of extra- and intra- organisational factors including student socio-economic background, abilities and attitudes, organisation and delivery of teaching and school policies and practices. Studies measuring the impact of different factors on student achievement tend to use data sets and methodologies providing limited measures of learning and partial indicators of the range of factors influencing it. (p. 34)

This type of criticism leaves school principals disillusioned about how to improve student outcomes when using this test data and therefore leaves them to consider other local influencing factors. Here the impetus for change in all schools remains based on the desire to improve learning and outcomes for students by accessing a broad range of options. For principals to understand the role that other factors play and to implement change and experience success, each school's PLC must become research-based and data-driven (DuFour, 2004; Mason, 2003). The rationale for any strategy for building a PLC revolves around the premise that such organisations will produce dramatically improved results if they engage effectively in their own research using student data (Senge, 1990) while being guided by the research literature. This premise remains unchanged. Research by Mason (2003) in Milwaukee public schools focused on the building of capacity of schools to use data more effectively to assist continuous improvement.

Schools also need to create organizational and structural mechanisms for using data to improve teaching and learning. In our most recent study, school teams worked collaboratively to learn about continuous improvement, decision-making and data inquiry processes, and the analysis, application and use of data. Ongoing field research has revealed that these school teams and the processes they employed exemplify the key characteristics of learning communities. Moreover, these professional learning communities appear to provide an ideal organizational structure to address the challenges of schools and the needs of teachers as they seek to learn from data and use it effectively to improve student learning (p. 24)

**3.5.2 Data literacy.** Schools today are more data rich than ever before but the challenges of how to use these data to improve student learning remains. This problem is recognised in the literature as “most schools being data rich, but information poor” (Mills, 2006, p. 45). This lack of information gleaned from current data is due to data

illiteracy, that is, “the knowledge of how to use the assessment data with other types of data to identify areas of effectiveness” (Lachat, Williams, & Smith, 2006, p. 17) as well as areas to target for instructional improvement efforts. There are many reasons as to why this data illiteracy may exist, but what is suggested in the literature is that teachers, and often principals, do not have the knowledge and skills to analyse and interpret data (Choppin, 2002; Lachat et al., 2006; Mandinach & Jackson, 2012). Also, there is often limited access to data for teachers (Choppin, 2002) coupled with time constraints in terms of analysis and interpretation (Ingram, Seashore Louis, & Schroeder, 2004). Teachers also question the usefulness of data gathering and do not always make connections with what the data are telling them in terms of the interventions necessary to improve student learning (Lachat et al., 2006).

“Using data effectively requires a desire to improve outcomes for students, staff members and a willingness to stop doing the same old things while hoping for a different outcome” (Mills, 2006, p. 45). As a result, the real work of managing data must involve all members of the school community. This involvement may vary from group to group but, at the same time, demands participation by all. If everyone within the community owns the data, then its use and importance can more easily be addressed.

When most teachers or leaders speak of data they talk about test scores from predominantly nationally-normed assessment tests. These test scores form only part of the picture of data. Educators need to learn to use a wide range of sources of data beyond these test scores to inform their decisions and next steps. But this is no easy task. Finding data and transforming it into knowledge about a school, the teachers and students takes planning and commitment (Mills, 2006). Principals must be able to locate their data, determine if it is current and reliable and decide how it can best be analysed before going any further. Reeves

(2008a) identified four tips to gain control over what is called the “flood of data that threatens to engulf us” (p. 90).

First, commit to data analysis as a continuous process, not an event (p.90). The positive results of this tip is evident in the finding from a study by Bay Area School Reform Collaborative revealed that “schools who reviewed their data several times each month were far more likely to close achievement gaps than those who reviewed their data only a few times a year” (Oberman & Symonds, 2005, pp. 8–11).

Second, begin with a specific focus, such as, what our areas of strength in literacy are in a particular cohort (p.90). Reeves (2008a) argues that “having a clearly focused question will avoid the time-wasting exercise of trolling through spreadsheets without direction” (p. 90).

Third, “develop a school wide culture of hypothesis testing, in which teachers consider their assumptions before looking at the data. This approach encourages the teachers to look specifically at data that is relevant to their hypothesis” (p. 90).

Fourth, look deeper to consider the causes of students’ success or failure (p.90). Focusing too greatly on demographics avoids a consideration of the powerful influences of teaching practices, curriculum relevance and teacher feedback. It is challenging—but more important—to have discussions about how the classroom experiences of students differ and if this impacts on their results. By considering these tips, Reeves (2008a, p. 90) argues that the essence of successful discussion about data must include a commitment to examine not only the data but also the stories behind the numbers.

**3.5.3 The culture of inquiry.** The examination approach to understanding data seems straightforward in theory but in practice, as identified, educational leaders may not be competent technicians who are able to organise and manipulate data in prescribed ways. What is identified in the literature as a means to help educational leaders to unpack the data

is an inquiry habit of mind. This practice enables leaders to collect and interpret evidence in ways that will enhance their understanding (Earl & Katz, 2005). This idea is explained more fully by identifying the practices of a school leader with an inquiry habit of mind (Earl & Katz, 2005) as one who:

1. Values deep understanding. School leaders with an inquiry habit of mind do not presume an outcome; they allow for a range of outcomes and keep searching for increased understanding and clarity.
2. Reserves judgement and has a tolerance for ambiguity. Learning from data requires a tolerance for uncertainty and a willingness to live in the dissonance long enough to investigate and explore ideas until there is some clarity.
3. Takes a range of perspectives and systematically poses increasingly focused questions. Data almost never provides answers, but using data usually leads to more focused investigations and better questions (pp. 16–17).

This depth of understanding of achievement will not come from test scores alone; student achievement must also take into account non-linear measurements. These non-linear measures include student engagement and student self-belief. These aspects affect how a student will achieve on more linear measures (Morrissey, 2000).

### **3.6 Culture**

According to the study, “Cultural Change That Sticks,” by Katzenbach, Steffen and Kronley (2012), “Culture trumps strategy every time” (p. 113). This statement indicates that despite the best plans and detailed strategies, it is the culture of the school or organisation which will determine the success of the implementation. If a strategy imposed from above is at odds with the ingrained practices and attitudes of the culture it is doomed to fail (Katzenbach et al., 2012). This claim appears relevant to this study because, despite an extremely tight improvement strategy the outcomes across schools varied unexpectedly. The

LDP initiative was developed in such a way that there was an expectation that each school within the group committed to implementing the agreed strategies to improve the teaching of literacy. These strategies included the introduction of professional learning communities, streamlined data collection and analysis and the appointment of a literacy leader to lead all new developments in their schools. The literacy leaders were trained by a common facilitator and strategies discussed and defined in their weekly training sessions.

**3.6.1 What is culture?** Culture has been well-documented in the research literature and whilst a single definition has not emerged, most writers variously describe it as a form of framework of shared assumptions, values and norms. Schein (2010) defines culture as a set of beliefs and values and the actualisation of these beliefs and values within an organisation. These sets of values and beliefs are made up of basic human values, general moral values, professional values and beliefs, and social and political beliefs. Other writers explain culture as the transmitted framework of values and norms (Kaplan & Owings, 2013) and the normative adhesive that holds the organisation together (Hoy & Hoy, 2006). Deal and Peterson (2009) posit that when people are speaking of culture they are typically referring to the “underground river of feelings, norms and values that influence how people go about their daily work” (p. 9).

It can be argued therefore that these various descriptions of culture have resulted in an acknowledgement in the research literature that culture is more complex than the word implies. Culture comprises the sum of the more complex, difficult to identify, intangible, deeper elements (Peterson & Deal, 2002) and is situationally unique (Beare, Cladwell, & Millikan, 1989).

**3.6.2 Complexity of culture.** Organisations have discrete cultures and they are manipulable, although the discourse can have it both ways with the term because on the one hand, culture is known to be symbolic, intangible, and abstract, and on the other, it can be

the object of conscious and rational redesign and reframing (Mowles, 2013a, 2013b).

Writers have explored this complexity in a range of ways over time. Schein explores this complexity of culture using the term, “layers”. He suggests that the layers of culture reflect the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer (Schein, 2010).

These layers explore the overt and veiled expressions of culture within a group. For Schein, there are 3 layers with the first being artefacts. This is the most tangible aspect of culture and would include explicit and visible aspects of culture. In the context of schools, this is most visible in charters, mission and vision statements and documents which explain organisational structure of roles and responsibilities and the models adopted for professional learning. Cook and Yanow (1993) also propose that “when organisations are seen as cultures, they are seen to learn through activities involving cultural artefacts, and that learning, in turn is understood to entail organisations’ acquiring, changing or preserving their abilities to do what they know to do” (p.267). It is also visible in the routines the school adheres to, the ceremonies it uses to celebrate, the awards it presents, what these are presented for, and the rites and rituals in which the community participates. The second layer is the espoused values, beliefs, attitudes and perspectives of the group. These guide members of the group in how to interpret and deal with certain key situations, and train new members how to see, think and behave. This has been termed “onboarding” or “organisational socialising” (Bauer, Erdogan, Truxillo, & Tucker, 2007) because these espoused values, beliefs and attitudes indicate what is actually important which might differ from what is claimed to be important. This process ensures new members understand the values and beliefs of the group. Such beliefs and values often become embodied in an ideology or organisational philosophy. The third layer, often described as the most unexplored aspect of culture, is the body of basic underlying assumptions. Culture is the pattern of these underlying assumptions, a pattern which is taken for granted and is



transformed into a guide for thought perception, feeling, and behaviour (O'Mahoney, Barnett, & Matthews, 2006). This layer of culture is the most difficult to determine and understand. It can be a challenge to look beyond the visible artefacts and espoused beliefs to unpack the assumptions a group holds and to learn the process of how these assumptions evolve. Schein (2010) believes:

If you do not decipher the pattern of basic assumptions that may be operating, you will not know how to interpret the artefacts correctly or how much credence to give to the espoused values. In other words, the essence of culture lies in the pattern of basic underlying assumptions. And after you understand those, you can easily understand the other more surface levels and deal appropriately with them. (p. 32)

Deal and Peterson (1998, 1999) shared many common threads of the work of Schein and have researched widely to determine what characteristics of culture enable schools to be successful. They have identified schools with strong positive cultures as places:

- where staff have a shared sense of purpose, where they pour their hearts into teaching;
- where the underlying norms are of collegiality, improvement, and hard work;
- where student rituals and traditions celebrate student accomplishment, teacher innovation, and parental commitment;
- where the informal network of storytellers, heroes, and heroines provides a social web of information, support, and history; and
- where success, joy, and humour abound (p. 29).

“Strong positive cultures are places with a shared sense of what is important, a shared ethos of caring and concern, and a shared commitment to helping students learn” (Deal & Peterson, 1998, 1999, p. 30). This work also reflects the findings of Michael and Young (2005) who identified successful schools as those promoted by traditions, a sense of

mission, and a sense of place. Everyone within the school community knows the “lore” (p. 4) and this shared knowledge enables the community to share a common sense of purpose and manifest the lived mission daily (Michael & Young, 2005). The daily living of this mission is made visible by the use of dialogue, actions and symbolic gestures. Other attributes of successful school cultures identified include a culture of equity and high expectations. This is particularly relevant in schools which draw their students from a range of socio-economic groups (Michael & Young, 2005).

Leaders in these schools know that truly equitable communities do not happen by chance; they must be built into the school’s culture through curricular and extra-curricular activities that honour diversity, promote equity, and continuously connect the school with the larger global community. (p. 4)

Whilst culture is explored in the literature it appears that some aspects of culture are more prominent than others. Relational trust is identified by many researchers (Beatty & Brew, 2004; Brenda & Christine, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2003; Fink, 2013; Seashore Louis, 2006) to be one characteristic of many that influence a supportive culture.

**3.6.1 Relational trust.** Relational trust derives from repeated interactions over time between trustor and trustee. Relational trust is also known as "affective trust" (McAllister, 1995) and as “identity-based trust” at its broadest scope (Coleman, 1990). Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt and Camerer (1998) suggest that:

Reliability and dependability in previous interactions with the trustor give rise to positive expectations about the trustee's intentions. Emotion enters into the relationship between the parties, because frequent, longer term interaction leads to the formation of attachments based upon reciprocated interpersonal care and concern. (p. 399)

In this way, as suggested by Bryk and Schneider (2002):

relational trust is anchored in the social exchanges attached to key role relationships found in schools. It is seen as an organisational property of a school because its constitutive elements are socially defined in the reciprocal exchanges among participants in the school community, and its presence has importance for the functioning of the school. (p. 22)

It seems logical then that the degree of trust within the school community is a powerful predictor of school consequences. It is in this way that the argument of relational trust is also associated with higher levels of performance on such varied measures as student achievement (Bryk & Schneider, 2002) is made. It is seen to be key to working together in a professional context to influence such performance.

Trust does not develop by chance and there is an indication in the research literature that building relational trust requires school leaders to explore emotions. “If this exploration of emotions is limited or prohibited in professional discourse it can in turn limit the development of trust and directly influence the likelihood of the leader’s success in building collaborative cultures” (Beatty, 2007, p. 332). However, sharing emotions creates a culture where the whole self is valued and trusted. This in turn creates a freedom to explore and celebrate and develops into relationships and engenders a true passion and enthusiasm of new learning. “This builds confidence and develops further the emotional and social interaction components of learning for students, teacher and leaders and thereby influences student achievement” (Beatty, 2007, p. 341).

In summary, “the presence of trust allows for the smooth functioning of organizations. Trust is seen to reduce friction and facilitates the straightforward exchange of information. Trust protects the norms and values of a community and promotes honest and cooperative behaviour” (Lewis, 2008, p. 39). Trust empowers people to be creative and to

make constructive changes. It enables levels of confidence to grow (Hoy & Smith, 2007). Strong leadership at all levels enables trust to grow (Goddard, Tschannen-Moran, & Hoy, 2001).

**3.6.2 Collaborative endeavour.** Collaborative endeavour is when groups of teachers and leaders within a school trust one another enough to work together to achieve the school's goals. The quality and nature of school collaborative culture has been shown to have an important impact on school reform. (Edmonson et al., 2001). Superficial collaboration does not produce these same results and is therefore not sufficient. There are many understandings of collaboration from working together in networks or groups through to contrived collegiality (Mulford, 2007); however, collaborative endeavour is more than working together, more than consensus and more than contrived collegiality. It is the very fabric of the culture of the school which is woven together with trust, communication and challenge. Communication in this situation is open and honest and encompasses an analytical and critically challenging language of *learning talk* (Annan, Lai, & Robinson, 2003), also referred to as *cognitive conflict* (De Lima, 2001). It is this type of talk that encourages, rather than quells, collegial debates because it ensures teachers and leaders get to the heart of the issues and allows for deeper consideration of both outcomes and next steps.

### **3.7 Leadership of Culture**

As the school's educational change context becomes more complex so too do the leadership structures within it. There are leadership descriptors which enable principals to identify their strengths and weaknesses of leadership skills and these can be helpful at times. The exploration of management, delegation, distributed and shared leadership to name a few are not ends in themselves but rather tools to develop further skills. As identified in section 3.6 the complexity of culture demands a new and changing perspective of leadership.

Contributing to this growth of complexity has been in part the increase of accountability for achievement and the focus on whole school reform (Fullan, 2001). With these changes, the growth in the array of facets of school leadership is not surprising given that many fields of study have influenced the leadership theory. These concepts continue to develop as new understandings of leadership emerge. For the purpose of this study the leadership of a culture is explored. The focus on cultural leadership emphasises that leadership must create conditions that value learning as both an individual and collective good (Fullan, 2001).

A search of the literature pertaining to leadership of culture provided evidence that much of the literature was located within business with far less located within education. This may indicate that schools are well placed to look to business in terms of further developing their understanding of leading culture.

Schein (2010) explains there are many ways leaders are able to get their message across. He identifies 12 embedding mechanisms—6 primary, the most powerful things leaders do—and 6 secondary, more formal mechanisms that support and reinforce the primary messages.

The six primary mechanisms are

- what leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis;
- how leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises;
- how leaders allocate resources;
- deliberate role modelling, teaching, and coaching;
- how leaders allocate rewards and status; and
- how leaders recruit, select, promote, and excommunicate (p. 238).

These six primary mechanisms are the major tools Schein (2010) believes leaders have available to them to teach their organisation how to perceive, think, feel and behave based on their own conscious and unconscious convictions. These mechanisms deal

primarily with the actions of the leader and how their actions, words and behaviours are a powerful teacher in terms of what staff will come to believe is important in their school community.

He also identifies six secondary mechanisms which are the more visible cultural artefacts. These mechanisms, although highly visible, may be difficult to interpret without the knowledge gained by observing the leaders' actual behaviours. The first of these six mechanisms is the organisational design and structure. Whilst schools do not often have the founder as a current member of the group, this mechanism does acknowledge that the change process allows for leaders to embed their deeply held assumptions through this mechanism. They convey their assumptions about the tasks to be completed, the means to accomplish it, the nature of the people and the right kinds of relationships. In terms of the school setting this mechanism can be reflected in the decisions of leaders to have a tight hierarchy where all decisions are made by the principal or a more decentralised organisation where middle leaders are able to make decisions in regard to aspects relevant to them. The second mechanism identified by Schein is the systems and procedures. He believes the most visible part of an organisation are the routines, procedures and other recurrent tasks that need to be performed. These procedures and systems formalise the process of paying attention and reinforce the message that the leader cares about certain things. It is what a leader focuses on and talks about that people come to believe is important. The third mechanism explores the rites and rituals of an organisation. The rites and rituals in a school setting may include how the staff meet, how new members are welcomed into the school setting, how students are acknowledged and what they are acknowledged for. All of these rituals send a message to those who participate in and observe them. These rites and rituals are a symbolic way of sharing the assumptions and because they are not always easy to decipher they are not considered a primary mechanism but rather a secondary one. The

fourth mechanism is the physical space, facades and buildings. Physical design encompasses all the visible features of the school. Whilst many leaders have little control over the buildings they do have more control over the setup of various spaces in the school and this setup does convey the assumptions of how the work can be done and how people are expected to relate to others. The staffroom in a school setting is a clear example of this mechanism. In a staff room where all the chairs are set out around small tables reflects the assumption that it is acceptable to develop small groups and cliques, conversely if the room is set up in a circle of chairs and tables this gives the message that this is one community who work collectively. The fifth mechanism is the stories about important events and people. This mechanism acknowledges that the stories, no matter the form, reinforces the assumptions and teaches these assumptions to newcomers. Whilst the leader cannot control what is said about them in stories they can reinforce stories that can give desired messages. It is challenging, however, to try to understand the culture by stories alone because if people do not know the other facts about the leader, they cannot always correctly infer what the point of the story may be. The sixth and final secondary mechanism is the formal statement. This is the attempt of the leader to clearly articulate what the values and assumptions of the organisation are. The statement usually highlights a small part of the assumption set that operates and will also highlight the aspects of the leader's philosophy that is appropriate to share with the community. In a school setting, the Charter, which encompasses the school's mission, vision and values along with the strategic plan for achievement, are the formal articulation of the community's beliefs and aspirations. However, Schein believes these cannot be viewed as a way of fully defining the school's culture as they reflect such a minor aspect of the culture.

Schein is not alone in identifying what it is that leaders do and how their staff will perceive their actions. Kuhlmann (2010) states that there is no doubt that a leader's success

depends on how they mould and develop culture. In fact, the best leaders are those who *walk the talk*. These leaders derive their authority from having a genuine and inspiring sense of purpose and commitment. Leadership is about commitment; however, commitment through words alone is not enough (Wolfson, 2011). Staff observe a leader and will be acutely aware of

- how leaders honour commitments;
- what leaders say in formal and informal settings;
- what leaders express interest in and ask questions about;
- where leaders go and who they spend time with;
- who leaders consult with; and
- how leaders organise staff and physical surroundings (p. 4).

Leadership of culture then is about attending to the visible and the invisible. It is about relationship. While it has been well-defined in the literature that leadership is an influence relationship (Duignan, 2009; Neck & Manz, 2007; Rost, 1993), it appears to be more than a linear influence. Leadership connects people and defines a culture in which people are able to achieve agreed goals. Walker (2011) defines leadership as a connective activity. He suggests that it is essentially about designing, managing and energising the right connections. He also suggests that leading learning cultures in schools demands three core sets of connective activity, namely:

- cultural connectors – based on values, beliefs and assumptions (invisible);
- structural connectors – the way in which a school organises itself (visible); and
- relational connectors – how people relate and work with each other (p. 9).

If influence is central to leadership, then Duignan (2010) suggests that one key way to influence people is by developing mutually rewarding and productive relationships. He also suggests that “without relationship there is unlikely to be influence and without



influence there is unlikely to be leadership” (p. 145). In turn, if effective leadership is relational as is suggested in the literature then a key to relationship-building is communication. This communication, both verbal and non-verbal, has the power to be either congruent and explicit or incongruent and confusing for followers.

### **3.8 Leadership of Change**

Whilst it is acknowledged that leadership of culture is a critical aspect of leadership it is also important to explore the notion of change leadership. This is relevant to this study as the schools attempted to implement and change initiative. This section seeks to explore the nature of the change process and what it is a leader must be and do in order to successfully lead change in the educational setting of a school.

Change literature has developed over time and whilst much has been written since the early 1970s about how to lead educational change, considerable doubts, misgivings and uncertainties remain (Branson, 2010). This perspective is also reflected in the work of Fullan (2006) who identifies that too many change efforts remain ineffective and disappointing. A review of the literature identified that educational change was most adequately represented in six perspectives (Blenkin, Edwards, & Kelly, 1997; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; House & McQuillan, 1998). These six perspectives offer a unique insight into the change process. The six perspectives identified in the literature are technological, cultural, micro-political, biographical, structural and socio-historical.

Central to the technological perspective is the logic of technical rationality. This perspective assumes that innovators and teachers construe practice the same way, innovators are considered superior to teachers and the features of schools as organisations tend to be missed. This technological perspective is most common in terms of externally mandated reform and has had little success over decades (Fullan, 2001). The cultural perspective treats schools as cultural entities—complex social organisations—and is concerned with the

meaning of change, the meaning for teachers and teaching. This perspective signals that innovation cannot be assimilated unless the meaning is shared. The micro-political perspective attempts to understand the distribution and utilisation of power. Here, change is seen as potentially a threat to the balance of power already in existence. The biographical perspective emphasises the way in which change impinges on the lives and careers of teachers and how these two phenomena interact. It acknowledges that resistance to change is a psychological reaction to loss of meaning. The structural perspective assumes that schooling is a reflection of a wider social and political structures and this implies a minimisation of the possibility of human agency in the change. The final perspective attempts to understand where subjects come from and why they exist. Each perspective cannot be aligned to change individually; however, all six perspectives are inextricably linked in the process of change. The challenge in terms of change is what leaders do to effect successful and sustained change. Scholars of change have argued for a refocusing of the process of change, identifying that it must be holistic, systemic, and dynamic and to use a multi-dimensional approach in order to be successful (Fullan, 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Mendels & Mitgang, 2013).

As identified in section 3 the leadership of culture is a challenge for principals; it is, however, not the only challenge they face in their role. The leadership of change is a constant challenge and leaders are often unaware of how to create an inclusive environment for developing and implementing educational change, how to develop positive power with others to focus on the deep learning that all members of the dynamic learning community can experience and enjoy (Hargreaves, 2004, p.292). Effective leaders in schools can have a transformational impact on student learning outcomes (Fullan, 2010); however, the role of the principal in all its complexity is something researchers are still wrestling with, particularly as they attempt to implement change (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013).

**3.8.1 The principal as change leader.** There is no doubt that the role of principal as leader is inextricably linked to change (Burnes & By, 2012) or that it is challenging and complex, particularly when there is such impetus for educational change to improve student learning outcomes (Timperley, 2005). Where the struggle emerges is in what it is a principal needs to be, and in what it is a principal needs to do in order to effect successful change. Much of the literature relies on the notion of single entity transformational leadership in terms of the change process. This model relies on the principal as the agent of change; therefore, it is understood that schools need leaders that have the right personality and skill set (Gill, 2003). Leaders of change, however, know the distinction between having expertise in a curricular or pedagogic area and demonstrating expertise in managing the process of change (Fullan, 2002). They also understand that sustaining improvement requires the leadership capability of more than one—the many rather than the few (Mulford, 2003) and are open to calling upon skilled teachers who are already influencing their colleagues positively to support the change process (Sly, 2008).

It is important to understand that all change results in a change of meaning and meaning is created by the process of self-reference. We only change if we decide the change is meaningful to us (Wheatley, 2006). This goes some way to explain the reactions many people experience in the face of change. If the change lacks meaning for people, then they are likely to put up some form of resistance and the leader must have the personal capacity to be resilient and confident in the face of this resistance (Branson, 2010). Fullan (2001) urges leaders to appreciate, if not welcome, the resistance, rather than trying to suppress it. He believes that when a leader can see reasons a person may resist, it becomes easier for the leader to support them to engage with the change. This also reflects the work of Bridges (2002) who identified that change is external and transition is internal and if leaders can acknowledge the sense of loss people feel in the transitional stages, they are more likely to

be able to assist them to engage with the change. The role of leader in this process requires more than IQ, rather, it calls for both the mental and emotional intelligence of the leader. Whilst the process of change can be exciting to those who do it, it can be threatening to those to whom it is done (Gill, 2003). When a leader can see the reasons a person may be resisting, it becomes easier to remain resilient and support them to engage with the change (Branson, 2010).

Leaders who have been identified with the ability to lead effectively have also been acknowledged as using personal power rather than positional power or authority (Gill, 2003). They are able to relate to people on a personal level, thus leadership of change is not solely about the actions or the position they hold but rather the quality of the interactions (Harris & Spillane, 2008; Moos, 2015). The actions are more clearly defined in the literature and include creating a shared vision, attending to social context, drawing on multiple sources of information to solve complex problems, sustaining a focus on teaching and learning, and being aware of and responsive to the broader context (Holmes, Clement, & Albright, 2013). Whilst the literature gives leaders some clear lines of action it seems there is less clarity about the interactions.

Kouzes and Posner (2002) identified five exemplary leadership practices which at first reading may appear to be a list of actions for a successful leader; however, on closer scrutiny they, in reality, identify a way of interacting that enables people within the organisation to be supported, encouraged and challenged. These five practices are *Model the way*, *Inspire a shared vision*, *Challenge the process*, *Enable others to act*, and *Encourage the heart*.

- Model the way—establish principles concerning the way people should be treated and the ways goals should be pursued. Because the prospect of change can be overwhelming, they set interim goals so people can achieve small wins, they

signpost to assist people when they are unsure of where to go, and they create opportunity for victory on the journey.

- Inspire a shared vision—through their magnetism and quiet persuasion they enlist others in their dream. They breathe life into the vision to enable people to see the exciting possibilities for the future.
- Challenge the process—leaders search for opportunities to change the status quo. They are always looking for opportunities to improve the organisation and, in doing so, they experiment and take risks and, because taking risks involves mistakes, they accept these as learning opportunities.
- Enable others to act—leaders foster collaboration and build team spirits. They understand that mutual respect is what sustains extraordinary efforts. They strive to create an atmosphere of trust and human dignity. They strengthen others and make them feel powerful and capable.
- Encourage the heart—leaders recognise the contributions of others in order to keep hope and determination alive. They reward the efforts of others and make them feel like heroes (p26).

Each of these practices encourages interaction with the people involved in the change. When people have some control over the change process their emotional responses are usually more positive (Elmore, 2002). The interactions of the leader are about influence of people and how to support them when they experience the emotions associated with the change (Dinwoodie, Pasmore, Quinn, & Rabin, 2015). In effecting change it is crucial that leaders remember that they are working with webs of relations, not machines (Wheatley, 2006). Thus, what is required of leaders is more than transactional leadership; rather, it is transrelational leadership where the essence is to create a culture based on shared values of trust, openness, transparency, honesty, integrity collegiality and ethicalness (Branson,

2014). These cultural values underpin the concept of a PLC in its truest sense and only schools that possess the culture of learning can institute sustainable change (Beabout, 2012).

### **3.9 Conclusion**

This systematic review of literature was guided by an overarching research question to address the problem of the variation in student achievement outcomes across schools participating in LDP.

As a result of this literature review, several themes emerged. The key themes identified from the literature that impact student achievement are vision, the responsibility for which lies with the leader to create, to articulate, to express confidence that together the goals can be achieved and to open the space to create communities of mutual support. In the professional learning literature design principles for effective, high quality professional development” (Bredeson, 1995) are identified. One such principle is that effective professional learning is “collaborative and involves reflection and feedback” which can successfully be achieved through effective PLCs. The third theme culture which is more complex than the word would suggest leads to an exploration of how leadership connects people and defines a culture in which people are able to achieve agreed goals. The final theme, the leadership of change is a constant challenge and leaders are often unaware of how to create an inclusive environment for developing and implementing educational change, how to develop positive power with others to focus on the deep learning that all members of the dynamic learning community can experience and enjoy.

A synthesis of the literature generated the following four questions which will guide the next stage of this study

1. In what ways did the vision influence student academic achievement in LDP?

2. In what ways did professional learning influence student academic achievement in LDP?
3. In what ways did culture influence student academic achievement in LDP?
4. In what ways did the leadership of change influence student academic achievement in LDP?

Chapter Four explains and justifies the research design for the study.

## Chapter 4: Design of the Research

### 4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the unexpected variations in student academic achievement outcomes in literacy across participating schools in LDP. At the conclusion of Chapter 2 the research question guiding the literature review was identified as

*What factors are influencing the unexpected variation in student academic achievement in literacy outcomes across participating schools in LDP?*

Chapter 3, the literature review, provided an overview of current research on educational change that is aligned to this current study. At the conclusion of Chapter 3 four sub-research questions generated through the literature review were itemised. These research questions are used to guide the methodological choices and the design of this research. The purpose of this chapter is therefore to explain and justify these choices.

The sub-research questions are:

1. In what ways did the vision influence student academic achievement in LDP?
2. In what ways did professional learning influence student academic achievement in LDP?
3. In what ways did culture influence student academic achievement in LDP?
4. In what ways did the leadership of change influence student academic achievement in LDP?

Given the nature of these questions the study is situated in the epistemological traditions of constructionism. The theoretical perspective of interpretivism and symbolic interactionism are adopted. These choices are presented in Section 4.2. In section 4.3, case study methodology is outlined and justified while Section 4.4 includes a description of the methods utilised in this study along with that of the participants, their selection, and participation. This is followed in Section 4.5 by a discussion of the data gathering strategies



used in this study. The process of data analysis and the use of the constant comparative analysis method are then explained. In Section 4.6, the matter of trustworthiness is addressed as are the ethical issues in Section 4.7. Section 4.8 provides an explanation of the limitations of the research and the final section, Section 4.9, provides an overview of the research design.

## **4.2 Research Design**

The selection of a theoretical framework, which encompasses the epistemology, theoretical perspective, and methodology, must provide the logic and consistency of purpose with the research questions. In particular, the theoretical framework offers a lens through which the research can be conducted and viewed. The following section describes the theoretical framework adopted for this particular research. The epistemological stance of constructionism is adopted since it seeks to “understand the complex world of lived experience from the point of view of those who live it” (Schwandt, 2000). The theoretical perspective provides a practical interpretation of the epistemological stance so as to guide the process of this research. To this end, the theoretical perspective of interpretivism was adopted in this study as it enabled the researcher to explore the issue of variation as it is understood by the participants and to interpret their shared reality. Moreover, this study used interpretivism in the form of symbolic interactionism as it assisted with the focus on the understandings and experiences of teachers and principals. Symbolic interactionism enables the researcher to gain a clearer understanding of how the social interactions within the schools included in this study influence the variation in student academic achievement outcomes in literacy.

**4.2.1 Epistemology–constructionism.** The term “epistemology” refers to how researchers understand knowledge—how it is generated or negotiated (Crotty, 1998). It is predominantly concerned with the development of common bodies of knowledge or how

one's personal knowledge is acquired. The study of epistemology provides a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledges are knowable and how we can ensure these are adequate and legitimate (Crotty, 1998).

Constructionism is the epistemological stance adopted in this study as it allows for the generation of collective meaning (Crotty, 1998). Constructionism acknowledges that humans engage with and interpret their reality in a personal and subjective way. This stance is outlined by Schwandt (2000) where he wrote:

Human beings do not find or discover knowledge so much as construct or make it. We invent concepts, models, and schemes to make sense of experience, and we continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experience. Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and socio-cultural dimension to the construction. We do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against a backdrop of shared understandings, practices and language. (p. 179)

Constructionists negotiate their reality through concepts of culture and language. This epistemological stance of constructionism also holds that learning is essentially dynamic; individual participants construct their knowledge of the world that can be represented as a unique pattern connecting perceptions, experiences and understandings. In this way, individual participants become connected into wider perceptions and realities. Given this belief that knowledge is individually constructed, dynamic, and based on perception, this epistemological perspective favours the importance of interpreting the world.

The consequence of the epistemological stance of constructionism is that there is no fixed knowledge or end result, but rather the creation of a body of knowledge which is always open to further exploration and reinterpretation of reality. In this way, our reality is a product of our social interactions. It is not objectively given but rather it needs to be

constructed through our social interactions. Here, reality is socially constructed by those as and when they experience it (Gergen, 1999).

In this study the view of the researcher is that the lens of constructionism was not limited to her. Rather, the participants themselves were also viewed as constructionists. Even though the LDP project was explicitly described and the expected processes were clearly shared with principals and teachers, those involved constructed their own knowledge of how the project would be implemented within their own school environment. They filtered the provided objective knowledge of the project which was shared with them through their subjective lens, and constructed a personal knowledge and understanding of how the project should be implemented in their particular school. In addition, not only are the participants seen as constructors of their own essential knowledge in this research but so too is the researcher. Constructionism was elected for this research as it invites the researcher to approach the participants in a radical spirit of openness to its potential for new or richer meaning. In this way, the epistemological stance of this study is an invitation to the reinterpretation of what we hold as true (Crotty, 1998). In this way the researcher as constructionist gathered data about the process of the LDP programme, interpreted that data and constructed her understanding of it.

Being concerned with perspective, constructionists typically create models and concepts, and plans to make sense of the experience of engaging with data and therefore go on to test and modify their constructions in light of new experiences. This reconstruction leads to a new understanding of reality that is continually unfolding.

As this research explores the issue of variation across a community of schools, it is considered appropriate by the researcher to adopt a constructionist epistemological perspective as it allows the researcher to explore, interpret, and reinterpret the issues of variation that draws on each participant's experiences and interpretation of the events.

**4.2.2 Interpretivism.** A theoretical perspective must be congruent with the purpose of the research and can also be used as a rationale to justify the particular methodological approach that fulfils the purpose of the conduct of research and to seek answers to the research questions (Crotty, 1998). Interpretivism has been adopted for this study as this perspective is concerned with “revealing the personal perspectives behind empirical observations, the actions people take in the light of their perspectives and the patterns which develop through the interaction of perspectives and actions over particular periods of time” (O'Donoghue, 2007, p. 21). There are, however, common criticisms that underpin interpretivist research. These criticisms include the belief that all inquiry research is value laden; that there is a difficulty in gaining objectivity; and that many factors interact and reflect a worldview which is made up of multi-faceted realities (Candy, 1989).

As the purpose of this study is to explore the variation in academic achievement outcomes in literacy, interpretivism allows the researcher to engage with the personal reasons and motives that shape a person's internal beliefs and feelings that guide decisions to act in particular ways. This study aims to learn what is meaningful or relevant to the teachers and principals and how this is constructed and therefore impacts on how they experience their daily life. This is achieved by the researcher familiarising herself with the particular setting and seeing these experiences from the point of view of the participant. The researcher is then able to appreciate feelings and interpretations of the individual and groups under study.

In interpretivist theory the individual and society are inseparable. A complete understanding of one is not possible without a complete understanding of the other (O'Donoghue, 2007). One of the basic tenets of interpretivist research regarding the individual is that all human action is meaningful and hence has to be interpreted and

understood within the context of social practice (Usher, 1996). There are three forms of interpretivism—hermeneutics, phenomenology, and symbolic interactionism:

- Hermeneutics is an attempt to *read* human practices, human events, and human situations in ways that bring understanding (Crotty, 1998, p. 87).
- Phenomenology is in the search of objects of experience rather than being content with a description of the experiencing subject (Crotty, 1998, p. 83).
- Symbolic interactionism is where the investigator is directed to take, to the best of their ability, the standpoint of those being studied (Denzin, 1978, p. 99)

For the purpose of this study symbolic interactionism has been adopted.

**4.2.3 Symbolic interactionism.** Symbolic interactionism is a sociological perspective on self and society based on the ideas of George H. Mead (1934). Symbolic interactionism defines life as being lived through symbols. They are social objects which have cultural origins and have shared meanings that are shaped and preserved in social interaction. Reality is primarily a social product, dependent on symbolic interactions for its existence.

Symbolic interactionism is deemed to be a credible form of interpretivism as it supports the stance that humans do not simply respond to the environment (Charon, 2007). “We are not simply shaped by, conditioned, controlled by that environment, but we act toward it according to our ongoing definitions arising from our perspectives that are themselves dynamic” (Charon, 2001, p. 40). The value of adopting an interpretivist approach, specifically symbolic interactionism, for this research, is that it has the potential to provide the researcher with a lens through which the individual perceptions, feelings and attitudes of teacher and principal are able to be investigated and interpreted in order to understand the meaning that developed from interactions with one another regarding the phenomenon of a variation of achievement.

There are three tenets central to the concept of symbolic interactionism (Blumer, 1969). The first tenet is “that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning they have for them” (p. 2). In other words, individuals attach their own meaning to a given phenomenon and act according to their constructed meaning. In this way people do not respond, rather they make choices about their actions. In making choices they display a sense of personal decision-making that influences their actions (O'Donoghue, 2007).

The second tenet is that meaning is derived from and arises out of the social interaction one has with others. This assumption asserts that “the meaning of a thing for a person grows out of the ways in which other people act towards the person with regard to the thing” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). What is intended here is that meanings held by a person can be constantly changing due to interactions with others. The world view or perspective of the person is not constant or fixed.

The third tenet is that “meanings are handled and modified through an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he or she encounters” (Blumer, 1969, p. 2). This assumption is described as having two stages. The first stage is where the person points out to himself that things have meaning and the second stage is where the person checks, reviews and transforms meaning in the light of the situation and the interaction with others (O'Donoghue, 2007). This process creates for the person a perspective, a way of seeing, and a point of view. The role of the researcher here is to interpret this perspective. This is an interaction role and becomes symbolic only because of the significant symbols, that is, the language, gestures, and non-verbal communication that we share and through which we communicate. It is only through this dialogue the researcher becomes aware of the perceptions, feelings beliefs and attitudes of others and is able to interpret their meaning and intent (Crotty, 1998).

Symbolic interactionism employs two distinct phases during data collection, the *exploration* phase and the *inspection* phase (Charon, 2007). The exploration phase is where the researcher gains an early understanding of “what is going on around here?” (p. 147). The second phase is the inspection phase where issues identified in the exploration phase can be investigated further.

### **4.3 Case Study**

Case study is described by Merriam (1998), as “an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community. The case is a bounded, integrated system” (p. 8). Similarly, Stake (1995a, 1995c) not only posits that researchers should view case study as a bounded system but more that they should inquire into it as an object rather than a process. Stake (1995a) identifies three types of case study. Intrinsic, instrumental and collective, and then goes on to outline each.

Intrinsic case study is undertaken when there is a desire to better understand a particular case. Instrumental case study is used to accomplish something other than understanding a particular situation. It provides insight into an issue or helps to refine a theory. Here, the case is of secondary interest; it plays a supportive role, facilitating our understanding of something else. The case is often looked at in depth, its contexts scrutinized, its ordinary activities detailed, and because it helps the researcher pursue the external interest. The case may or may not be seen as typical of other cases. Collective case study is where cases may be jointly studied in order to inquire into a phenomenon, population or general condition. (p. 16)

The case which is the focus of this research is an unexpected variation of achievement across five schools that had implemented a shared schooling improvement project called LDP. The intrinsic case study has been selected for this research in order to

better understand the particular case of the variation of achievement across schools participating in the LDP.

Case study is specifically appropriate for this research as it allows the use of a wide variety of data collection strategies (Merriam, 1998). This study uses a variety of methods to draw on the experiences of teachers, literacy leaders and principals in the implementation of an across-school improvement project. A quality case study creates a depth of description, focusing on individuals or groups and their perspectives (Stake, 1995a). Case study gives the opportunity of continuous internal debate between a participant's perspective and the researcher's interpretations. In addition, the researcher is central to the case (Hughes & Hitchcock, 1995), taking on the role of ultimate research instrument (Gillham, 2000). As the researcher is fully involved in data collection, interpretation, and analysis it is essential that the researcher is alert to her own biases. The researcher needs to be open and transparent about these issues, since researcher subjectivity and bias may distort the outcomes (Flyvberg, 2004).

The advantages of case study are well-established in the literature (Flyvberg, 2004; Guba, 1989; Stake, 2005). Case studies produce knowledge that is contextually located and based on the reality of the participants. Understandings from intrinsic case study are able to be used to understand a particular case and may be transferred to more generalised cases and can contribute to a growing body of evidence related to the case. In this research, the insights gained from the experiences of teachers, literacy leaders and principals will help by contributing to an increased understanding of the implementation of an across-school improvement project and may help explain the phenomenon that is the variation in achievement.



## 4.4 Methods

Research methodology is “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 outcome” (Crotty, 1998, p. 3). Section 4.4.1 outlines the participants in the study and describes how they were approached and selected. This study had two phases– the exploration phase and the inspection phase, and three steps of data collection. In Phase 1, two steps of data collection were adopted – Step 1: Document analysis and Step 2 – Individual interviews. In Phase 2 there was a further step of data collection – Step 3: Focus group interviews.

**4.4.1 Participants.** This section includes the details of the participant groups within the research. In particular, it considers how they were selected and approached. The selection of participants for case study research is usually focused on two factors the first is the closeness to the case and the second is the participants themselves (Merriam, 1998). This research takes place in a community that is bounded geographically. In this description it was noted that there are eight schools within a geographically close cluster with five of these schools participating in this study. These five schools were invited to participate in this study as they each had year groups which were able to be compared using national and local data.

The participants of this study represent a range of teachers from the five schools. Five principals were part of the participant group with one principal being the researcher. The curriculum leader of literacy in each of the five schools also participated. This inclusion of the literacy leaders ensured the researcher was able to gain an understanding of how teachers experienced leadership within their schools. A purposive sampling approach in selecting teachers within the schools for interviews was used (Merriam, 1998). As a result of this approach, the teachers some of whom were also syndicate leaders were invited to

participate in the study. It was necessary that they were employed at the schools for the duration of the LDP. Staff turnover during the project determined the number of participants from each school. There was a total of 24 participants as displayed in Table 4.1. Each of the principals in this study has been referred to as female in order to ensure they are not identifiable, as required by ethics approval.

Table 4.1

*Participants*

Participant category	Individual interviews	Focus group	Total
Principal	5	1 x 5	5
PLC Literacy	5	1 x 5	5
Syndicate Leaders, Teachers	15	1 x 8 1 x 7	15

**4.4.2 Data gathering strategies.** This section details the data gathering strategies used within this research. Two main forms of data were collected:

1) Documents with achievement data for the cluster were used as these documents were part of the work the cluster had already undertaken; and

2) Semi-structured individual interviews followed by semi-structured focus group interviews were adopted as they were appropriate data gathering strategies for use with intrinsic case study (Gillham, 2000).

This process of data gathering is divided into two phases. The first phase is the exploration phase. In this phase the achievement documents were analysed and individual interviews were conducted with principals, literacy leaders and teachers. Data analysis began as data were being collected and emerging themes were noted. The second phase of data gathering is the inspection phase. This phase included focus group interviews where

further clarification of participants' perspectives was sought. This process is outlined in

Table 4.42:

Table 4.2

*Overview of Data Gathering Process*

Data Collection Phases	Phases for Data Collection and Analysis	
<i>Phase 1: Exploratory Stage</i>	Step 1	Document Analysis
	Step 2	Individual Interviews: Principals (4) Literacy Leaders (5) Teachers (15)
<i>Phase 2: Inspection Stage</i>	Step 3	Focus groups interviews: Principals Group (1) Literacy Leaders (1) Teachers (2)

**4.4.2.1 Document analysis:** The first phase of the data gathering involved the analysis of achievement data across the five participating schools. The Assessment Tool for Teaching and Learning (asTTle test) was the tool used by the cluster during LDP to identify achievement levels in reading and writing. The national means were developed by the asTTle Development group after a national trialling of the tool across a wide range of students in the various year groups. This was achieved by collating the national scores to determine a mean score from which age appropriate norms were developed. The group did not review the asTTle test during the time of this project thus, the age-appropriate norms remained the same from 2004 through to 2008. Pre-project data were collected in 2004 and post-project in 2008. The data were collected from each school involved in this study and a school mean ascertained at each collection point. These data were shared between schools and a cluster mean identified. School means were then compared to both the cluster and national means for students in Years 4, 5 and 6. All data were shared across schools in this study.

**4.4.2.2 Interviews:** The next two steps of the data collection were interviews, Step 2: Individual interviews, followed by Step 3: Focus group interviews. Each type of interview used semi-structured interviewing techniques. These steps involved the researcher asking participants questions designed to illuminate the case of the variation of achievement in literacy across five schools. Interviews are important to intrinsic case study as they enable the researcher to delve into participant perspective (Stake, 1995b).

**4.4.2.2.1 Individual Interviews:** The individual interview process allows the researcher to ask a series of standard questions of each participant but also allows the researcher to delve deeper into the participant's responses, as appropriate, in order to enter into the participant's perspective (Patton, 1990). In this interview format the researcher guides the participant to share their perspective, their ideas and beliefs and their daily situation (See Appendix B, p.236). This study involved 25 individual interviews. Each interview was recorded and transcribed. The transcription was shared with the participants to verify the record and provide clarification of their responses.

**4.4.2.2.2 Focus Groups:** A focus group interview allows the researcher to interact with a small group of participants with a view to gathering shared understandings around a certain phenomenon (Cresswell, 2008). This is a variation of the individual interview in that it is a small group of participants joining in a group discussion format. Interaction in this interview format is usually directed by the interviewer through the introduction of semi-structured questions (see Appendix C, p.237). Focus group interviews allow participants to share perceptions, experiences and beliefs.

In adopting focus group interviews as a data gathering strategy, the researcher is aware of the limitations which may exist in this process. For example, some participants may be overpowered by other members of the group and may feel uncomfortable in sharing perspectives due to professional implications (Patton, 1990). Nonetheless, it was deemed

important to conduct focus group interviews and four focus groups were formed. Principals formed one group, literacy leaders another and teachers formed the remaining two groups. As with the individual interview process, questions were designed by the researcher to guide the discussion. The structure provided the participants with the freedom to respond to the interview questions from their own perspective as principal, literacy leader or teacher. All focus group interviews were recorded and transcribed and confirmation sought from participants at a time not long after the interview.

**4.4.3 Researcher as participant.** In interpretive research, the researcher is inextricably linked with the process. Within the context of this research project, the researcher has worked with many of the participants in a range of ways and for over eight years. Given the nature of the closeness of the bounded community of schools and the closeness of the relationships, it is important to identify the process by which this relationship did not intrude too greatly on the research. There are also benefits because the researcher was part of this bounded community. This “deep insider researcher” (Edwards, 1999, p. 1) brings heightened knowledge, awareness of organisational history and culture, trust, rapport, and rich shared history. The researcher acknowledges the need to be aware of intrusion of personal opinion and bias. In light of this, an independent interviewer was employed by the researcher to undertake the individual interviews within the researcher’s school and to provide support during the focus group interviews such as facilitating the discussion and drawing out responses from participants.

## **4.5 Analysis of Data**

The data analysis procedure adopted by this study is constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). This is a process of identifying, theming, and coding. There are three major types of coding in this process: “open coding, axial coding, and selective

coding” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 7) and these are promoted as a suitable data analysis technique in symbolic interactionist studies.

Each step in this analysis process has been described by many researchers. Coding has been described as the process by which data are broken down into concepts (see Appendix D, p238). More specifically, when open coding:

...the researcher simultaneously codes and analyses data in order to develop concepts. By continually comparing specific incidents in the data, the researcher refines these concepts, identifies their properties, explores their relationships to one another, and integrates them into a coherent theory. (Taylor & Bogdan, 1984, p. 126)

Coding is a three-step process:

- Step one: Open Coding. During open coding, the data are broken down into concepts. These concepts are then closely examined and compared for similarities. Open coding refers to that part of analysis that deals with the labelling and categorising of phenomena as indicated by the data.
- Step two: Axial coding. This puts data back together in new ways by making connections between a category and its sub-categories Thus, axial coding refers to the process of developing main categories and their sub-categories (Pandit, 1996, p. 10).
- Step three: Selective coding. This involves the integration of the categories that have been developed from the other two forms of coding to develop theory. (O'Donoghue, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

## **4.6 Trustworthiness**

Trustworthiness is defined by the type of research being undertaken. In interpretivist research, four criteria are identified to judge trustworthiness: credibility, transferability,

dependability, and confirmability. These criteria are intended to better reflect the underlying assumption that form part of qualitative study (Guba, 1981).

Credibility is comprised by determining that the findings of qualitative research are credible from the perspective of the participant in the research. This type of research is used to understand a phenomenon from the perspective of the participant. It then makes sense that they are best placed to deem the research credible. Data are collected, transcribed, and then given back to the participant for confirmation.

Transferability relates to the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings (Guba, 1989). When the research is thorough, a reader is able to make a judgement about how well this research is able to be transferred into their own context. The reader then generalises the research to their own context rather than relying of the researcher to do so.

Dependability relates to ability for the findings to be consistent should other researchers repeat the study. There should be enough information from the research to enable someone to replicate the study and get similar findings. An inquiry audit can be used in order to confirm dependability. This can be achieved by involving an external person to review the process and the analysis of data to validate consistency of findings and that the research is able to be repeated.

Confirmability examines the impartiality in the research findings. This aspect aims to ensure that researcher bias does not distort the analysis of participant input to fit a certain narrative. Confirmability can be achieved through the provision of an audit trail which outlines each step of data analysis that was used in order to ensure authentic findings truly reflective of the participants' responses. The use of an audit trail was employed in this study to ensure the results could be confirmed by others.

Each of these criteria has been addressed in the course of this research. The context and assumptions of this research have been addressed thoroughly by the researcher enabling a rich and textured story to be told. The richness of this story promotes the opportunity for the reader to make judgements about how transferrable this research is.

#### **4.7 Ethical Issues**

Ethics in all research demands three major considerations. These are a respect for democracy, respect for truth, and respect for persons (Bassey, 1999). Respect for democracy allows the researcher to engage with participants and seek their stories. In this regard a researcher is also bound by a respect for truth. This places the onus on the researcher to be open and transparent in the collection of data and to act with integrity in everything related to the participant's story. The respect for persons involves the researcher seeking appropriate approval from participants by way of formal consent and the permission given to all participants to withdraw at any time without reason. It also acknowledges the right of the individual to hold an opinion and to share that opinion freely.

All aspects of this study were undertaken in accordance with the requirements of the ACU Human Research Ethics Committee from whom ethics approval was given (see Appendix E, p.239-240). In meeting the requirements of the Ethics Committee, informed consent was gained from the Principal's Cluster. Principals then informed their literacy leaders and teachers and the researcher then invited them in writing to participate. Research objectives were conveyed to all participants in writing prior to their agreement to participate in the study and the collection of any data. Participants were clearly informed of the voluntary nature of their participation and the option offered to them to withdraw from the project at any time without giving a reason. They were all assured that should they chose to withdraw; this would not prejudice their position in any way. Signed consent was gained



from each participant prior to the beginning of the data collection process. All data were stored securely and safely in accordance with ACU protocols.

#### **4.8 Limitations**

As with all research, the qualitative approach to research is not without its limitations.

A limitation of this study is that it is set in a bounded community where the principals had worked collaboratively together for many years. The nature of their collaborative relationships was a limitation as it challenged the principals to engage in critical reflection as a group of principals. The outcome was a focus on maintaining the relationship at the expense of improved practice.

A second limitation was that the study was limited to five schools. There may well have been other schools that were involved in improvement projects and achieved positive outcomes but they were not identified and therefore their results were not known to the researcher so their results were not considered for this study.

#### **4.9 Conclusion**

This chapter has explained the theoretical paradigm and research design that has driven this study. Constructivism provided the ontological direction, and within this paradigm the epistemological focus has been interpretivism where a symbolic interactionist approach was adopted. The exploration stage involved the analysis of achievement data documents and required the creation of guiding questions for the interviews with the principals, teachers and literacy leaders in the five schools. The individual interviews and focus group interviews were conducted during the exploration stage of the study. The second stage, inspection, comprised the use of the constant comparative analysis process. Case study was selected as an appropriate means to explore the phenomenon of the variation in achievement. This case study explored an understanding of the social context of the

principals, teachers, and literacy leaders by examining how they understand and made meaning of the LDP.

This justification and outline of the research methods provides an understanding from which the study was conducted. The following chapter, Chapter 5, explores the case and generates the foundation for the cross-case analysis.

## **Chapter 5: Individual Site Analyses**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this research is to explore the unexpected variations in student academic achievement outcomes in literacy across participating schools in LDP. The focus of this chapter is to display the data for the five participating schools. These data will be presented in two parts. The first part describes the project expectations. It was assumed that all schools would implement the project expectations uniformly within the context of their own school. The second part describes the demographic data and presents an analysis of the interview data themed for each school. In this way, in this chapter I seek to provide an understanding of the specific manner by which each school actually implemented the project expectations and the principal's, literacy leader's and teacher's responses to this implementation.

### **5.2 The LDP Process**

The LDP process had the following three aims:

1. Improved teacher content knowledge

The focus of this aim was to assess the current level of content knowledge teachers had in the teaching of literacy within the valley. This assessment was undertaken by the literacy team and the project co-ordinator through the use of a scenario assessment. The scenario was developed using a fictional classroom reading or writing lesson. All teachers were asked to identify the level of effectiveness of the literacy teaching practices in this scenario using a number rating system. Based on teacher's responses generated from this process, each teacher's current level of content knowledge for the teaching of literacy was assessed and gaps identified (see Appendix F, pp 241-247).

## 2. Improved transfer of literacy pedagogy into practice

Once a clear picture of the teaching of literacy content knowledge levels were ascertained, teachers across all schools were observed by independent observers (the coordinator and the resource teacher of literacy) to assess their practice in the teaching of literacy. It was believed that there may be discrepancies between what teachers explicitly knew and what teachers did in the teaching of literacy. In other words, it was thought that although a teacher might not be able to explicitly verbalise their specific literacy teaching practices they may actually be intuitively including some in their everyday classroom teaching methods. To ensure consistency across classrooms and schools, these observations were standardised whereby the observers were trained in the observation practice and used the same criteria and recording sheet in each observation (see Appendix G, p 248). The criteria for these observations used the same language as was used in the scenario process. As these observations were standardised, data from these were collated and shared within and across schools.

Whilst the project was focused on literacy as described in Chapter two, schools were able to select a specific focus on reading or writing. Scenarios were available for both contexts and the scenario and observations used the same criteria across both aspects of literacy. The data collected were the nationally normed asTTle test which allows for a judgement of achieving at expectation in both reading and writing. Schools B and C selected writing as their focus and Schools A, D and E selected reading. It was assumed that a focus on literacy in general would allow for a greater transfer of effective teacher practice across reading and writing and this in turn would raise levels of achievement across both domains of literacy.

3. Develop and support for the implementation of professional learning communities.

Professional learning communities (PLC) were set up and facilitated by the Project co-ordinator and this allowed for all schools to undertake this process with some level of individuality. There were two across-school PLC groups – the principals' PLC and the literacy leaders' PLC – such that each school was represented in both of these PLC groups. It was also a clear project expectation that each individual school would form its own in-school PLC. An essential feature of a PLC is the role of participating teachers to willingly de-privatise their practice whereby teachers are expected to work collaboratively with their colleagues rather than individually and in isolation in their classrooms

The LDP project co-ordinator and the principals' group also initiated opportunities for teachers to develop across-schools' networks for the purpose of professional learning. Three processes were introduced to this effect. The first was an area-wide symposium, the second was an across-school cluster group for literacy leaders, and the third was an annual literacy retreat for principals, deputy principals, assistant principals and literacy leaders.

The symposium offered teachers the opportunity to gather together annually where cluster-wide data were shared with all teachers and possible reasons for underachievement in particular areas of schooling were explored. The symposium consisted also of a guest speaker to address current issues identified by principals. This was followed by workshops that were designed to share best practice across the valley. In the last two years of the project the workshops had been in individual schools and had led to the development of school improvement plans. These improvement plans were based on the shared data with the purpose being to target underachievement in individual schools rather than across all schools as was the original intention.

The across-school literacy leaders cluster group had three nominated outcomes. The first was to deepen literacy leaders' understanding of the effective teaching of literacy. The second was the opportunity to build across-school collegial relationships, while the third nominated outcome was to provide an opportunity for literacy leaders to share best practice. The expectation of principals and the project co-ordinator was that the literacy leaders would then lead the literacy developments within their own schools.

The annual retreat was attended by the leadership teams from each school and was held outside the local area. These retreats were designed as an opportunity for all leadership teams to share their journey, their successes and their challenges. Cognition Education NZ an educational company that designs and delivers a range of publishing, professional learning, and consultancy services, attended these retreats providing an opportunity to undertake an external review of the project with the intention being to better understand the impact LDP was having in the participating schools.

The intended aim of the combination of all these actions was to provide consistent direction, support and guidance to each and every school along with an implementation strategy that prescribed the three expectations discussed. By doing so it was assumed that the project would achieve very similar beneficial literacy outcomes for each school. But, as will be shown in the following descriptions of how the project was actually implemented in each of the participating schools, some inconsistencies prevailed and there were clear differences in the beneficial literacy outcomes achieved across the schools. Thus, this research seeks to highlight these implementation inconsistencies as a means of providing knowledge about which of these may have had the most influence upon the successful teaching of literacy.

Following the stage one interviews, the interview data had been analysed and themed and three themes emerged. The process of how the themes were generated can be

seen in Appendix H (p.249). The first theme is *professional learning experiences* which describes the initiatives generated by the project assessments and the response of each school to these initiatives. The second theme explores *staff outlook and commitment*. This theme examines the experiences of the staff and the impact this had on their commitment to the implementation of the project aims. The third theme reflects *the perception of the leadership* in the process of implementation of the LDP project. The remainder of this chapter explores each school in relation to these three themes.

### **5.3 School A: Demographic and Interview Analysis**

School A was founded as a result of a merger of two state schools in 2003. This school had a roll of 290 students in Years 1–6 at the time data were collected. The cultural makeup of the student population included 33% indigenous NZ Maori, 13% Pasifika and the remainder of the students were New Zealand European with a small percentage of students who were Asian. There were thirteen classrooms with thirteen full-time teachers. Four of the classroom teachers were employed at the beginning of the LDP in 2004. A further four teachers had been employed at the school for two years or less at the commencement of this study. The remaining five teachers had been at the school for between three and seven years.

The school had a leadership team of four. This team consisted of the principal, the deputy principal and two syndicate leaders. Syndicate leaders are teachers responsible for groups of classes within the school. Syndicates are most commonly characterised as:

Years 1-3 junior school syndicate and Years 4-6 senior school syndicate. The principal, Casey, was sixty-two years old and was three years from retirement. Previously she had been the principal of two schools in the area such that she was the principal of one of the pre-merged schools from 1990 until the merger in 2003 to form School A.

The deputy principal (Beth) had been at School A for two years having spent her previous four years in another school within the cluster of schools involved in the LDP project. One syndicate leader (Julie) had been at the school since the introduction of LDP. This syndicate leader was a leader in the other school that merged with Casey's school to create School A. She had been employed at that school for over twenty years. She was one of the two leaders retained in the initial merger process and as syndicate leader, she also held the role of literacy leader for the implementation of the LDP project. The second syndicate leader (Karen) had been employed at the school for four years and had held this leadership position for two years. The school had experienced a high turnover of staff in the years following the merger of the two schools that became School A and prior to the introduction of LDP.

School A was situated in close proximity to both the local intermediate school (Years 7 and 8) and high school (Years 9 to 13). It was less than 500m from another primary school. In 2004, School A had a student population of over 350. Enrolment had declined in the subsequent years to a population of 290. The reasons for this decline are due to an aging population with 64% of the current population in the area over 50 years of age and to parents choosing alternative schooling. The possible reasons for this change in parental choice patterns are complex and were not explored within this case study.

**5.3.1 Professional learning experiences.** Student assessment data collected prior to the beginning of the LDP project indicated that students at School A were achieving below the expected national standards in reading. In keeping with the project expectations, the project co-ordinator and the literacy leader undertook the mandated scenario and observation assessments.

The scenario, as described earlier, was designed to give the co-ordinator and the literacy leader an overview of what the School A teachers knew about how to teach reading.



This purpose, however, was not conveyed to teachers as they did not initially see this form of assessment as a helpful tool for them. The teachers identified that they did not understand the purpose of the assessment nor did they feel they had been given an appropriate introduction to the task. Hence, one teacher's comment was, "It was strange in the beginning because we really didn't know what to do." (Beth, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

A number of teachers commented that the principal did not administer the assessment nor did she undertake the assessment herself. They believed that the lack of enthusiastic participation by the principal had a negative influence on staff:

I think Casey was snowed under with all the merger work. I'm not really sure but she didn't seem to join in much. She didn't do the scenario and I know she didn't really know what we were talking about when we got our results back. I was a bit frustrated then because I wondered what the point of it was. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The second assessment, as described above and implemented by the project co-ordinator and the literacy team, was the classroom observations of reading lessons. The project co-ordinator and the literacy leader undertook all of the observations and criteria were shared with teachers prior to the observation. Sharing the criteria with the teachers allowed for a transparent process and enabled focus on the practice on the effective teaching of literacy. The criteria were based on the Effective Teaching of Literacy Criteria created by the National Literacy Development Team.

The observation assessment was a positive experience for teachers in School A. One teacher expressed her experience with the assessment using the following words:

I loved having someone come into my classroom and make me reflect on what I was doing. She told me the good things I was doing and told

me what I could work on next. Previously I was in my own wilderness.

That has been the best thing for me. (Karen, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

Clearly, it provided a professional learning experience. The teacher's pedagogical knowledge was being deepened as her previously implicit teaching behaviours became explicit and she was learning more about herself as a professional teacher. She had professional knowledge that she was not aware of since she was using effective practices in her teaching of literacy and had not, until this point, understood why they were effective.

However, for other teachers, this assessment was not a positive experience, the literacy leader identified reluctance by some teachers when she commented:

The one person I am thinking about absolutely hated having someone come into her room. She was oppositional to the point of being rude. It was a difficult situation but we kept the pressure on. (Beth, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The presence of this resistant of being observed teaching in their own classroom was not totally unexpected as this action was somewhat counter-cultural for them. They had been used to having the freedom to work alone in their classroom in whatever way they wished. They had been free from any professional judgement of their performance as a teacher.

Nevertheless, the observation assessment had a positive influence on teacher practice. The feedback received from the observers enabled teachers to share their new learning with professional colleagues. This was exemplified by one experienced teacher where she said, "When I met with the co-coordinator after my observations I could share things with her and get a better idea of what I needed to work on" (Karen, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011).

The influence of these two assessments became the catalyst for the generation of a professional learning programme which specifically addressed teacher identified needs. Thus, the project co-ordinator and the literacy leader introduced three initiatives. The first initiative was a series of *focused staff meetings for collective learning* in the strategies for effective teaching of reading. The second initiative was a *regular observation cycle* to provide teachers with feedback on classroom practice and to set goals for individual professional learning. The third initiative was a *learning programme* which aimed to enable teachers to develop a deeper understanding of student achievement data. In particular, the teachers were provided with experiences of analysing data to assist with planning to meet learning gaps for students. These three initiatives will now be described in a little more detail.

*Initiative 1:* The first initiative was a series of focused staff meetings for collective learning in the strategies for effective teaching of reading. These staff meetings were planned and led by the co-ordinator and the literacy leader. The meetings addressed such things as introducing learning intentions and success criteria. This meant teachers now shared with their students what the students were learning and why. Teachers also introduced success criteria for students and this allowed the students to understand what they needed to do to be successful in their learning.

The principal identified these meetings as meaningful. In contrast, a number of teachers complained that these meetings were less than helpful because the meetings failed to extend the teachers who already understood the foci, or the proposed strategies were introduced too quickly, or the meetings failed to inspire the reluctant teachers. One teacher explained this perspective in the following way:

Probably the downside of these meetings was when people were ready to move on to the next new strategy and they were held back by those not yet

ready. I had to wait so it was kind of difficult being one of the people ready to move on but having to wait for the others. (Beth, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

*Initiative 2:* The second initiative was the introduction of a regular observation cycle. This cycle was developed to ensure every teacher was observed every term in the teaching of reading, and critiqued in their practice. Regrettably, it appeared that the observations had a mixed influence on teacher practice. Arguably, this mixed influence was largely caused by the departure of the co-ordinator and the literacy leader at the end of the fourth year of the six-year project, which meant that the regular observation cycle waned. Teachers were not being observed every term and, for some time, teachers were being observed only once a year.

During the last two years of the project, the new deputy principal attempted to re-implement the observation cycle but this generated some constraining problems. The deputy principal identified three problems. Her comment, “I don’t get released enough. I can’t do everything when I am in a classroom. I think if I was released full time I would actually be able to put regular observations back in place”, revealed that a lack of release time was the first problem she encountered (Beth, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011). The second problem was what she perceived as a lack of forward planning. She explained this “As a management team we need to set aside time to actually do the observations because sometimes other things come along and we put off the observations. I don’t think this would happen if they were already pencilled in (Beth, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011). The third problem encountered was a lack of personnel within the school to support her in this role. This was evident by her comment:

Casey needs to get into classrooms more often. she needs to learn to do observations. With the co-ordinator we were always learning about effective practice. Now it is me trying to teach the syndicate leaders so there are more people who can do the observations. (Beth, deputy principal, literacy leader individual interview, 21/06/2011)

*Initiative 3:* The third initiative was the generation of a learning programme which aimed to assist teachers to develop a deeper understanding of student achievement data. This initiative was positively received by the teachers. They believed that the increase in this understanding had improved their ability to plan more specifically for the needs of the students in their class. One teacher stated:

I really found analysing the data most helpful. It meant that the data were now shared and I had to take responsibility for it. I learnt so much about how to analyse it and find out, where to next. That was the most meaningful for me. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

In this way the student achievement data were perceived by teachers as helpful in improving their influence in meeting student learning needs. This resulted in more classroom teachers enthusiastically collecting and analysing classroom data.

Now I am looking at data, looking at what kids can do, planning for next steps from the strengths and looking at what the data tells me about the gaps in learning. I know how to analyse it well. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

As a result, more teachers also incorporated data analysis findings in their classroom planning. One teacher perceived this as an expectation when she said, “I knew they would look at my planning to see if I had used the data to make up the groups in my class and whether I have planned to meet the needs and fill the gaps (Julie, syndicate leader,

individual interview, 21/06/2011). This stimulated a need for teachers to regularly share their data both informally with a colleague and more formally in syndicate meetings.

In addition to meaningful learning experiences within schools, cross-school professional learning in the form of the symposium, retreat and literacy leader PLC was also introduced. School A's response to the across-school professional learning was mixed. The symposium had been acknowledged by some teachers as a positive experience as was indicated by Julie's comment that "I enjoyed the symposiums, especially the data part. We had some good speakers and workshops. They were really good because they built on what we were doing. The focus was important but I think it was really about collegiality" (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011). Other teachers, however, did not perceive the symposium as beneficial. One teacher articulated her disappointment with the following comment:

It was ok if it linked in to what we were doing, but they were not that worthwhile to me. I think sharing the data was positive but it could be done in one afternoon rather than taking a whole day. (Karen, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

School A's teachers appeared to focus more on the relationships they were able to build through the across-school professional learning opportunities. They were able to connect with teachers in other schools who were able to support them after the departure of their literacy leader and the lack of support they received from the principal. One teacher commented on her experience of these positive relationships in this way:

I knew after a while I could talk to any teacher in the area and get support and ideas. We broke down barriers and I think the reason we could share things was because now we had a common language and a

common understanding. That was a really positive thing for me. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

As closer across-school teacher relationships developed teachers began to visit each other and evaluate practices in both schools. This across-school learning had been particularly positive for School A as it enabled the teachers to seek support from others who were being guided by the co-ordinator.

I know people have come to visit me and I have gone to visit them. I found it really useful. It was nice to know I was on the right track and to know what other people were doing in their schools. We built up collegiality and trust. I could share problems and together we tried to find better ways of doing things. (Beth, deputy principal, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

Teachers in School A sought out support from teachers in other schools particularly after the departure of the co-ordinator in the third year of the project. Teachers identified the co-ordinator as a key person in the implementation of LDP in their school. She carried out all observations, trained teachers in analysis of data, and, led professional learning within the school. She was a highly respected colleague and had gained the trust of teachers and the principal. She was able to challenge and support teachers in the implementation of LDP. Teachers in School A looked to the co-ordinator as a mentor and advisor. Casey, the principal, relied on the co-ordinator to support her staff in new learning.

She was very significant in our school. She had the knowledge of literacy. She had a clear vision and knew the steps to go through to implement change. She was a good change manager. She certainly showed up my lack of knowledge and in that process helped me get together a leadership team. She also had the benefit of knowing so

many teachers in the Valley that she could link teachers across schools for mutual benefit. That was a huge plus for me. (Casey, principal, individual interview, 23/08/2011)

Teachers' experience of the support of the co-ordinator also reflected her value as in Karen's view. "I think the co-ordinator was fantastic. She kept things ticking over, I just think she was amazing and people had such respect for her in the way she presented everything" (Julie syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011).

School A continued to experience a high level of staff turnover in the years of LDP. This appears to have made it difficult for teachers within the school to get the constant support they felt they needed. They saw across-school professional relationships as significant to their continued improvement. One teacher was clear about her need to seek support outside her school:

We have had huge staff turnover. There are very few of us originals left. The new teachers took time to buy into LDP and I needed someone who was already at the same stage as me. That's why I visited other schools to seek the professional support I needed. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

**5.3.2 Staff outlook and commitment.** With the two staffs coming together, and a new school being created, teachers believed that old loyalties and emotions hindered the "clean implementation" of LDP. There were times when the staff concentrated on creating a new school culture and this was met with difficulties. One teacher perceived that the difficulties emerged from the management team. "The management team here have never gelled since the merger. That was why people keep leaving and we have to start all over again" (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011). A sense of frustration was experienced by teachers due to the increased amount of work needing to be done in terms of



the merger, and teachers felt that the placement of LDP on top of that led to increased workload. They experienced a sense of not being able to achieve all that was expected of them by the co-ordinator.

There was so much to do. Everything had to be redone, all implementation plans, everything. There was no real consultation and I guess it was just easier because there was so much to do. LDP just got put on top of all the other stuff that wasn't sorted. It was all very difficult. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

Thus it can be seen how the implementation of LDP in School A was influenced by the competing priorities of this newly merged school. Some teachers believed that the management team saw other things as more important than LDP and that this could be a reason as to why the co-ordinator, and not the principal, led this development.

The co-ordinator drove this project. She led all of the professional development and the observations and the data analysis. I think this was because the management team were busy writing new school policies and trying to develop a new school. It wasn't a nice place to be sometimes. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

As the school continued to develop, teachers either withdrew into their own classrooms to focus on their own practice or they sought support outside the school. This was perceived by one teacher as a result of the inconsistency of the espoused culture of the school—Layer One—and the underlying assumptions—Layer Three—as defined by Schein (2010). It became a challenging place in which to work. This teacher expressed this in the following way.

The school was a difficult place to work. There was a real sense of overload and no-one was really helping sort out systems. People were

snowed under. Some people went to other schools to get support and ideas. I just did what I had to do and then focused on my own class. People kept leaving and then we had to wait for new people to get on board. It was very hard work. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The merger of the two schools to create School A had impacted on the implementation of LDP. Two identified influences of the LDP project were increased workload and high staff turnover. The management team worked to ensure that the policies and procedures were in place for the new school; however, the lack of alignment of the layers of culture of the school appears to have caused difficulties for teachers in their usual teaching practice and the implementation of LDP.

**5.3.3 Perception of leadership.** The management team in School A had changed several times during the time of the LDP project. Initially the co-ordinator assisted the principal in setting up the new management team. There had been changes of three deputy principals and three senior teachers in the first four years of the project. Along with the departure of the co-ordinator, it appears that a lack of consistency in personnel had led to practices not being sustained. One teacher articulated this phenomenon in this way:

We haven't had the same team who could drive change. It was all so erratic. It seems everything we did changed when new people came in. The management team even put LDP on hold for the ERO visit. I don't think they drove the change very well. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The changes in the management team seemed to have had an impact on the teachers. They described a sense of inconsistent expectations of their practice. This inconsistency was experienced by one teacher in the following way:

One week I am being asked to analyse the data and the next week I am being told I need to be observed. There is nothing we do for a long period of time so I'm not really sure what it is they expect of me as a teacher. (Julie, syndicate leader, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

New teachers coming into the school did not always experience this in the same way. One new teacher to the school did not perceive that expectations for teachers were always followed through by the principal. She believed this allowed teachers to continue with their current practices with no consequences. She expressed her perception with these words. "She does not really expect things to happen and she lets teachers think it won't. her expectations for teachers are too low and it is hard for others to set expectations for teacher practice if she is not" (Beth, deputy principal, individual interview, 21/06/2011 ).

Teachers also spoke of a top-down model of leadership which they articulated as not meeting their needs. It was a perception for some teachers that decisions were made at the top and passed down. They were not consulted and therefore took little ownership of the decisions. Their view of the leadership by the principal was that of a resource manager rather than the leader of learning within the school. The principal viewed her role in a similar way. She believed she was responsible for the provision of resources. She accepted the need to be involved in learning but did not view herself as leader of learning within the school. She explained her perspective by saying, "I know I have to be involved in the learning but mainly I have to budget and provide resources for leaders to get into classrooms and to work with teachers" (Casey, principal, individual interview, 23/08/2011).

The leadership within School A was experienced by teachers as more of a management process than it was a leadership of learning model. This model emerged due to the need to create a new school identity which included the need to create new policies and procedures. While the co-ordinator was leading the project development in School A,

teachers felt supported and, at the same time, professionally challenged. This support and challenge was provided by someone with whom they had developed high levels of relational trust. After the departure of the co-ordinator, teachers did not feel professionally supported and this caused them to seek their professional learning and support from outside the school.

School A experienced less success than other schools.

**5.3.4 Summary.** In summary, whilst the LDP project generated some meaningful learning experiences for the teachers in School A, the greatest benefit experienced was the collegial relationships that developed in this process. These relationships were perceived as necessary due to the difficulties teachers experienced in receiving the support they desired from within the school. Teachers in School A struggled to understand what the priorities were, and the misalignment of the vision and the espoused values, beliefs and attitudes led to teachers leaving the school, withdrawing into their own classrooms or seeking support outside of the school environment. This school also experienced some difficulty in terms of the leadership as the principal was perceived to be managing rather than leading the learning for the project. Table 5.1 displays National asTTle Reading and Writing Test data for school A. Whilst gains were made in all year groups, the mean scores across all groups in reading remained lower than the cluster means. Year 6 was the only group achieving above the national mean in reading in 2008. In terms of writing, whilst this Year 6 group was able to achieve above the cluster mean in both 2004 and 2008, their mean score dropped from 467 to 456 over these four years of the project. The only mean that surpassed the national mean was the Year 6 reading in 2008.

Table 5.1

*School A's Reading and Writing Data*

Reading

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School A 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School A 2008
Year 4	412	399	345	404	405
Year 5	462	419	405	458	422
Year 6	489	466	389	514	425

#### Writing

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School A 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School A 2008
Year 4	454	265	275	297	358
Year 5	482	357	340	379	360
Year 6	504	412	467	423	456

### 5.4 School B: Demographic and Interview Analysis

School B was founded in 1961 and was not directly affected by the previously mentioned primary school merger process undertaken in the region in 2003. At the commencement of the LDP project its total student enrolment was 220. This particular school is situated in a residential area and is 1km from any other primary school. School B is a school with students from Year 1 to Year 6 with 65% of the school's student population being NZ European, 22% Indigenous Maori, and 8% Pasifika students. There were 10 classrooms and one attached special needs unit which, at the time of this study, was under review.

The school had ten fulltime classroom teachers. Nine of the ten teachers had been employed at the school for three years or less. School B has a leadership team of three consisting of the principal, Dale, the deputy principal and literacy leader, Margaret, and the assistant principal, Jamie. Dale is 62 and had been principal of the school for over 20 years. Margaret had been the deputy principal at the school for the past 15 years and had taken on the role of literacy leader since the introduction of the LDP project. The assistant principal, Jamie, moved to school B from school A in the third year of the LDP project.

**5.4.1 Professional learning experiences.** Student assessment data collected prior to the commencement of the LDP project indicated that students at School B were achieving below the expected standards in writing. In keeping with the project requirements, the project co-ordinator and the literacy team undertook the two teacher assessments as identified in Part 1 of this chapter the scenario assessment and the classroom observation process. The remainder of this section outlines the school's response to the data generated from these two assessments.

The first assessment was the scenario which was undertaken by the literacy leader and the co-ordinator. Teachers were unaware of the purpose of the assessment; however, upon explanation from the co-ordinator they were clearer about the intention. This is clear from this comment:

Teachers were not sure about the scenario. They wanted more explanation. The co-ordinator and I explained the reason we were doing this and what we would find out about their knowledge of teaching reading. This made them feel a little bit better with doing it. (Margaret; deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

The observation assessment was a positive experience for teachers in School B. The literacy leader expressed her experience with the assessment with the following words:

It was very positive for me to have such an experienced person come into my room and tell me all the great things I was doing. She also told me what would make my practice better. She was very knowledgeable and I really respected her opinion. (Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

The results of these two assessments as expected became the catalyst for the generation of a professional learning programme which specifically addressed teacher

identified needs which resulted in the introduction of three initiatives. The first initiative was a series of *focused staff meetings* for collective learning in the strategies for effective teaching of writing. The second initiative was a *regular observation cycle* to provide teachers with feedback on classroom practice and to set goals for individual professional learning. The third initiative was the development of *individualised learning pathways*.

*Initiative 1:* The first initiative was a series of focused staff meetings for collective learning in the strategies for effective teaching of writing. These staff meetings were initially planned and led by the co-ordinator who then supported the literacy leader in this role. The meetings addressed such things as introducing learning intentions and success criteria. This meant teachers commenced sharing with their students the intention for the lesson. Teachers also introduced success criteria for students and this allowed the students to understand what they needed to do to be successful in their learning.

The principal identified these meetings as a way to improve teacher's knowledge and to further develop the skills of the leaders. She acknowledged that in the past whole staff meetings did not have this focus. Consequently, there was little evidence of change in practice. With the development of the new focused staff meetings teachers were able to critique their practice with their peers in light of the new information being shared. She identified this change in this way:

The format of our meeting really changed. The pointless meetings have gone and now our meetings which we call PD sessions have become so focused. Our school was a writing school so all of our group sessions were on writing. I saw a real change when teachers began to feel okay about critiquing their practice with each other. Teachers then began critiquing the presenters practice and were able to share how these

meetings could better meet their needs. (Dale, principal, individual interview 15/06/2011)

*Initiative 2:* The second initiative was the introduction of a regular observation cycle. This cycle was developed to ensure every teacher was observed in teaching writing and evaluated in their practice every term. The observations were initially undertaken by the project co-ordinator with each teacher observed. Following these observations each teacher met with the co-ordinator to discuss findings and share ideas about best practice in the teaching of writing. These discussions led to an awareness that the teachers in School B were at varying stages of development. As a consequence, the literacy leader and the co-ordinator developed the following initiative, Initiative 3, to process and address this difference.

*Initiative 3:* The third initiative was the generation of an individualised learning pathway which aimed to provide teachers with the individual support they needed as identified in the observations of their teaching. Each teacher, supported by the co-ordinator, identified their next steps in learning and a programme was developed for the teacher to implement. In addition, the principal and literacy leader developed a programme to support teachers. This support was tailored to the individual teacher's needs and came in a range of forms including attending courses, visiting other schools to observe teachers, working one on one with the literacy leader, and working with a small group of teachers in a learning circle. The teachers identified this individualised programme as a helpful initiative and felt supported in their learning. The assistant principal expressed this with the following comment:

What I really liked about the individual pathway was that I got the support I needed and I didn't have to wait for other teachers to be ready to learn what I was learning. I had a clear plan and I knew what I had to



do. I got good support from the co-ordinator and the literacy leader.

Having an individual plan meant I could choose and if I didn't achieve my goal it was my responsibility. (Jamie, assistant principal, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

Although the literacy leader found the implementation of the process positive, sustaining the learning was problematic. She identified two major problems with the process. Her first problem was an increase in her own workload as she met with and assessed progress made by teachers. While she had her own plan she felt she had little time to implement her new learning as she was always working on the plans of others. The second problem was the lack of support she experienced after the departure of the co-ordinator. This frustration was clear when she said:

The individualised plans were good for others but not really for me. I felt like I was always checking in with others and supporting them. My only support came from the co-ordinator and when she left I was on my own. There was no-one supporting me. I loved having time with her because she gave me the support and new learning. Once she left I was in a vacuum really, just helping everyone else and not getting any new input for me. It was hard work. (Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

The principal also identified a sense of disappointment in her personal learning. While she found the local principals' group supportive, she believed it lacked any depth of analysis of principal practice:

The principals' group was good. It was a group where we could discuss lots of things and where we could get support. We got readings and began to have real professional discussions. What was disappointing to

me was that there was no real investigation in principal practice. No-one really looked at what principals were doing to make things better in their schools. (Dale, principal 23/08/2011)

The individual learning pathway initiative was positively received by the teachers in School B. They experienced this learning as both helpful and supportive. In contrast the leaders within the school did not believe their individual learning needs were met. The departure of the co-ordinator impacted on the support provided to the literacy leader and the principal. This in turn changed the nature of the learning provided for teachers.

**5.4.2 Staff outlook and commitment.** In the initial stages of the LDP programme teachers describe the school culture as being supportive and focused. Teachers understood the purpose of LDP and undertook the tasks willingly. This was evident in the following statement:

At first I liked that we had a new focus. We understood what we needed to do and the literacy leader and the co-ordinator supported us in implementing all the new ideas. We were all in it together and I found that really helpful. I knew if things were hard for me that they would be hard for someone else too. We talked a lot about what we were doing. The co-ordinator was in school a lot and she was very supportive to me. (Jamie, assistant principal, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

Teachers felt supported by the literacy leader in all activities and new learning. The literacy leader identified that she was able to support the teachers because of the extensive support she received from the co-ordinator.

I met regularly with the co-ordinator and she was able to guide me to develop next steps for teachers. If I hadn't had her at the beginning I

wouldn't have been so confident. I felt really energised by the new learning and by putting it into place in classrooms. I liked watching teachers try new things. It was great in those first years. (Margaret; deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

In the first two years of the project teachers experienced the school environment as supportive and focused. They trusted the literacy leader and the co-ordinator. This level of trust enabled teachers to take risks in implementing new teaching processes and sharing their reflection on their attempts. However, the change in personnel on the leadership team impacted on the level of trust within the school. The literacy leader initially felt she had an ally in the new assistant principal and believed that together they would be able to find mutual support. "It was great when Jamie started. We both met with the co-ordinator and I felt like I now had someone to support me in my work." (Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

This relationship was not sustained after the departure of the co-ordinator. The literacy leader expressed her view of this change in this way:

Once the co-ordinator left I felt like we were two people doing two different things. There was no merging of our perspectives and it seemed to me that we were working against each other. There was one plan for the junior school where Jamie worked and another one for the senior school where I worked. When we had leadership meetings it was like we were fighting for support from the principal to help the teachers in our own team. There was not a single school perspective. (Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

This change altered the level of trust in the school. Teachers were now getting the support they needed only from their syndicate leaders and at times this was at the expense of

teachers in the other syndicate. Teachers began to protect their support and the sharing between teachers decreased. Staff meetings were led either by the literacy leader or the assistant principal and the focus shifted to meeting the needs of syndicates rather than the collective staff. The literacy leader experienced isolation in her role. This is evident by the following comment:

At first the co-ordinator drove the learning, mine and the teachers’.

When she left I had to continue to support the teachers but I did this on my own. When the assistant principal came I thought we would do this together but it didn’t work out that way. I was on my own. When I went to the principal for support she would have to talk with the assistant principal before she could respond to me. I was really alone and so I ended up making decisions that would help the teachers in my syndicate and just go along with my plans. (Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011).

This change in relationship in the leadership team generated a sense of being alone and unsupported and, in turn, affected the support teachers received. It generated conflict and diminished the confidence of some teachers. This may have been the catalyst for the outcome of a high turnover of teaching staff. From Year three to Year six of the project, seven of the ten original teachers left the school and newly-employed teachers had been beginning teachers predominantly, who on average have remained in the school for only two years. The literacy leader explained the effect of this in the following way:

We have had a lot of staff leave and then new teachers are appointed.

Most of them are beginning teachers. They bring enthusiasm with them but I have to start all over again. I have to try and get them to the point we are at. It is very hard when they are so new. Some of these teachers

don't want to buy into our model so after they have been here two years when they are registered they leave. The staff turnover had meant that we are always starting again. We don't get very far ahead and when they leave and new beginning teachers come we do it all again.

(Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

Changes in staff have impacted on the ability of the school to maintain a strong sense of identity and to express the values and beliefs of the school in terms of, 'What it is we do around here'. A sense of frustration had been expressed by the literacy leader but this view was not shared by the assistant principal and the principal. The principal believed the change in staff had come about due to the increased workload for teachers. she explained her view in this way:

There is so much pressure, there are pressures about the amount of paperwork required and there are pressures about achievement. We have certain expectations of what our students should be able to do and those expectations place pressure on teachers. They have to work very hard to make sure students achieve at expectation and for some teachers the pressure is too much and they leave. (Dale, principal, 23/08/2011)

School B had experienced high staff turnover in the past four years and this in turn had created incongruence between two fundamental layers of culture – the artefacts and the espoused values and beliefs of the school. The deputy principal and the principal are the only staff who have been in School B since the beginning of LDP. The next longest serving staff member was the assistant principal who had been in the school for the previous four years. The members of the leadership team are the only staff who have been employed in School B for the duration of LDP.

**5.4.3 Perception of leadership.** In the initial stages of the LDP project, members of the leadership team were intensively supported by the co-ordinator. This support was offered to individuals through the Individual Learning Programme process. The principal described the leadership within the school as distributed leadership. She explains her understanding of this model in this way:

In this project we talked about distributing leadership. I asked the deputy principal to become the literacy leader and the co-ordinator supported her in what she needed to do. She attended all the literacy leaders' meetings and then came back and shared that stuff with the staff. She took all the responsibility for literacy within the school.

When Jamie came to join the staff they worked together on the literacy stuff. (Dale, principal, 23/08/2011)

The deputy principal initially took on her role as part of a distributed model; however, this view changed after the departure of the co-ordinator and she explained her view in the following statement:

At first I was very excited about taking on this leadership in literacy role. It was so energising for me. I was excited about all the new things I was learning and I was excited about putting them in place in our school. The co-ordinator was always available to help and support me. When she left things changed. I guess I was expecting the principal to take on the role of supporting me but that didn't happen. I began to think this role was unreasonable without support. I expected the principal to take on the co-ordinator role but she didn't. That's when I began to think the leadership wasn't distributed it was relinquished. (Margaret, deputy principal, literacy leader, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

The third member of the leadership team, the assistant principal, had yet another view of the leadership model within the school. She described the model in this way:

When I arrived at the school the deputy principal was the literacy leader and she was leading all of the LDP initiatives in the school. We had known each other for a while because I had been literacy leader in my last school. We started sharing the role and began to take responsibility for different syndicates in the school. We worked closely with the co-ordinator and basically made all the decisions for the things we wanted to implement in the school. We were the leaders of learning. I really enjoyed it. When the co-ordinator left we continued leading but really didn't get any internal support so we just carried on. I got some support from literacy leaders in other schools so that was good for me. (Jamie, assistant principal, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

**5.4.4 Summary.** School B developed three initiatives to improve the professional learning of teachers in terms of the effective teaching of literacy. These initiatives had a positive effect on teacher practice but the ongoing benefits were diminished by the departure of the co-ordinator. This resulted in increased workloads for the deputy and assistant principals and a culture of competition for support developed between syndicates. This competition in turn affected the levels of trust, which had developed with the co-ordinator in the early stages of the project. The departure of the co-ordinator also affected the leadership team as both the deputy principal and the assistant principal believed they would continue to be supported by the principal. This support did not eventuate and

essentially the two leaders worked in isolation of each other, competing for time and resources.

Table 5.2 displays the data for School B. Minimal gains were made in the mean scores over the period of the project where the school was not able to reach the national mean in any year group in either reading or writing. In fact, in Year 4 reading and Year 6 writing, the scores were lower than the mean scores at the beginning of the project. The largest gains were made in Year 6 reading with the mean improving by 34 points. Significant also is the drop in the Year 6 writing score from 345 in 2004 to 255 in 2008—a drop of 90 points.

Table 5.2

*School B's Reading and Writing Data*

Reading

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School B 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School B 2008
Year 4	412	399	396	404	376
Year 5	462	419	412	458	424
Year 6	489	466	421	514	455

Writing

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School B 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School B 2008
Year 4	454	265	245	297	255
Year 5	482	357	325	379	326
Year 6	504	412	345	423	255

## 5.5 School C: Demographic and Interview Analysis

School C is the smallest primary school in the study. This school was not included in the merger process of 2003 and was not affected by the change in schooling provision due to its distance from other schools and the implications this would have in terms of travel if it



were to merge with another school. It had a roll of 208 students in Years One to Six at the time of the study. School C is made up of 47% indigenous NZ Maori, 34% New Zealand Europeans/ Pakeha, 16 % Pasifika students and 3% of students from a range of other ethnic groups including Indian and African.

The school was led by a leadership team of three: the principal, Alice; the deputy principal, Annette; and the assistant principal, Robyn. Alice has been principal at the school for 15 years while the deputy and assistant principals have been in their current roles for two years. In addition to the leadership team, there were eight classroom teachers and this included both the deputy and the assistant principal. Of those eight teachers only one teacher had been at the school since the commencement of the LDP project. The school had had three deputy principals in that time and each of these deputies took on the additional role of literacy leader. There had also been three assistant principals in School C during the LDP project and this is reflective of a high staff turnover more generally throughout the duration of the LDP project.

The interview data presented in this case study reflects the perspective of the current principal and assistant principal. This reflects the only available longitudinal view of those who have been in the school for the implementation and sustaining of the LDP project. Following the stage one interviews, the interview data had been analysed and themed and this case explores the following three themes. The first theme is the *focus on professional development* which describes the initiatives generated by the project assessments and the response of School C to these initiatives. The second theme explores the *issues with staffing faced by the school*. The third theme reflects *the perception of the leadership* in the process of implementation of the LDP project.

**5.5.1 Professional learning experiences.** The LDP project initiated a new understanding of the need for the provision for professional development within schools.

School C acknowledged that their professional development model did not have the desired effect of improving teacher practice. The principal and the project co-ordinator undertook the required assessment processes the scenario and the observations. Section 5.3.1 reflects the responses of this school's staff to the change of process and the outcomes of the professional development programme.

The current assistant principal, a classroom teacher at the time, found the scenario confusing as she was unsure of the purpose of the assessment as this had not been explained clearly to her. This perception is illustrated by her comment:

The scenario was a classroom writing lesson. I thought it was quite a good lesson. I wasn't really sure what we were doing it for but when I got the results back I realised it was sort of like a test. I was bit confused about the whole process and what was going to happen with all the results. (Robyn, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

In contrast to Robyn's comments about the scenario assessment above, she and the other classroom teachers found the observation assessment beneficial. The observation process was a more common practice and understood by teachers. This process was well-received and teachers found the process helpful. "I really liked having someone in my room to watch me and then share the results with me" (Robyn, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011).

The collated feedback was given to the principal for further analysis where she analysed the observation and scenario data and developed a plan for professional development for the staff. Prior to this development plan, professional development had not been structured by the principal; rather, it had been in the form of individual teachers attending courses of interest to them or ministry-funded opportunities. The principal

acknowledged that this was not always relevant to her school however, when it was funded by the ministry, it was cheaper and easier for teachers to attend. She articulated this view in this way:

I used to encourage teachers to go on courses. I knew that it wasn't always relevant but they were getting some PD. I also had professional development advisors working in the school. This was an easy way to get help as it was funded by the Ministry which was really helpful to us financially. LDP helped me see that there was another way to provide PD. The greatest thing was that we could show people a way of how you could go about things and do PD your own way. Our PD changed dramatically. We now use a clear self-review model to decide what PD is needed and discuss internally how we are able to provide the learning for our teachers. (Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

As described in Alice's comments above, the next evaluation stage for this school was the provision of professional development (PD) that met the needs of teachers and enhanced student achievement outcomes. The principal worked with the co-ordinator and the literacy leader to develop a professional development plan for the school. She analysed student data and created a pathway of learning for teachers. This pathway was based on the needs identified in both the scenario and the observations. This pathway was the provision of in-school PD; however, the teachers were reluctant initially to give up their course attendance and participate in this new model. This is clear in this statement by one teacher:

I wanted to keep going to courses. I liked getting out for the day and spending the day doing something completely different. Now PD is in school and I understand why. I don't really think that the courses changed my practice. In this new model I am learning with my

colleagues, which means I can talk to them and get advice and support because we are all learning the same things. (Robyn, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

This new appreciation of the importance of PD-setting led the principal to commit to the plan and, in the process, she identified that she developed a new understanding of the role of the principal in the PD programme. This is explained by this statement:

I think it comes down to the leaders. I got involved as the leader and that showed that the PD had value. Other staff then took it on board. As the leader I guess I had to set up the PD sessions and lead them rather than setting it up and going to play golf or sitting in my office while teachers did the PD. I learned that how I behaved sent messages to the staff so I changed and I knew that I needed to be involved. (Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

The professional development in School C was determined by the principal and the project co-ordinator and was based on the identified needs of teachers. The principal attended all of the literacy leaders' meetings in order to ensure her knowledge was current. In so doing she believed she was better placed to support the literacy leader and the co-ordinator in the school to provide relevant PD. Some staff found this helpful and noticed a dramatic change in practice. The teacher interviewed described this change in this way:

Before LDP we all chose what courses we wanted to go on. Once LDP began and Alice went to the literacy leaders' meetings she realised that we needed to look at what PD was going to help us. She worked with the co-ordinator and prepared the staff for the PD sessions. I hadn't seen this before and it was good. I liked her being interested in what we were

learning and it was great that she could support us more easily. (Robyn, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

The evaluation and development of focused professional learning was seen as a positive by some teachers and the principal. Other teachers, however, found the focused learning too challenging and left the school. This is explored in the following section.

**5.5.2 Staff outlook and commitment.** One of the effects of the new process of professional development was an increased workload for teachers as there was an expectation that they would implement the required changes in their classrooms. This was not well received by all and as a result, had an effect on the staffing within the school. With increased workload demands, some teachers decided this was too demanding and applied for positions in other schools outside the area. This situation is explained by the principal in the following comment where she points out that the underlying issues were not restricted to workload but also included competency:

I suppose if I was honest the people who weren't quite so competent left. I think one of the things that came out of LDP was the pressure the project put on people and some of them chose to get out. They said we were working too hard. They went to schools outside the area because they knew that if they moved to another school in the area they would have the same workload. (Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

This comment makes it clear that the LDP project, through its analysis of data and practice, illuminated the gaps some teachers had in their understanding of effective teaching of literacy. When their weaknesses were exposed it was too difficult for many to manage. As a consequence, they sought positions in other schools.

As discussed above, School C has had considerable staff change in the time since LDP. It has had three deputy principals and three assistant principals, and only one of the original teachers has remained on staff. Of the remaining teachers, three have been in their position for three years and four have been employed in the last two years. This turnover has been identified as affecting the continuity of the implementation and sustaining of LDP in two ways.

The first way is the increased participation by the principal in developing and leading professional development as explained above. The second is the lack of sustained improvement experienced by the school due to the need to regularly train new staff. This lack of movement is described by the principal as disappointing. She justifies this view thus, “I thought we might have progressed faster. We didn’t really have teachers who were resistant to change. Rather we had teachers who, when it got too hard, left” (Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011).

The only remaining staff member has taken on the role of assistant principal and literacy leader. When she first began at the school, 5 years ago, she was a mature age graduate and was in her first year of teaching. In the years she has been at the school, she has been a classroom teacher and a literacy leader assistant, and is currently assistant principal and literacy leader. She has expressed her experience of the lack of sustained improvement in this way:

When I first began at this school I was new to teaching and had a lot to learn. I guess I was lucky that I started not much before LDP did. I wanted to get on board and make the changes asked of me. I don’t think everyone wanted the same. I was lucky to have the co-ordinator with me to share her knowledge and to teach me the next steps I needed. Looking back, I guess not everyone was so keen so it meant

we didn't really get the movement in achievement that other schools did. (Robyn, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

The staffing turnover has meant that the leaders within the school were constantly having to take backward steps in order to ensure new teachers were aware of the expectations and the processes required by LDP. This training and retraining meant time was not available to move to new stages. The teachers appointed to leadership positions were also trained in their new roles and this was seen at times as detracting from the literacy focus. The leadership team was often interchanging roles and this caused a sense of confusion in regard to roles and responsibilities. It was acknowledged also that some leaders experienced a degree of difficulty in giving up tasks assigned to particular roles where they felt they had ownership. The teacher explained this in the following way:

When they first appointed me literacy leader assistant I went to the meetings with all of the other literacy leaders in the valley and then when I came back to school I didn't really do anything with what I learned. The deputy principal who had been the literacy leader didn't really stop doing the job. She was doing two jobs and it seemed like a waste of my time. It took some convincing and some time before she gave some things over to me. (Robyn, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

This situation of the leaders being reluctant to let go of certain tasks was complicated and, after some reflection, the principal realised that the relinquishment of the tasks was perceived as more work for the leader as they were then required to teach a new person how to undertake the tasks. This was noticed also by the principal and she articulated it in this way:

When Robyn became the new literacy leader she would come back from meetings and we would all sit down and I would ask her to share what she had learned. I had to often say we have made this person the leader of this area so you have to let go of more. Unfortunately, it meant that more time had to be given to teach her the assessment tasks, data collection and analysis so in the end I think it was all a bit hard.

(Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

**5.5.3 Perception of leadership.** Leadership within the school was viewed as transient. It has been difficult for the school to ensure sustained practices as much of the time has been devoted to training leaders to take on key roles within the school. The departure of the co-ordinator impacted on these changes. This impact was expressed thus:

I always wondered what would happen if you took the co-ordinator out of the role. Well in my opinion there was a drop off. I could always rely on her to support and lead my leaders. When she was no longer there, there was a gap. We tried to fill that gap with someone else but it didn't work. I then thought ok so we have no co-ordinator, it now becomes my job. I thought I will have to do this work now in my school. I don't know how effective it has been. (Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

The principal endeavoured to develop capable leaders in a range of areas but this development was hindered by staff turnover and her ability to manage teachers into new roles. The principal then sought support from the principal's group and although she found the other principals supportive, she also experienced a sense of being on her own and her reluctance to fully participate in the principals' group increased. The following statement expresses her position:



When the co-ordinator left I experienced a change in the principals' meetings. I really wanted to get some support from the whole group. I had a degree of frustration with the group so I tend to pull back now and concentrate on how I can do things. I want to save my energy for my school. (Alice, principal, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

**5.5.4 Summary.** School C implemented a range of new professional learning practices which aligned with the project goals. The principal took a lead role in implementing these changes and the impact was unforeseeable. The greater demands placed on teachers exposed those who were not competent and this resulted in many staff departures. The deputy and assistant principals within the school were transient and the effect of this turnover was a lack of traction where the school was not able to meet project expectations. Efforts to retrain these leaders challenged the principal on a regular basis and whilst she sought support from the principals' group she felt frustrated and isolated.

Table 5.3 displays the data for School C. Positive gains were made in all year groups in reading. Despite not meeting the national mean, all year groups improved their mean scores such that Year 4 and Year 5 achieved the same mean score as the cluster mean in 2008. Whilst Year 4 mean score in writing did not meet the national mean there was significant improvement from a mean score of 324 in 2004 to 425 in 2008. Neither Year 5 nor Year 6 made gains in their mean scores and both slipped back slightly from the mean score at the beginning of the project.

Table 5.3

*School C's Reading and Writing Data*

## Reading

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School C 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School C 2008
Year 4	412	399	386	404	404
Year 5	462	419	399	428	428
Year 6	489	466	424	514	454

## Writing

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School C 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School C 2008
Year 4	454	265	324	297	425
Year 5	482	357	404	379	368
Year 6	504	412	434	423	417

**5.6 School D: Demographic and Interview Analysis**

School D was the first school established in the area, opening in 1857 with fifteen pupils and it remained the only primary school in the area for 101 years. In 2003, the school accepted 25 students from another primary school which closed after the merger process in 2002. School D was the largest school included in this study, with a student population of 378. Of these students, 51% were New Zealand European, 37% were Indigenous NZ Maori, 6% were Pasifika students with the remaining 4% of other ethnic origins including Asian and African students. The school had a teaching staff of 18, which included the principal and non-teaching assistant and deputy principals. There are 15 classroom teachers. The school was divided into three syndicates where the junior syndicate was comprised by students in Years 1 and 2; the middle syndicate, Years 3 and 4, and the senior syndicate, Years 5 and 6. Each syndicate had a leader who formed part of the wider leadership team.

The Senior Management team was made up of the principal, Kerry, the assistant principal, Philippa, and the deputy principal, Josie.

Kerry was appointed principal mid-way through 2003. The deputy principal Josie had been at the school for 14 years in two different roles, teacher and deputy principal. The school's assistant principal had been previously in the school for 17 years and had been a teacher, and literacy leader. The remaining leaders had also been employed at the school for nine years each.

The deputy and assistant principals had been assigned the role of the professional learning leaders for the school. They, along with the principal, planned all professional learning within the school while the assistant and deputy principals facilitated the programmes of learning for teachers.

**5.6.1 Professional learning experiences.** Student assessment data collected prior to the beginning of the LDP project indicated that students at School D were achieving below the expected standards in reading. In order to address the deficit in reading achievement, the project co-ordinator and the literacy leader undertook the required assessment with each of the teachers in the school, as outlined by the project. This section outlines this school's responses to the two assessments and the outcomes that followed.

The teachers had a mixed reaction to the scenario assessment. One teacher described her experience as positive with this comment:

I found the scenario very interesting. When I first looked at the lesson I thought it was great. I had such limited knowledge at the time and it wasn't until I was a little bit more aware that I realised the lesson was less than effective. It was a good motivating tool for me. (Lucy, syndicate leader, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

Others on the staff did not find the scenario a useful tool and expressed their opinions in more negative tones. Typical of these comments was the following:

I didn't really understand the scenario. I didn't get it very right because I wasn't looking at the lesson the way we were supposed to look at it. I don't remember it as a very useful tool. I'd rather have an observation. (Shane, classroom teacher, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

The literacy leader articulated the sense of surprise that some teachers displayed on receiving the results of their scenario assessment. "Some people could not believe their results were so poor and others were pleasantly surprised" (Philippa, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/08/2011).

Teachers with poor results were angry with their feedback; however, support was offered as is described in this comment:

Some people could not believe what they came out as, and some people surprised themselves about what they knew. It was quite funny because instead of taking opportunities available like the offer to come and discuss the feedback...well some people don't take that offer at all. Some people took this as a chance to improve and other people took it as a personal affront. (Philippa, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/08/2011)

In School D, the project co-ordinator and the resource teacher of literacy (RTLit), an external assessor, undertook all of the observations. In time, the project co-ordinator trained the assistant and deputy principal to undertake the observations. Although the same criteria sheet was used to score the observations when the assistant and deputy principal took over the role, the nature of the observation practice was described as "changed" by the teachers.

Not all teachers found being observed by the assistant and deputy principal a positive experience. This is illustrated by the following comment:

I had a lot of confidence in the co-ordinator. I thought she was amazing and she did the observations in a very non-threatening way which I really liked. She was positive and she was able to give positive next learning steps for me as a teacher. Now when we are observed it is threatening. They come in with a clip board. They come in and sit with their clipboards, they don't speak to you, and they only speak to a couple of children at the end. They didn't ask us what we would like them to look at. They mark you on everything. I think the criteria are just too wide. It's not a helpful process for me. (Sarah, classroom teacher, individual interview, 30/06/2011)

Some teachers provided advice to the deputy and assistant principals on how to improve the observation process, suggesting it would have been enhanced if a review of the criteria occurred along with an explanation of the process were provided to the teachers.

The following teacher's comment captures this view:

I'd rather do observations. It is a real critique of what I am doing and not just a test, but when someone is critiquing what I am actually doing for a living and it comes back as something not so good then I guess I got really angry and knew that I could do something about getting better. I could get better at what they were looking for. I had a sense of frustration and wasn't really convinced that they were looking for the right things. There were other things that I thought were important and they weren't there. I still have that to some degree, like engagement,

for example. They didn't measure that and I think it is a really big deal.

(Shane, classroom teacher, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

While the teachers experienced a range of responses to the observations, the assistant principal identified the difficulties she had in undertaking the observations. There were some teachers who welcomed the chance to get feedback on their practice and others who didn't accept this process willingly. This is how she explained this phenomenon:

Maybe it was the culture of the school that didn't make observations easy. That culture had been very hard to break down. We offer the opportunity to be observed and give feedback but some just don't take that offer. I know there are some teachers who, when we go in, put on a pony show. I say please don't do something special for us we are trying to get a picture of practice across the school. They become a bit grumpy because they are trying to show us something special. It's a difficult situation sometimes. (Philippa, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/08/2011)

Despite the conflicting perceptions to conducting observations across the school they have remained a strong part of the professional practice within the school.

With both the scenario and observation assessments completed, information about teacher knowledge and practice was collected which provided the leadership team with the information they believed they needed in order to provide relevant professional learning for all teachers. The professional learning took place on two levels within the school. The first was whole school development which was provided by the professional leaders of learning and the second was the professional inquiry learning undertaken at each syndicate level.

The syndicate level learning was directed by the syndicate leaders in consultation with the leadership team. They used student achievement data to direct the area of learning

and this became a focus for inquiry. An example of this was that the data at Years One and Two indicated low levels of achievement in oral language. The syndicate brainstormed all of the reasons they believed led to this lack of achievement. Strategies were sought to implement improved learning into the classrooms. Once this had been achieved, further assessments were undertaken to gather evidence on any movement in achievement levels. Teachers were asked to reflect regularly on the practices they implemented and these reflections were shared at the syndicate inquiry meetings. There was a range of responses to the syndicate inquiry learning model. One teacher expressed her positive view of this model with these words:

Our inquiry meetings are more effective than whole school PD because we look at our data and our practice. We analyse data, we talk about what we can try in order to improve achievement. We then look at our practice. We always start with what is working well, then the challenges we face. We share ideas. It is more effective because it is down to earth. In our syndicates we are directing our own learning. The culture is different in syndicate meetings than it is in whole school PD. At syndicate people can feel free to moan and ask questions and once we have done that we can move on. We are very supportive of each other. (Sarah, classroom teacher, individual interview, 30/06/2011)

In contrast, another teacher found this inquiry learning less beneficial. The lack of opportunity for teachers to direct their own learning based on perceived class and personal need was expressed as a concern. One teacher explained his experience in this way:

It is all a bit tricky for me because the focus was chosen but my particular class make-up did not fit the focus. There are three middle-

aged women; one had been teaching for a long time, one had been teaching fairly long and they are both close to retirement. The other lady is quite nice but doesn't do things like I do, so the syndicate doesn't really offer me a lot of support or knowledge. What we do in the syndicate is not terribly motivating to me. (Shane, classroom teacher, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

While the professional learning experiences have been provided for teachers there was an inconsistency in the value attached to the varying forms of professional learning experiences offered. The whole school professional learning was provided by the two professional leaders; however, teachers sense both a lack of modelling and an inconsistent pace. For some teachers the pace was too slow and for others it was too fast. The syndicate professional learning offered opportunities for teachers to direct their own learning but this was dependent on the make-up of the syndicate. The teachers indicated that while the PD offered to them was generally good, there was not enough time given to practice strategies, digest new learning, and reflect on new learning before moving onto new ideas.

**5.6.2 Staff outlook and commitment.** During the LDP project, the school had a single focus of literacy to increase achievement in reading. With a rise in Ministry of Education compliance demands and National Education Policy changes the school had attempted to keep pace and this had resulted in an increased workload. The senior management team developed professional learning plans and expectations to ensure priority areas of the current government were implemented into the school. This implementation had been described by teachers as putting layer on layer. The school had several foci including literacy, Reading, Oral Language, Pasifika and Maori achievement, and Maths. The number



of foci was identified by teachers as a major influence on their workload; indeed, one teacher articulated her concern with this comment:

At the moment people are feeling overwhelmed. It is just layer upon layer. We currently have five foci and I don't think we are doing any of them well. It is easy for the top management to take on these but they don't have to implement them so that's all a bit tough for teachers.

(Lucy, syndicate leader, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

Teachers believed that the increase of foci had limited their ability to implement new strategies effectively or reflect on their practice. There was little time given to ensure the new strategies were embedded into classroom practice before introducing the next new idea. This pace had been difficult for some teachers to maintain at their current workload level and, therefore, the workload for these teachers had increased. In contrast, some teachers were making decisions about what it is they would and would not implement. This was seen as a personal decision on the part of teachers to maintain their good health and work-life balance. Normalising the increased workload was viewed as a personal choice. One teacher acknowledged this view with this reflection:

I believe it is the individual who creates stress for themselves. I think if you are told to do things and you think it is unreasonable then it is ultimately up to you if you do it. Some people normalise the overwork and just don't take a stand. (Shane, Classroom Teacher, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

While this teacher was of the opinion that some teachers had normalised overwork and add more and more to their workload, he also articulated his own concerns with the number of foci with this statement:

I can't even tell you what the focus is because there are too many.

When we have too many things to focus on we do everything badly.

Having too many foci does not give me a chance to reflect or a chance to give them all a fair time in my classroom. (Shane, classroom teacher, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

The experience and cause of an increased workload were not shared by the senior management team. They were of the opinion that the work they were asking teachers to do was reasonable and if teachers were not able to keep up then they needed to take the time to reflect on what it was they are spending their time on. They believed they were not asking their teachers to do any more than teachers in other schools were being asked to do. This perception was expressed by the principal with these words:

When I look at what other schools do it doesn't appear as if we are doing too much. Different teachers who I knew were coping really well never complaining and getting on with the job so what did they do that others were doing and we looked at that and we discovered things like they wouldn't always come to the staff room and just sit and talk, they would be working hard. Things like that, time management stuff.

Everyone is different and we have to acknowledge that some people take longer to do things than others. We looked at what we could get rid of and asked what do you spend all your time on? Why did you spend all your time on home work? It had proven to be a waste of time. For most home work just do your basic facts, your reading and your spelling and don't do anything else. Things like that, that's what people were doing. It was about sitting as a senior team and talking. It was me asking them "what is this about being overwhelmed"? If I was in the

classroom now I wouldn't be overwhelmed. I wouldn't let myself get overwhelmed I would sort things out. (Kerry, principal, individual interview, 14/06/2011)

The assistant principal was aware of the increase in teacher workload and believed the progress in achievement had been hindered by the increase of foci. She conveyed her perspective with the following comment:

I think we made the most progress when we had only one focus. Now we have slipped back to having quite a few and many of us know that none of it is really being done very well. Everyone is saying there is too much to do and too much to think about and I think they are right. It is really hard for the teachers when it is a little bit of this and a little bit of that. We as professional leaders of learning try to marry it all up but to be honest it doesn't really work. We keep pushing and the teachers are now pushing back. (Philippa, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/08/2011)

The issue of increased workload was influenced by the expectations of the principal to ensure all government initiatives were implemented into the school and the introduction of increased foci to meet government achievement expectations. The teaching staff fulfilled the expectations of the principal and the professional learning leaders to varying degrees making personal choices about their work life balance.

**5.6.3 Perception of leadership.** There were two layers of leadership within the school. The first was the senior management team which consisted of the principal, the deputy principal and the assistant principal. The second layer included the syndicate leaders.

The syndicate leaders were called the middle managers and while they formed part of the management team, their decision-making and leadership were limited to their syndicates.

The deputy principal and the assistant principal were designated the leaders of professional learning. They met regularly with the principal to determine the professional development experiences to be offered to the staff.

The principal's role was a mixture of support for the professional learning leaders, provision of resources and liaison between the school and the Board of Trustees. The principal did not lead any of the professional learning experiences within the school. She was an active participant in all professional learning opportunities provided for the staff, learning alongside them, and this was viewed in a range of ways by teachers. Some teachers felt her participation was a token gesture and lacked authenticity as she was not required to implement the new learning nor did she have to reflect on her new learning. The following is one comment which reflects the teacher's perspective:

She is learning alongside us but at the end of the day she does not have to implement what she is learning. I've never seen her take PD. She definitely cares about the children's wellbeing and she does look at the data but what she is exactly doing I'm not sure. (Lucy, syndicate leader, individual interview, 01/072011)

The principal had her own perspective on her participation in professional learning experiences. She believed being part of the learning team was key to her role as principal. She explained her role with the following comment:

I guess my role is to cut through all the things coming into the school. I have to say what is really important and what things the school should be doing. I am not the professional leader of learning for the school – for better or for worse- I support the two professional leaders of

learning and work with them. My role is to listen to what they are saying and work with them to make collective decisions. (Kerry, principal, individual interview,14/06/2011)

The creation of the role of the professional leader of learning was an attempt by the principal to build sustainable leadership. The deputy and assistant principal were both fully released from the classroom. Their role was to provide professional learning, undertake classroom observations, support syndicate leaders and teachers, and collect, collate and analyse all achievement data.

All whole school professional learning was facilitated by the professional leaders of learning and the learning programmes were based on data collected from observations and Ministry of Education initiatives. Teachers' perceptions of the benefits of the whole school learning were varied. There were some indications that the professional learning leaders were distant from classroom experience of teachers and therefore not all new learning was implemented or followed through. Many teachers articulated a sense of disconnect with the teaching and the practice of the leaders. The following comment typifies the experience of the teachers interviewed:

At our PD meetings something new is introduced and the leaders tell us to give it a go but we don't see any modelling going on. There are a lot of great ideas but no time to practise before they are telling us more ideas. Sometimes I'm thinking why are we doing this PD? I don't understand how it is going to help me...then all of a sudden we are learning something new. It is so easy for them to come up with new ideas but they don't have a class so what do they really know? (Lucy, syndicate leader, individual interview,01/07/2011)

While teachers acknowledge that the learning experiences offered do have merit they found the pace of the introduction of ideas was too fast. There were concerns that the leaders were little further ahead in their understanding and knowledge and were not sufficiently supported in their professional learning. The assistant principal acknowledged this with the following statement:

I have grown in confidence but really I am only a step ahead of some of the teachers. What is really hard for us is that since the co-ordinator left we have relied on each other to get professional learning support. We don't really get any professional learning in leadership so while we might know the strategies to teach it doesn't mean we always know how to lead. (Philippa, assistant principal, individual interview, 01/08/2011)

The leadership model employed in School D aimed to develop a greater base of leadership. The three tiers of leadership principal, professional leaders of learning, and the syndicate leaders worked together; however, not always at the same pace or with the same intention.

**5.6.4 Summary.** School D implemented the project initiatives with enthusiasm and commitment; however, these initiatives competed with other government initiatives. The workload for teachers increased as the school attempted to manage up to five improvement foci. The professional leaders of learning implemented a range of strategies to support staff in their new learning but the pace did not meet the learning needs of teachers. Teachers also believed there was an unreasonable expectation to learn and implement new teaching strategies without being given sufficient time to practise before the next strategy was introduced. The confidence in the professional leaders of learning was limited, and their demands were often dismissed as unnecessary and excessive. The principal attempted to

develop distributed leadership within the school; however, this was not as successful as anticipated and a sense of incongruence between the three tiers of leadership emerged.

Table 5.4 displays the data for School D. The Year 6 mean at the end of the project was above both the cluster and national mean. There was significant improvement from the 2004 mean scores. There was little improvement for Years 4 and 5 in reading, lifting their mean score by 5 and 10 points respectively. Whilst these groups did make significant improvements in their mean score, neither year group reached the national mean in reading or writing.

Table 5.4

*School D's Reading and Writing Data*

Reading

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School D 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School D 2008
Year 4	412	399	385	404	390
Year 5	462	419	415	458	425
Year 6	489	466	486	514	505

Writing

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School D 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School D 2008
Year 4	454	265	312	297	365
Year 5	482	357	395	379	429
Year 6	504	412	434	423	485

## 5.7 School E: Demographic and Interview Analysis

School E exists as a result of the merger of the two Catholic schools in the valley. This school opened in 2005, the year after the implementation of the LDP project.

School E is a Year 1–8 state integrated school. State integration ensures the maintenance of the special Catholic character, while being funded by the state for both

staffing and operation. The roll at the time of the study was 275 students representing 38 % Pasifika, 29% Indigenous NZ Maori, 28% NZ European and the remainder were Asians and Africans. School E is situated in close proximity to the local Intermediate and the High Schools and also School A which is participating in this study.

There were 12 full-time classroom teachers. Due to teachers moving to a range of new teaching positions, only 12 of the current teaching staff participated in the LDP project.

For the purpose of teaching and administration, the school was divided into three teams. The senior team cared for students in Years 7 and 8, the middle team was concerned with students from Years 3 to 6, while the junior team focused upon students in Years 1 and 2. The school was led by a school leadership team of seven, consisting of the principal, three associate principals, the director of religious studies (DRS) and the team leaders. The principal, Chris, had been a principal for 10 years, during which time she had spent eight years leading School E as the founding principal in 2005. One of the associate principals had been at the school since 2006, one since 2007 and one since 2009. The DRS had been in this role at School E since 2007. One team leader was involved in LDP from the beginning of the implementation. The second team leader had been at the school since 2007, holding a number of responsibilities including literacy intervention, team leader, and literacy leader.

**5.7.1 Professional learning experiences.** Student assessment data collected prior to the beginning of the LDP project indicated that students at School E were achieving below national average in reading. In order to address this deficit, the LDP project co-ordinator and the leadership team implemented the two assessments for the project as outlined previously.

The first assessment administered by the principal, literacy leader, and the project co-ordinator was the scenario. This assessment aimed to provide the leadership team with information about how well each School E teacher understood the effective teaching of



reading. This was a new form of assessment and initially the literacy leader indicated a lack of clarity concerning the purpose of the assessment. With some clarification by the project co-ordinator, the purpose became clearer. Some teachers were unsure about their ability to judge the effectiveness of the scripted lesson, as is evidenced by this comment:

We did the scenario and that was a bit scary. I wasn't sure if I got it right and when I got my piece of paper back I felt ok but some people were really angry. I remember one teacher throwing hers in the bin.

(Donna, team leader, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

Teachers received their feedback and responded in a range of ways. Some were pleasantly surprised as expressed above and others were angry. The initial scenario assessment awoke in teachers the notion of effective strategies in the teaching of reading and, whilst some teachers were very experienced, this was new learning for them. One teacher explained this awakening with these words:

We looked at a scenario, gave an opinion about whether we thought this sort of teaching was effective. Well that certainly opened my eyes to some things that I had assumed were right. I wanted to teach well.

(Bernadette, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

In School E, the leadership team wanted to monitor teacher progress over time, and a decision was made to administer the scenario a second time three years into the project and the progress of teacher knowledge was evident as this comment articulates:

When I got my piece of paper with the boxes coloured yellow this showed me I was a more effective teacher in areas I hadn't been effective in initially. I kept that piece of paper. The first one I ripped up. The last one I keep in my treasure box. (Bernadette, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The second assessment undertaken as per the project guidelines was the classroom observations. In School E the observations of the coaches were undertaken by the principal and the project co-ordinator. The principal made a decision to use a coaching model to improve practice and used the scenario assessment results and personal knowledge of the teachers to select coaches and partner them with their coachees. She explains her decision in this way:

I wanted to train coaches because I felt it was the best way to improve teacher practice quickly. I knew the role to upskilling 12 teachers could not be done alone or in fact in tandem with the co-ordinator so this was my preferred choice in terms of developing teachers. (Chris, principal, individual interview,08/07/2011)

They then trained the coaches to undertake the observations for their coachees. This process was to enable the coaches to gain first-hand knowledge of their coachees' practice and it was assumed that both the scenario and observation assessment results would form the starting point for the coaching process.

Teachers appreciated the observations as positive professional learning. One teacher expressed her experience with the assessment using the following words. "It wasn't that hard for me because I thought it would be helpful if they could tell me where I could do better. The feedback was positive and they made me feel like I was doing ok" (Donna; team leader, individual interview,06/07/2011). In addition, teachers indicated that the practice of allowing colleagues in to observe them teach was challenging:

I had been so used to being in my room closing the door just me and the students. Now it's a much more transparent thing happening and that was really hard just to get used to because you were stripping

yourself off, basically, in front of others and they would see you warts and all and sometimes there were things you didn't want them to see because you knew you were doing what you could, but you open yourself up and it was quite difficult. (Blake, teacher, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The influence of these two assessments assisted in the generation of a professional learning programme (PLP), aimed at addressing all teacher-identified needs. An important characteristic of the PLP in this school was a coaching process in which more experienced and reflective teachers assisted their colleagues. In order to ensure this was professionally relevant, fortnightly meetings were conducted for coaches. The PD experiences in these meetings included shared readings, activities to develop deep level questioning skills and strategies for coaches to support their coachees. This was a powerful experience for the coaches as they felt supported in their new role. This sentiment is evident in the following comment. “The most helpful thing was those fortnightly meetings at which Chris, the principal, gave us strategies to help us be clear about our expectations” (Donna, team leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011). Coaches observed their colleagues during their weekly release time. The experience was both challenging and satisfying:

I was a coach so I had to learn how to do the observations so I could see how my coachee was going and to find areas we needed to work on.

Man we had our work cut out for us because there were quite a few teachers who didn't do very well. (Donna, team leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

Indeed, a constant theme from the coaches was that the process of their working with coachees became a very beneficial professional experience for them. Similarly, teachers who were being coached believed it to be a highly positive experience. Working

with a coach and having regular observations and feedback was powerful for the coachees, who were able to undertake new learning while being supported collegially. This professional culture enabled them to take risks in their teaching of reading and confidently develop plans to improve their practice. One teacher expressed his experience of the coaching process with these words:

One of the first things I experienced when I came here was the school's coaching process. I was teamed up with a coach who was part of the leadership team. They worked with the principal on effective teaching and then they would bring it to us and we would do things together. The coach observed my teaching and supported me in trying new things. I learned a lot in this process. (Blake, teacher, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

It was evident in the interview data that the coaching process empowered both coach and coachee to improve their practice in the teaching of reading. The culture of professional learning was developed through the coaching process and encouraged a high level of trust between colleagues.

While a number of LDP initiatives were implemented in individual schools, three across-school PD initiatives were designed and implemented by the LDP project coordinator. These initiatives, as outlined in the introduction to this chapter, included the annual symposium, the weekly literacy leaders' meetings and the annual LDP retreat. This section explores the response and outcomes of these cross-school initiatives for School E.

The symposium had been acknowledged by some teachers as a positive means to enhance personal relationships across schools while others experienced limited benefits. One teacher articulated positive outcomes with the following words:

I liked the symposium. We had some really good speakers and some workshops were good. I liked going back to our own school to do the afternoon sessions because we all were on the same page and we looked at our data and we could make decisions about how we could make it better. We saw all the cluster data but that is no good unless you know where your school is. (Donna, team leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

Some teachers did not find the symposium as beneficial as others. There was some disappointment with the level of engagement from some schools in terms of being present, on time, and being prepared to share. This was evident in this teacher's comment:

I think one of the things that hasn't happened is that not all schools have taken LDP on board as well as others. Some schools came to symposium late and that was a disappointment. There were times when we were in groups and it was obvious that some people weren't interested and just complained about the day. It was better when we did the workshops back in our own schools. (Blake, teacher, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

Teachers and leaders predominantly found the retreats a positive experience as it gave them time to work in school groups in order to review the improvement plans and develop next steps. The principal was positive about the opportunity to collaborate at the retreats. She made this comment:

I enjoyed the retreats. It was a real opportunity to get together with the leadership team of our own school and review actions, outcomes and plan next steps. It was also good to hear where other teams were at and what challenges they were facing along

with their ideas for next steps. It was a collegial and supportive time for the most part. (Chris, principal, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

Teachers also found this time with their own leadership team valuable in that they were able to work without the distraction of the day to day life of the school. Teachers also experienced a sense of disappointment with the lack of progress they perceived in other schools. This disappointment was expressed by one teacher using these words:

Sometimes teachers who were not excited about implementing the initiatives were disappointing. Sometimes other schools who didn't really want to buy into things were disappointing. When I went to the retreats I would be in groups with teachers from some other schools and they would be saying things about what their principals were like and man, some had problems. It was disappointing that all the principals didn't get it. Some of them didn't try very hard to help their teachers. That was hard for some of the schools. (Donna; team leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

Another disappointment expressed by teachers was the lack of perceived compliance by all schools within the cluster. This is clear in this statement:

I thought LDP was a great idea and its introduction made a real difference in the Valley. Teacher knowledge had improved and practice had been questioned all the time. I think one thing that had happened is that not all schools have taken it on board as well as others. There are some schools that are not doing the testing that the Valley decided to do together which affects the data. We don't get a

total picture. That should not have been allowed to happen but it had.

(Blake, teacher, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The third cross school initiative was the weekly literacy leader's meetings. These meetings were implemented to increase the content knowledge of the literacy leaders in each school. The meetings were led by the project co-ordinator and were structured in such a way as to provide the literacy leader with content knowledge on the teaching of reading and writing while also developing their leadership skills to share this knowledge with teachers in their own school. The literacy leader found the meetings helpful initially; however, they became less helpful as leaders within the group moved forward at a differing pace. She expressed her experience like this:

Some of the meetings were good but some were a waste of time. It is hard to teach everyone the same thing when some people are further on. I do remember thinking we were ahead of some schools. (Donna, team leader, literacy leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011).

In conclusion, while many teachers believe that their personal relationships with teachers across schools have been enhanced by these across-school initiatives, the professional learning benefits were perceived to be limited.

**5.7.2 Staff outlook and commitment.** In School E there had been an increase in teachers' capacity. This increase had developed due to the high expectations articulated by the principal. She explained her reasons for the clarity of expectations in this way:

I have always believed that students will achieved according to what it is teachers expect of them. It was no different in terms of teacher achieving what it is I expect of them. I made a decision to be very clear about my expectations of teachers which in turn I believed would encourage teachers to reflect on what expectations

they had for their students. (Chris, principal, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

Teachers were well aware of the expectations of teaching with a particular focus on literacy at this school. These expectations were regularly and clearly articulated by the principal and included practices such as the data analysis meetings. At these meetings teachers were held accountable for progress and achievement of students. This was a challenging process for teachers as is evident by this comment:

She gives out achievement graphs and makes teachers accountable for their teaching in reading. Chris was always asking us where we are at and where to next. She collated every class's data and then gave it to us and we had this set of questions we had to go through. I remember everyone waiting for the graphs and being really nervous about what it would look like. I used to get upset if a child I had in my class hadn't moved far enough. It was good but scary. Once we got used to it, it was easier to be able to talk to other teachers. The first time we got the graphs everyone kept it to themselves and then we looked at it later. That lasted for a couple of times and then the coaches had to show teachers how to look at the data and find out what it was telling them. We had to use our own graphs so we couldn't really hide anymore.

(Donna, team leader, literacy leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

Being on the LDP journey enabled other teachers to question and challenge their practice. While change was not always immediate, it did eventually become evident across the school. One teacher explained this phenomenon in this way:



Not all teachers changed their teaching straight away but after a while there was no way of getting away with staying the same. We worked really hard as a school to set expectation for teachers and kids. A high point was having Chris as a principal because she knew a lot of stuff and she always shared it with us. She would come into the classrooms and talk to kids and teachers all the time and ask really hard questions.

(Donna, team leader, literacy leader, coach, individual interview,06/07/2011)

While teacher capacity was increasing within the school there was also a demand for these teachers to share their growing expertise with schools beyond the area. As a result, teachers from School E grew in knowledge and confidence. This experience for one teacher is articulated in this way:

A real high point for me particularly was being invited to go to a conference called Smarter with Data. It was for teachers and literacy leaders and other people from around the region and further afield. I had to speak at the conference about my initial experiences of LDP and how I didn't really appreciate my teaching being questioned at that stage and how I feel about it now and what changes I had made and why. At that conference I also had the opportunity to see how I could use my data more effectively and tried to become more involved in the STAR testing. I was invited to take a workshop in another school with the co-ordinator. That also gave me confidence to say yes. I thought, this is exciting and I can help others! As my coaching capacity increased, I continued to move forward because I was confident enough

to present that workshop. (Bernadette, team leader, coach, individual interview,06/07/2011)

The growth in teacher capacity had been attributed to the style of leadership practised in School E. This shared leadership model had empowered teachers to take the lead in a range of areas and share their learnings with others.

**5.7.3 Perception of leadership.** The leadership team in School E had changed in nature and in size during the LDP. These changes have been implemented in order to increase the leadership capacity across the school. There was now a leadership team of seven. These seven people took collective responsibility for the implementation and development of programmes within the school. Leadership meetings were held fortnightly and time was devoted to developing leadership frameworks and the teaching of new knowledge in the area of leadership. This process built leadership capacity and was seen as positive by those involved as evidenced by this statement, “At our fortnightly meetings we do have a lot of time to reflect on our own practice as leaders. This is led by the principal and is really good for me” (Blake, Teacher, coach, individual interview,06/07/2011).

The leadership team continued to meet and set direction for the PD and that remained based on what leaders knew about teachers in their teams and themselves. “Everything we do is moving forward. We still use all the data to drive our plans and now we are even moving to getting students to drive our plans” (Donna, team leader, literacy leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The teachers in School E articulated clearly their beliefs about the success they experienced as teacher leaders. They were able to share the three drivers they believed enabled them to develop in their leadership capacity. The first driver was that the principal was fully involved in the LDP project and she articulated regularly the expectations for teachers. These expectations included a full commitment to the aims of the project, full

participation in the activities of the cluster and a singular focus on improving the effectiveness in the teaching of reading. The principal held the personal belief that one barrier to achievement was the deficit thinking and beliefs of teachers in terms of which children could succeed. Teachers expressed that the principal was relentless in the pursuit of success for all children. One teacher explained the practice of the principal with these words:

In our school we had a principal who wasn't going to give up. I remember how she asked a teacher why it was that a child couldn't read because they had no shoes. That was what she called deficit thinking and getting rid of that, well not getting rid of it totally, but challenging it, made us all learn how to do that. Teachers who didn't like her challenge left and that was a good thing. (Donna, team leader, literacy leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The second driver was the principal's level of professional knowledge and her ability to guide and support the teachers and others. Teachers within the leadership team felt supported by the principal and were encouraged to take steps to improve their practice as leaders. This was evident from this statement made by one teacher leader:

We have the leadership team that meets regularly. We are really well-supported with readings and the chance to reflect on what's been happening and we are also guided by what data we have gathered. We planned our PD together, we grew leadership skills together. We were always challenged, encouraged and supported by the principal. (Bernadette, team leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The third driver identified by the leadership team was the team culture that existed. The leadership team was described as "a great team—we had great fun and worked really,

really hard, but together” (Donna, team leader, literacy leader, coach, individual interview,06/07/2011). The principal in School E was able to create a culture of teamwork and this and teamwork enabled these teachers to grow in leadership and take on roles which would see them lead individuals, groups and the whole staff. One teacher expressed it using these words:

I'm able to lead certain areas to increase teacher capacity and to lead the development of new areas that we're working on in our school. The leadership team helps me in development and preparation. It is not so much me telling them. It's “the everyone learning together situation of our school” which always had been practised. A lot of the leadership that I do in the school is instigating something that we, the leadership team, might have identified as a need and then working with other teachers and leaders to implement new practices. This is shared leadership to me most definitely. (Bernadette, team leader, coach, individual interview,06/07/2011)

The principal had developed a shared leadership model to implement new practices and had done so with clear expectations, strong challenges and appropriate support. These three drivers can be summed up by this statement made by this teacher:

I think this happened because of the guidance from our principal. She had questioned us. She had pushed us in the right direction. She had challenged us to think in this way and most of it is up to her leadership in the school. That is what had caused this to happen and then she allows other leaders to lead groups of teachers to achieve what we set out to achieve. (Bernadette, team leader, coach, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The leadership model as defined by the teachers in School E had been a catalyst to the school's ability to raise achievement levels in reading and sustain this over time.

**5.7.4 Summary.** School E's principal promoted the project initiatives with enthusiasm and commitment and set clear expectations in terms of the staff commitment and focus. The school developed a coaching model to develop the professional learning and capacity of the teaching staff. This was positively received, despite the challenge of the enormity of the undertaking. An unexpected result of the coaching process was the mutual benefit experienced by the coach and her coachees. School E staff participated fully in all across-school professional learning opportunities; however, the benefit was related more to collegiality than furthering professional knowledge. Some frustration was experienced with a perceived lack of commitment from other schools. The deliberate focus of the principal on the development of leadership skills enhanced the capacity and confidence of the leaders within the school, enabling them to eventually have influence beyond their own school. The level of trust in School E was enhanced by a philosophy of team, collective responsibility and support.

Table 5.5 displays the data for School E. Significant improvements of achievement in mean scores from Years 4-6 in reading and writing are evident. School E achieved above the cluster mean for reading in 2004 in all year groups except Year 6 the school however achieved below national means across all year groups at this time In 2008, all year groups were achieving above both the cluster and national mean scores in reading. The largest improvement was at Year 6 where the mean score was increased by 122 points. School E exceeded all cluster mean scores in writing and was able to achieve above the national mean in Years 5 and 6. Worthy of note is that whilst School E started with higher scores their learning was accelerated and they made greater gains than other schools. Significant improvements of achievement in mean scores from Years 4-6 in reading and writing are evident.

Table 5.5

*School E's Reading and Writing Data*

Reading

Year group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School E 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School E 2008
Year 4	412	399	435	404	494
Year 5	462	419	436	458	497
Year 6	489	466	442	514	564

Writing

Year Group	National Mean 2004 and 2008	Cluster Mean 2004	School E 2004	Cluster Mean 2008	School E 2008
Year 4	454	265	375	297	426
Year 5	482	357	429	379	495
Year 6	504	412	465	423	530

## 5.8 Conclusion

This chapter has explored five schools that are considering the case of the variation of achievement using three themes: professional learning experiences, staff outlook and commitment, and perception of leadership as well as the results associated with each school. Chapter 6 is a cross-case analysis of the five schools in order to generate themes that will lead to a greater understanding of the factors which contribute to the variation in students' achievement outcomes.

Despite a perception of a streamlined implementation of the project, this chapter has identified a wide variation in practice across the five schools which has in turn identified a

variation in the implementation of the project. Some variations include the principal's role in:

- how the project vision was merged with the individual school vision;
- the workload of teachers;
- the professional learning opportunities offered to teachers;
- culture; and
- leadership of change.

These variations in practice are explored in depth in the full case analysis in Chapter six, as themes for further investigation.

## Chapter 6: Full Case Analysis

### 6.1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to explore the unexpected variations in student academic achievement outcomes in literacy across participating schools in the Literacy Development Project (LDP). This variation of academic achievement was contrary to the presumed outcomes of those who created the project. A standardised project, where schools received similar levels of professional support through personnel, funding, and resources, did not result in congruent improvements in academic achievement in literacy, and this study seeks to explore the reason for this variation. The purpose of this chapter is to conduct a cross-case analysis of the five schools in order to explore the themes identified in Chapter 5. The themes are

1. Vision: This theme explores the congruency between the project's mission and the vision of each individual school;
2. Workload: This theme explores how the workload of participants influences the implementation of the project;
3. Professional learning opportunities: This theme explores how the provision of professional learning influences the implementation of the project;
4. Culture: This theme explores how the culture of the school influences the implementation of the project;
5. The role of the principal: This theme explores the leadership capacity of the principal in terms of leading change.



## 6.2 Vision

In 2004, the principals in the area of study generated a vision for the Literacy Development Project (LDP) which was: *to develop effective teaching and learning within a collaborative PLC.*

Fundamental to this project vision was the improvement of teacher practice to improve literacy achievement outcomes. Three key outcomes were identified as

1. improved teacher knowledge and pedagogy in the teaching of literacy;
2. improved achievement outcomes for students, in particular, Maori and Pasifika students; and
3. effective professional learning communities within each school.

The need to create a shared vision was supported by the work of the Taskforce on Developing Research in Educational Leadership that stated "Effective educational leaders help their schools to develop or endorse visions that embody the best thinking about teaching and learning. School leaders inspire others to reach for ambitious goals" (2003, p. 3).

Despite the principals having generated the vision for the Literacy Development Project (LDP) collaboratively, collective school data gathered in the case studies indicated that the different schools generated diverse interpretations of the vision and expectations of the LDP during its implementation. This phenomenon is also identified in the literature by Sarros et al. "The capacity of the leaders is one thing, but to have that vision accepted and acted upon as anticipated both individually and organisationally is quite another proposition" (p. 149). Whilst it was assumed the vision was shared amongst the principals it was also anticipated that all schools would implement the agreed vision uniformly. This was not the case. This variation is worthy of further exploration in order to identify the effect of the implementation of the vision in relation to the LDP.

School E embraced the agreed shared vision enthusiastically and the LDP vision became an integral part of the school's individual vision. The principal assumed responsibility for the implementation of the vision by assisting staff to develop programmes consistent with the LDP vision. She also worked collaboratively with the leadership team to negotiate curriculum targets for achievement, which were congruent with the LDP outcomes. In addition, the LDP vision statement was displayed on the staffroom *vision and target board* and discussion of progress towards the achievement of the vision was an agenda item for staff meetings. What was particularly influential at School E was the regular and substantial communication between the leadership team, the literacy leader, and the principal. This dynamic generated defined and understood expectations for the leadership team and teachers to implement the LDP vision. Staff appreciated the principal's active professionalism with the following comment typical of teacher comments:

I think the buy-in has happened because of the guidance from our principal Chris. She shared the whole idea of LDP with us. She questioned us about how we could implement this into our school. She pushed us in the right direction. She challenged us to think in this way and most of it is up to her leadership in the school that causes this to happen. She taught us to lead groups of teachers and help them to achieve what we set out to achieve, the vision of LDP. (Bernadette, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

By way of contrast, in school D, the responsibility for the implementation of the LDP vision was shared, in theory, between the principal and the two professional leaders of learning (PLLs). They met weekly to discuss the vision and how the school might adapt its own vision to encapsulate the LDP vision. These discussions led to the development of a shared LDP school vision. Once this adapted school vision was developed, the PLLs took

sole responsibility for the implementation of LDP. While the newly formed vision was shared with teachers, challenges became apparent. Firstly, teachers appeared not to fully understand how the new vision had been developed, and secondly, they lacked an appreciation of LDP's expectations and their responsibilities in the implementation process, as the following quotation illustrates:

I ask a lot of questions but I don't get the answers and sometimes you can try things but if things are not explained well at that point I'd rather not do it. I'd rather do what I'm doing well because I'm confused. How can I do things well when I don't understand? I find it challenging.

(Lucy, School D, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

An alternative approach was adopted by School C. In this school, the LDP vision was aligned with the school vision in such a way that, in reality, it sat alongside the school vision. The principal actively led and educated staff to appreciate how the LDP vision would enhance their own school's vision. This process of leading staff to own and engage with LDP proved difficult, however, as the competing agendas were recognised:

We introduced the LDP vision. That process was a bit confusing. Sometimes it provided a focus for us to talk about our school vision and what it is we were doing. We also talked about *how we do things around here*. We had something to focus on but the two visions became confused. (Alice, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

In contrast, Schools A and B adopted different approaches again when implementing the LDP vision. In each of these schools, the LDP vision was implemented by the project co-ordinator and the literacy leaders. Due to the absence of the principals' contributions, the implementations were often hindered by the principals' attempts to prioritise the school vision over the LDP vision. This caused a level of vexation that, in turn, generated

substantial criticism concerning the extra hours of work that LDP implementation demanded from literacy leaders, LDP, and implementation expectations that were added to teacher workloads. Literacy leaders within each school indicated that there was only tolerance for their work rather than a positive support for it. This tension generated some passive antipathy towards them as this comment demonstrates.

I think the *buy-in* needs to come from the top-down. I think there has to be an expectation that this is going to happen but we also need to show people the value of it. It is difficult because some people have been here for so long it's just been the way they have done things. No one really wants to rock the boat. They just want to carry on and do what they have planned to do rather than take a real interest in LDP. (Beth, School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

Although the principals had generated a vision co-operatively, it became apparent that each principal had a different interpretation of the vision that they believed they shared. These diverse interpretations led to varying actions being taken in each school that ultimately impacted on teacher workloads.

### **6.3 Teacher Implementation Workload**

It was identified that, for those schools that failed to integrate the LDP vision with their own school vision, an increase of workload was experienced which appeared to be detrimental to the successful implementation process. For the teachers in these schools LDP was perceived to be an unwelcomed “addition”, rather than an integrated dynamic of the daily school mission. In these instances, the initiative was avoided whenever possible. In contrast, when there was an integration of the LDP agenda with the school’s individual vision, staff engaged more enthusiastically with LDP innovation. This phenomenon is reflected in the literature which identifies that working actively to keep alignment between

proposed initiatives and the school's vision and strategic plan for achievement is critical. If an initiative proposed does not enhance the direction the school is already committed to, it will drop the initiative (Directions Evidence and Policy Research Group, 2014).

These contrasting perspectives invite amplification. For example, School E specifically incorporated the LDP initiative into its own vision. LDP became the priority for professional learning and development. Not surprisingly, staff did not indicate they were experiencing increases in workloads, because the quantum workload for teachers remained comparable to the pre-LDP workload. Typical of the teacher comments at School E was the following.

It wasn't extra work – it was a change of practice. We worked hard to make it more meaningful to students and to make it more relevant to the stage that they were at. The new ideas just made our teaching much more specific. (Bernadette, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

A contrasting scenario occurred in School D. In this school, the principal assigned two non-teaching leaders to the role of professional leaders of learning. While their enthusiasm concerning LDP was commendable, they appear to have failed to *read* the capacities of the teachers they were leading. What was proposed by the professional leaders appeared to teachers to be a substantial increase of work, which would compete with their current responsibilities. Teachers questioned how they would be able to manage the new tasks, while simultaneously addressing existing responsibilities. For example, one teacher commented:

It appears to be just layer upon layer upon layer. We don't get extra time to do it. Something new like LDP is introduced and we are

expected to implement new things while also doing everything we already do. (Lucy, School D, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

A third example of the varied incorporation of the LDP vision occurred in School C. In this school, the principal worked with the co-ordinator to develop the learning experiences to support the implementation of LDP. These initiatives were then implemented by the co-ordinator and literacy leader. The workload for the literacy leader increased as she was required to implement the initiatives and review the implementation of each aspect of new learning. The principal continued to implement the school's vision and developed a process by which the school vision and the LDP vision could be merged. The increase in workload for the literacy leader led her to seek alternative employment, not only outside the school, but outside the region. The principal employed a new literacy leader, who eventually became disillusioned with the increase of workload; she also sought employment outside of the region.

School C experienced a high level of staff resignations during the implementation of LDP, which caused frustration for the principal:

There were three sorts of people I think. The people who weren't quite so competent they left [First type]. I think some of the stuff that came out of LDP... We put pressure on people and some of them chose to get out and they said, 'we were working too hard and too much' [Second type]. The third type of person is like my literacy leader. She got all the skills from LDP and then chose to go to another school and use her experience there. (Alice, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

A fourth scenario occurred in Schools A and B. In each of these schools, the co-ordinator facilitated the new developments with the support of the literacy leaders. They introduced a range of new expectations for classroom practice but in both schools, the LDP

vision was not aligned to the school vision and, for each school, it was considered an addition to their current practice which caused some difficulties for the literacy leaders although the literacy leaders were committed to the implementation of the LDP vision and they expected teachers to implement all initiatives developed for them by the co-ordinator. The literacy leaders believed initially that they would be supported by their respective principal in this expectation but unfortunately for them, this support failed to materialise. One possible reason for this reluctance of the principals was because these principals failed to participate in the planning and the implementation of the LDP initiatives. Their failure to contribute was interpreted by teachers as a lack of commitment to the LDP initiative from their school leadership. This can explain the teachers' minimum enthusiasm for LDP. The frustration of teachers not doing what they had been asked to do was described by one of the literacy leaders:

Well some staff are just paying lip service. They can give you the theory. They can tell you what they should be doing but the in the end they are not really doing it at all. I think they just want to be left alone.

(Beth, School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The literacy leaders in Schools A and B were supported by the co-ordinator. However, without the principals' support, LDP implementation met with varied responses which included refusal to participate in observations and in some meetings, as well as subtle noncompliance among teachers. To the detriment of the project this lack of co-operation increased the workloads of the literacy leaders to such an extent they sought positions in other schools, where they perceived their efforts would receive greater support. In addition, some teachers also re-evaluated their positions due to the increased workload expectation resulting in teachers seeking jobs outside the area. As a consequence, Schools A and B experienced unusually high annual numbers of literacy leader and teacher departures,

leaving the schools with less experienced teachers to continue with the initiative. The staff resignations due to excessive workload concerns made it difficult for both Schools A and B to sustain the LDP initiatives. As Karen noted, “When people leave all the time it is hard for the rest of us, especially when it is the leaders because we don't have the consistency or continuity” (School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011).

To summarise, in schools where the LDP vision was aligned with the school vision, teachers did not identify that the innovation generated excessive workloads. In schools, where there was a malalignment of visions, teacher workloads increased, along with increased staff resignations.

#### **6.4 Professional Learning Opportunities.**

For the LDP initiative to be successful, additional professional teacher learning became an obvious and necessary prerequisite. The result was an evolution of a three-tier approach to professional development. The first tier was the identification of some teachers to assume the role of literacy leader. The focus of this role was the promotion of effective teaching of literacy. Literacy leaders developed school plans that included strategies to improve professional practice within their schools. Each school had their own literacy leader. The second tier involved cluster wide professional learning in the form of an annual symposium while the third tier was the individual school initiatives, which specifically addressed unique school-based challenges. Further explanation of the dynamics of each of these tiers is appropriate.

Literacy leaders were appointed in each school to lead the development of professional learning initiatives for teachers. Supported by the co-coordinator, these leaders developed an understanding of the theory of effective practice in the teaching of literacy. Literacy leaders often planned co-operatively in teams in order to better share resources and



expertise. In view of the different interpretation of the LDP vision in each school and the resulting workload issues, the influence of the literacy leaders differed within schools.

Not surprisingly, the more a school was committed to LDP, the more the literacy leader was able to implement plans and mentor colleagues. In contrast, in schools where the implementation of LDP was perceived as an extra, literacy leaders found it more difficult to implement new learning programmes for teachers.

The second tier in the process of nurturing teachers' professionalism was an annual symposium. This was introduced to provide the opportunity for teachers to appreciate a collective perspective on the cluster school achievements. It aimed to encourage cross-school professional relationships whilst also providing an opportunity for collective learning. However, these aims were not achieved because schools embraced LDP with differing degrees of enthusiasm. While some of the schools exhibited considerable progress, they quickly became frustrated by the lack of progress made by other schools. Teachers from schools in which little progress had been made were reluctant participants in the collective learning initiative of the symposium and preferred to engage in social interaction with teachers in this setting from schools outside the LDP initiative. Consequently, for teachers in three of the participating schools the goal of promoting collective learning diminished as their priority seemed to focus on building collegial relationships.

The third initiative was the development of school-specific professional learning opportunities. Each school determined its focus for this tier of professional learning. As a result, professional learning was presented in a range of ways with varying levels of engagement and success with the outcome being that the learning programmes offered in each school varied in method, presentation, leadership, and engagement of teachers. An elaboration of each school's professional learning implementation explains the varied outcomes for teachers.

Schools A and B adopted a similar approach to their professional learning implementations. Their learning was provided by the project co-ordinator with the principal's encouragement and she worked with the literacy leader in each school to plan and implement new learning for teachers. In some instances, the co-ordinator offered individual learning pathways (ILPs) for teachers. These pathways were based on classroom observations followed by discussion and feedback. The ILPs were monitored by the literacy leader and co-ordinator. The literacy leaders in both schools received both professional support and challenge from the co-ordinator. As the literacy leaders' knowledge and skill level increased, it became evident that their principals were less able to support them in this role as they lacked the expertise the literacy leaders had acquired.

I was pleased to have the co-ordinator working in my school because she had the literacy development knowledge and she had a clear vision of the steps to go through to get change. She was a good change manager. It certainly showed up the lack of knowledge on my part.

(Jamie, School B, individual interview, 08/07/2011)

The LDP initiative was premised on the expectation that principals were part of a and their participation would develop their knowledge in order to be able to support the literacy leaders. This anticipated learning did not eventuate. Consequently, the literacy leaders indicated that, had their principals been fully committed to LDP, they would have developed their own understanding. Instead, both principals appear to have relinquished the overall responsibility to their respective literacy leaders and the co-ordinator. The literacy leaders identified this lack of support from the principals as a contributing reason for the lack of improvement in levels of literacy achievement within Schools A and B.

This lack of improvement can be attributed to an inherent disadvantage in this model, as it relied on the expertise of one person in each school to drive the initiative. This

became evident in 2007, when the co-ordinator left the area. As a result, the LDP initiative stalled in Schools A and B with some teachers returning to previously held beliefs and practices in the teaching of literacy as indicated in the following quote.

I think the change was hard. We were trying something different but we didn't have the consistency or continuance. Once the co-ordinator left we lost our way a bit. Some teachers just went back to what they were doing before LDP and it was easy to do that because we didn't have regular meetings. We also got so many new teachers and the amount of them over time was the biggest issue. (Karen, School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

A different approach was adopted by the principal in School C. In this school, the principal actively led the professional learning opportunities for teachers. The principal participated in the literacy leaders' meetings as a means of up-skilling herself. She endeavoured to work collaboratively with her literacy leader so that she was able to support the professional learning programme within her school. The co-ordinator supported the principal as she managed the departure of two literacy leaders in two subsequent years. Not surprisingly, the teachers indicated that the positive changes reported in their professional learning may be attributed to the option to self-select courses, in addition to the provision of school-wide professional learning. After the departure of the co-ordinator, the principal attempted to lead, while simultaneously training new literacy leaders. This change in focus affected the implementation of new learning initiatives within the school because the principal was preoccupied with developing new leaders. "I've had a degree of frustration with my leaders leaving so I tend to pull back on the PD and concentrate on how I can train new leaders. I think I want to save my energy for this" (Alice, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011).

An alternative scenario was evident in School D. In this school, the principal appointed two professional learning leaders (PLLs). While these PLLs were supported by the co-ordinator, they took responsibility for the planning and presentation of all professional learning within the school. The PLLs developed a two-tier approach to the new initiatives, where the first tier involved whole staff professional development staff meetings. These meetings explored the Effective Literacy Practice manual for teachers. They articulated the expectations for classroom practice and articulated expectations for the implementation of new strategies. Both PLLs were fully released from classroom teaching to undertake this role. Even though this classroom release gave them time to prepare, the teachers perceived that the PLLs lacked a comprehensive understanding and appreciation of how the LDP initiatives were supposedly influencing student learning.

It might be easier to stomach things if management were perceived as having a better grip on this LDP thing or if they were in class more regularly. They can make the demands but they really don't know how long it takes to implement and what effect the strategies have. It's not instant. (Shane, School D, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

Teachers in School D also identified that the pace of the new learning as a whole staff was of "major concern" with these concerns from teachers falling into two categories. The first group believed the whole school professional learning was too slow for them. They were ready to move onto the next strategy but felt they were being held back by those teachers who were reluctant to implement the new strategies.

The second group of teachers felt the pace was too fast for them. They believed that they were not given enough time to implement the new strategies and embed the practices into their teaching before moving onto the next stage of implementation. The PLLs failed not only to appreciate the differing amounts of time it took teachers to implement a new

strategy but they did not seek feedback from teachers to inform their next steps in programme planning.

The second tier of professional learning developed by the PLLs was an observation of practice cycle and Individual Learning Pathways (ILPs). The ILPs were a more successful model and were better received by teachers as they were able to move at a pace that was consonant with their individual needs.

School E implemented yet another model of professional learning, although it too was a two-tier approach to a professional learning programme. The process began with prescribed lesson observations. Following this, data gathered from these observations were analysed by teachers, resulting in professional development suitable for the whole school. These whole school staff meetings were planned and led by the principal and the literacy leader.

The second tier involved teachers being assigned to coaching pairs. In high trust relationships, teachers using this model were able to create their own individual learning paths. These paths were generated by teachers based on their observations. Teachers also considered their students' needs based on analysed student achievement data. Teachers were supported in their new learning via regular observation between coaches and coachees. This regular interaction enhanced the mutual relationship in learning. Expectations were clearly and regularly articulated by the leadership team and this assisted teachers in focusing their learning in order to move toward achievement of the LDP aims.

I hear teachers talk and the fact that they know a lot about individual students' progress and where they need to go to next, I think it is much more focused staff. I think they are really focused on student learning and achievement. I think this has happened because of the guidance from Chris. She has questioned us, she has pushed us in the right

direction and she has challenged us to think in this way. Most of it is up to her leadership in the school that causes this to happen and then she allows other leaders to then lead groups of teachers to achieve what we set out to achieve. (Bernadette, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

An analysis of the case studies indicates that the rapidity of the initiative in some schools became a hindrance to authentic professional development. Frustration levels with the initiative grew in schools, where the learning was planned and presented by the literacy leader without consultation with teachers. This resulted in compliance being the driver, rather than a desire to learn effective teaching strategies to improve outcomes for students. In schools where the teacher was the driver of their own learning, engagement with the process was high and teachers remained committed to their own personal learning and to the LDP initiative.

## **6.5 School Culture**

Every school has a different view of school life and this has often been captured with the term “the way we do things around here”. Although the schools in this study are located in the same area, attract their students from the same population and participated in LDP, the implementation and expectations of the project were experienced differently in each school. A partial explanation of this phenomenon may well be related to the particular cultures nurtured in each school. Consequently, an exploration of the influence of culture in each school during the implementation of LDP is appropriate.

In 2003, twelve schools merged to form five new schools, commencing the process of redefining each school’s vision and culture. The merger process generated funding to finance the LDP project, which aimed to improve achievement outcomes in literacy. The initiative generated an expectation that schools may deepen their current culture of learning

by introducing the practice of professional inquiry. Indeed, how schools incorporated the practice of inquiry into their culture of learning determined the level of success experienced in the implementation of LDP. It is appropriate to explore some of the cultural expressions in each school in order to investigate how staff implemented LDP.

There are four issues to be explored in this section. The first issue is the composition of teachers. The second issue is the effect of revisioning in schools not affected by the merger process. The third issue is the increased workload for teachers and the final issue is the credibility of professional leaders.

The first issue to explore is the composition of teachers in School A. These teachers originated from the teaching staff involved in the merger. Likewise, the management team consisted of staff from both schools. Not unexpectedly, there was difficulty in creating homogeneous culture with staff from varying backgrounds.

The management team never really jelled; they never got on since the merger. It has had a huge impact. They have such different ideas and when they can't sort it then somebody goes and we try and start again.

(Julie, School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The school was addressing the challenge of creating a new school vision which may or may not be in harmony with the LDP vision. In particular, as policies were being developed, each person on the leadership team attempted to retain aspects of their previous identity, rather than contribute to an evolving new and more contextually appropriate identity for a new school. This situation generated friction in sections of the staff, and as a result, some staff resigned from the school. Consequently, many teachers in School A believed the LDP implementation was not a priority.

In contrast to School A, the staff of School B addressed a different set of challenges. The teachers in School B were not directly affected by mergers and therefore did not need to

address issues of redefining school identity or culture. Their challenge focused on appreciating the need to implement LDP. The principal and teachers believed their current practice was serving students well and that LDP was developed to assist those schools which were more closely affected by the merger process. The LDP project was underpinned by the application of a set of new teaching practices which all schools agreed to adopt. The difficulty for many teachers in School B was that they did not believe LDP was offering an educational experience superior to the status quo. The literacy leaders, along with the coordinator, attempted changing this perspective and encouraged teachers to implement the project goals. Principal and staff failed to be convinced of the merits of LDP. This is evident in the following comment from the principal.

I thought we had good teachers and I thought the teachers were doing a good job and I think probably overall they were. We learned there were things that we could do better and not everything needs to get thrown out. There are still some practices that are quite valid. (Dale, School B, individual interview, 15/06/2011)

Such professional perspectives explain the reluctance for teachers to embrace the LDP project.

Whilst the leaders in School C welcomed LDP outwardly, they struggled to assimilate the LDP vision with their own school vision. They committed to the development of a culture of professional inquiry into practice. This practice was, however, limited to the leadership team. The process of professional inquiry did not filter through to classroom teachers. The leadership team struggled to develop a collective school-wide understanding of professional inquiry. This group held the knowledge and continued to demand more and more of the teachers who were responsible for the implementation of the new learning practices.



I had to change as a leader. I had a lot of ideas and I didn't always articulate them to the staff. I did with the AP, DP and the chairperson but not with the whole staff. I thought that for things to work, we needed to present a clear picture about what we wanted. That took time. We had to make sure the leadership team knew what we wanted to happen then we asked the staff to do it. (Alice, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

Due to this implementation issue, the workload of teachers increased. Teachers became disillusioned when they had worked hard to improve achievement and the results did not reflect their efforts. This lack of improvement discouraged teachers and became the impetus for a number of staff resignations. This in turn contributed to a declining morale among the leadership team members which, understandably, generated a defeatist school culture.

I suppose to be honest I thought we might have made progress faster. We didn't have really many teachers resistant to change at the beginning but the people who weren't quite so competent, they left. I think some of the stuff that came out of LDP put pressure on people and some of them chose to get out and said we were working too hard and too much for no reward. (Alice, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

A fourth issue challenged the teachers in School D. The leadership team welcomed the LDP project enthusiastically. The principal appointed two professional leaders of learning and delegated the responsibility for the implementation to these leaders. The issue encountered in this school was one of credibility. This credibility was not related to the LDP project, but rather to the leaders responsible within School D for its implementation. The

professional leaders of learning were not teaching. They implemented LDP with the support of the project co-ordinator; however, the pace of this implementation was a concern to some teachers. For some teachers, the pace of the implementation was too slow and this led to frustration. Teachers for whom the pace was too fast felt overwhelmed with the increase of workload. The credibility of the professional leaders of learning responsible for the implementation of LDP was challenged by teachers. Teachers perceived them as using a *Do as I say not as I do* model. This is evident in this comment from one classroom teacher:

Yes, the workload keeps increasing. More and more to do, we don't get extra time to do it. They teach us something new and tell us to give it a go but we don't see the modelling going on. (Sarah, School D, individual interview, 30/06/2011)

Teachers also perceived a disconnect between their workload and that of the leaders. This created a sense of unfairness in some teachers, as expressed by this classroom teacher:

Sometimes here, I think that those people think they're up here and they think we are down here, and in actual fact I think they're forgotten what it's like in the classroom environment. I don't know what they do. It seems from an outsider's perspective that we have, if you are doing a good job, 15 min – 20 min to plan something and they have got like four hours for the comparative amount of work and that feels a little bit unfair (Shane, School D, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

The questioning in regard to credibility of the leaders of learning in school D caused friction with some staff members. The increase in workload and the demands associated with this increase led to some teachers addressing these concerns with the principal. The principal was unsympathetic to their concerns as indicated in this statement:

I continue to get feedback that about getting overwhelmed by extra work that is really quite interesting. I then asked them “What is this about being overwhelmed?” Different teachers who I knew were coping really well, never complaining and getting on with the job, so what did they do that others weren’t doing. I think it was a time management thing. If I was in the classroom now I wouldn't be overwhelmed. I wouldn't let myself get overwhelmed. I would sort things out. I also thought, ‘Let’s have a look at what other schools are doing,’ and when I looked it didn't appear as if we are doing too much. (Kerry, School D, individual interview, 14/06/2011)

This attitude from the principal, coupled with the increase in workload demands, led teachers to question the value of LDP. Teachers actively participated in professional learning and at that point self-selected which aspects of the new learning they would implement into their classrooms. Through this process teachers developed a subtle non-compliant attitude.

An alternative set of cultural norms was evident in School E. The teachers in School E, as with teachers in all other schools, encountered the challenge of improving achievement outcomes in literacy as part of the LDP project. The process by which the leadership team chose to support the teachers in this challenge was a coaching model. The principal identified teachers who regularly engaged with reflective practice, and matched them with teachers for whom the professional inquiry into practice was new learning. The principal worked with the coaches to build their confidence and competence and supported

them in their work with their coaches. The coaching process developed a sense of empowerment for both the coach and the coachee.

A lot of great things came out of that because the coaching situation made the PD more specific for people who were being coached. It also helped the coaches because it made them clarify what they knew. It made them research areas to help the coachees and it gave them a time to reflect on their own teaching as well. (Bernadette, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The coaching model facilitated support and the mutuality of this support generated increased levels of trust. The sharing of data was a key feature in the opening up of teacher practice. While teachers acknowledged the challenge, they were willing to participate as explained by this teacher:

Chris was always asking us where we are at and where to next. She collated data from every class and then gave it to us as the coaches. We had this set of questions we had to go through. I remember everyone waiting for the graphs and being really nervous about what it would look like. I used to get upset if a child I had in my class hadn't moved far enough. It was good but scary. The first time we got the graphs everyone kept it to themselves and then we looked at it later. That lasted for a couple of times and then the coaches had to show teachers how to look at the data and find out what it was telling them. We had to use our own graphs so we couldn't really hide anymore. (Donna, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The sharing of data and the collaboration led to increased teacher reflection and a sense of "being in this together". Teachers shared their belief that this collaborative learning

culture was enhanced by the articulation of clear expectations from the principal and the development of a shared responsibility within the leadership team.

I also felt that that we were all working together to achieve the aims of improving the capacity of teachers in the area. I liked the collectiveness of it. That was very empowering to teachers; we were able to share experiences. It wasn't just about one teacher not doing well but all of us knowing we all had to improve and getting that PD to help us to do that. That's why coaching was so well-received in our school. (Bernadette, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

The collective nature of the learning in School E empowered teachers and leaders to strive for better achievement outcomes. Indeed, a distinctive understanding shared by School E's teachers is that LDP needed to be owned and implemented by a community of teachers, indeed, collectivity became a key component of the culture in School E.

## **6.6 The Role of the Principal**

The final important theme identified in the case studies is that of leadership. Arguably, this is not a surprise, given that educational research identifies leadership as second only to classroom instruction among school-related factors that affect student learning in schools (Leithwood, 2004). This research, however, endeavours to explicate its influence within the LDP in more detail. To this end, the leadership in this section relates to the role of the principal in the LDP implementation process. It is appropriate therefore to explore the role of the principal in each of the participating schools in order to understand their effect on the implementation of LDP as a schooling improvement project.

The role of the principal is influenced by the principal's understanding of and enactment of their personal beliefs about leadership. The continuum in Table 6.1 explains four leadership styles and their key identifiers.

Table 6.1

*Leadership Styles and Key Identifiers*

Management → (Bass, 1990) (Gardner, 1990)	Delegation →	Distributive Leadership → (Gronn, 2000)	Shared Leadership → (Crowther et al, 2002) (Spillane, 2005)
Implementing tactical actions	Planning and delegating tactical actions	Capacity-building. Can only be promoted, it cannot be mandated.	Seek out others in their school to build partnerships, tap others' strengths, and jointly move the vision forward. Believe and act in ways that are invitational and support a common purpose.
Detailed budgeting	Measuring and reporting performance	Inclusive and implies broad-based involvement in leadership practice.	Understand that strong relationships with their faculty, developed through both formal and informal interactions, are fundamental to motivating everyone to move in the same direction.
Measuring and reporting performance	Applying rules and policies	Does not mean everybody leads but rather that everybody has the potential to lead, at some time.	What really matters is that all reach the same destination; for schools, that destination is improved student learning.
Applying rules and policies	Organising people and tasks within structures	Occurs in various patterns, there is no blueprint.	
Implementing disciplinary rules	Recruiting people for jobs	Requires deep trust and reciprocal support.	
Organising people and tasks within structures	Developing people	Premised upon utilising the talent and capabilities of those within the school and outside it.	
Recruiting people for jobs	Problem-solving		
Problem-solving	Planning		
Planning	Motivating and encouraging others		
	Delegating and training		

It is important to explore the role of the principal as perceived by leaders across the five schools. Each principal was given a list of leadership attributes and highlighted the attributes most closely connected to their current role. These were collated and their self-perception mapped onto the leadership continuum in Table 6.2,

Table 6.2

*Principal Leadership Self-perception*

Management →	Delegation →	Distributive Leadership →	Shared Leadership
School A	School B	School C	School D
Resource Manager Finance Manager	Resource Manager	Resource Manager Finance Manager	Distribute leadership Coach leaders Facilitate collective:

Personnel Time Manager External Co-ordinator to lead project within the school. Manage release from classroom to undertake LDP work.	Finance Manager Personnel Time Manager External Co-ordinator to lead project within the school. Leaders assigned to role. Manage release from classroom to undertake LDP work. Delegate responsibility to Literacy Leaders. Meet with Literacy Leaders to plan next steps.	Personnel Time Manager Work with Co-ordinator to plan school implementation. Lead leaders in Literacy development within the school.	Appoint two Professional Leaders of learning (PLLs). Concentrate on the Big picture-vision, results and accountability Support PLLs in role Participate in new learning with staff. Liaise with Board of Trustees (BOT). Work with principals' group and professional learning communities across the cluster.	Vision Targets Goals Articulate expectations: Culture Teaching Learning Relationships Achievement
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The principal in School A, Casey, assumed minimal responsibility for the implementation of the project, giving this responsibility to the project co-ordinator and literacy leader. She viewed her role as a resource manager. This is evident by the following statement:

I supported teachers by giving them every opportunity to do the observations and testing. I did this by using creative budgeting. When they needed release time and things like that I would manage all of that. I also managed the purchase of resources that the co-ordinator and literacy leader identified as necessary for their work with the project.

(Casey, School B, individual interview, 23/08/2011)

Casey did not lead learning for her staff or the leaders. Her role, as she perceived it, was to support the co-ordinator and literacy leader in the implementation of LDP.

The principal of school B, Dale, also took on the role of resource manager. The difference that moved Dale further along the continuum was her acknowledgement of her lack of knowledge and skill in the area of the effective teaching of literacy.

I would hate to have to go back into full-time teaching now. I have some knowledge but I don't actually have the skills. Teachers have far better teaching skills than I've ever had and I wouldn't do a good job in the classroom. I enjoy going back and having fun with the kids but I don't know that I could actually teach in the way that I expect my staff to do all day, every day. (Dale, School B, individual interview, 15/06/2011)

This acknowledgement was the reason she delegated the responsibility of the implementation of LDP within the school to her deputy and assistant principals.

The principal in School C, Alice, committed outwardly to the implementation of LDP. Alice along with Casey and Dale acknowledged her lack of knowledge in the effective teaching of literacy. To address this deficit, she attended the literacy leaders' meetings regularly in order to develop her knowledge in the effective teaching of literacy.

I think that I didn't really know much. It was a new thing and we were being led along by the facilitator. I tended to let the facilitator do it. I went along to literacy leaders' meetings because I want to see how the process was going to work and to build my own knowledge and skill.

(Alice, principal, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

The effect this lack of knowledge had for Alice was her perceived inability to create a collective understanding of LDP within her school and the manner in which it could be implemented successfully. One reason for attending the literacy leaders' meetings was to identify the next steps in her role.

I'm here to learn in my role as the principal and to keep in touch with the curriculum. It was good to have a day and afternoon where I could go along and join in and also see how people interacted because I



found that interesting. I also wanted to see how this was going to work and how I could do this in my school. I wasn't sure I had a handle on the collective idea of LDP. On a personal level I found it helpful because it made me look at the curriculum with a focus on an area which I was not overly strong in. (Alice, principal, School C, individual interview, 01/09/2011)

An alternative model of leadership was adopted by Kerry, principal of School D. Kerry believed the model of distributed leadership would ensure both the success in short term achievement and sustainability in the long term. Consequently, she appointed two PLLs and distributed the responsibility of the implementation of LDP to them. She identified two key roles for herself. The first was the role of learner. She became a co-learner to ensure she was able to build her personal knowledge in the effective teaching of literacy. This learning became one of the key roles for her leadership during the implementation of LDP.

I am heavily involved in any PD that is going on. I'm not sitting in my office. I'm involved in the PD. I've got a theoretical knowledge if not the practical knowledge because I have not been in the classroom since 1993 but I can talk about it. I have worked in groups together with everyone and being part of their learning team – that's a key role for me. It's a key role because it shows the value of what we are doing and we all are part of LDP. I guess my role is to cut through all of that external pressure stuff and say, “What are the really important things you should be doing in school? What are the things you can stop doing?” In that way I am taking the lead. I am working very closely with the two professional leaders in schools. I'm not the professional

leader in the school, for better or for worse, but I support and work with them all the time. My other role is to really listen to what they're saying and work with them and make collective decisions based on that stuff. (Kerry, principal, School D, individual interview, 07/07/2011)

The second role identified by Kerry was that of liaison between groups including, leaders, staff, Board of Trustees and community.

I haven't attended all the PD sessions with the literacy leaders at the cluster level. I've attended some but not all. By not doing that I haven't got the knowledge to lead professional development. All I can do is support professional development. I see that it is my role to support it one hundred percent. I have a key role that is to talk about the learning and make sure that all staff, the Board of Trustees and the community know that this is really, really important. (Kerry, principal, School D, individual interview, 07/07/2011)

Kerry provided the Board with regular reports on progress and negotiated funds to support developments determined by the PLLs. Whilst Kerry was aware of the developments through leadership team discussions, she took no responsibility in designing or implementing the development plans.

At the right of the continuum is School E. In this school, Chris, the principal, adopted a shared leadership model. The vision, goals and targets were determined collectively. The leaders were coached in both leadership and effective teaching of literacy. This coaching was facilitated by Chris, while leaders were encouraged to determine their own needs and articulate how to meet these needs. All collective professional development was planned collaboratively by the leadership team and facilitated by members of the team. The key role of the principal in school E was the facilitation of skills, leadership, and

collective expectations for achievement. She perceived her role as one of challenge and support.

An analysis of the data identified that teachers within each school did not always see the role of the principal as the principal perceived the role. Table 6.3 explores the teacher perspectives. The top row of the table is the continuum of leadership theories. The second row is placement of principals from a teacher’s perspective and the final row explores the language used by teachers about the role of the principal in the implementation of LDP.

Table 6.3

*Teacher Perspective of Role of Principal*

Management →	Delegation →	Leadership →	Distributive →	Shared Leadership
School A	School B	School C	School D	School E
Casey School A	Dale School B	Alice School C	Kerry School D	Chris School E
Resource Manager Finance Manager Personnel Time Manager External Co-ordinator to lead project within the school. Manage release from classroom to undertake LDP work. Created confusion about expectations for participation in project.	Resource Manager Finance Manager Personnel Time Manager Unsure of need for LDP No support of Literacy Leaders Relinquished responsibility to Co-ordinator. Unsure of what principal did.	Resource Manager Finance Manager Personnel Time Manager Work with Co-ordinator to plan school implementation. Co-learner with literacy leaders Knowledge kept within the leadership team Focused on literacy not leadership.	Delegated leadership to two Professional Leaders of learning (PLLs). Co-learner with no implementation of new learning. Supports PLLs in role. Liaises with Board of Trustees (BOT). Works outside the school with different groups. High absence Not really sure what her role in LDP is.	Leader of collective: Vision Targets Goals Articulate expectations: Culture Teaching Learning Relationships Achievement Supporter Coach Teacher of teachers Driven to success Collective accountability

The teachers and principal in School A shared similar perspectives concerning the principal’s role. The teachers viewed Casey as a resource manager. Their perception

mirrored Casey's to the extent that they used the same language to explain her role. This is evident in this teacher's response:

Casey is the person who makes sure we have the resources to do what we need to do. She organises relievers and release for the literacy leader to work with the co-ordinator. She is like a resource manager because she doesn't lead the learning. The literacy leader and the co-ordinator do that. (Julie, School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

The perspective of the principal role in school B was also shared. The teachers were aware that the principal was providing support to the literacy leaders and the co-ordinator. This support was in the form of release time from the classroom to undertake the role and in the form of finance to support the new initiatives within the project. Teachers did not perceive the principal as the leader of learning.

She makes sure we have the time and money to do what we need to do with the co-ordinator but she doesn't lead any professional learning.

I'm not really sure what she does but she does manage the school and its resources. (Karen, School A, individual interview, 21/06/2011)

In School C, teachers perceived the principal as a co-learner. They also saw a major part of her role as manager of time, finance and resources. This was a similar perspective to that of the principal. The gap in the perceived role is in regards to the leading of leaders. The principal perceived she was leading leaders within the school; however, teachers felt she was focused on literacy development rather than leadership development. As Robyn said, "There was a lot of time she was working with the literacy leaders. She went to their meetings to learn about LDP and literacy" (School A, Individual interview, 21/06/2011).

The school which experienced the greatest disconnect was School D where the principal perceived her leadership as a distributed model and the teachers and leaders within

the school believed she had delegated leadership rather than distributed it. Their experience of her leadership was in stark contrast to the leadership she believed she was offering. The principal perceived herself as a liaison between the school and the Board of Trustees, along with the professional learning groups across the cluster. She participated in professional learning and this was perceived by teachers as being a co-learner with no responsibility to implement new learning. Kerry perceived that her participation as a co-learner displayed a commitment to professional learning and modelled appropriate support for the leaders of the learning. Teachers viewed her as an often absent participant and a co-learner rather than a leader.

She is out of school a lot. I'm not sure why. She does look at the data but what she is doing I'm not sure. She's learning alongside us that's what she is doing. (Lucy, School D, individual interview, 01/07/2011)

In School E there was a synergy of perception. The teachers believed the principal was the coach. She facilitated a collective approach to learning and leading. She worked with teachers to develop a clear vision and supported teachers to become reflective practitioners. The principal believed the coaching model encouraged teachers to become leaders and enabled the culture of success to grow. The shared nature of the leadership within School E enabled their achievement levels to improve and this improvement was sustained over time.

It is not so much telling them –it's (the) everyone learning together situation of our school which always has been and particularly in teams. A lot of the leadership that I do in the school is instigating something that we might have identified as a need and then working back. This is shared leadership most definitely. I'm leading to a certain extent, deciding on the focus and deciding on a process. Then it is

worked on in teams and as a whole staff. A lot of things worked on this way because Chris taught us to lead. (Bernadette, Literacy Leader, School E, individual interview, 06/07/2011)

## **6.7 Synthesis of Findings from Case Studies**

A synthesis of the five case studies provides the following conclusions:

**Vision**— The principal of School E was able to merge the LDP vision into the existing school vision. The degree to which the principal was able to engage with, articulate, and incorporate the vision into the existing vision was a critical factor for success. In contrast, the remaining schools were caught up in competing visions or retaining two visions. The inability of the principals to merge the LDP vision with their existing vision indicated a lack of professional knowledge in the process of change. This limitation also influenced the implementation workload.

**Implementation Workload**—Implementation expectations varied across schools within the LDP cluster and this can be linked directly to the status given to the LDP vision within the school. Three dynamics were identified as consequences of the implementation of the LDP vision. The first consequence was the varied levels of teacher buy-in. The second consequence was the increase in teacher workload and the third was increased staff turnover.

**Professional Learning Opportunities**—Two key outcomes of the implementation of the LDP vision was the identification of the need for prerequisite learning. Literacy leaders were appointed to facilitate this process. Principals lacking the professional knowledge of the management of educational change appeared to have bypassed some critical steps in preparing teachers for the change. They developed final solutions rather than pathways to the solutions. In schools where teachers were able to develop some autonomy over their professional learning, engagement in the process of new learning was high. In schools

where teachers were collectively engaged in their professional learning, higher levels of teacher self-efficacy were evident.

**School Culture**—Some schools dismissed the need to develop a culture for change prior to the implementation of LDP that resulted in little consistency among schools. This was evident from the beginning when Schools A and B did not see the need for the project while others attempted to implement the initiative with the belief that if teachers did more they would achieve more. This reluctance to engage with change put at risk the teacher's belief in their own personal capacity. In schools where the principal and leaders modelled the culture of “this is how we do things around here” collective capacity was enhanced and teachers were prepared to take risks in their implementation of LDP.

**Principal Leadership**—The leadership of the principal was identified as having an influence on the teachers' adoption of change, which indirectly influenced student academic outcomes. In particular, the research identified a number of leadership behaviours that principals adopted. These included a sophisticated understanding of leading change, an in-depth knowledge of the curriculum, the ability to lead appropriate professional learning opportunities, and the capacity to nurture a supportive risk-taking culture conducive to the adoption of new ideas and practice.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

The full case analysis of the five LDP schools focused on how principals led the implementation of the new student learning initiative of LDP. The following findings were generated from the cross-case analysis.

The first is the role of vision in an improvement initiative. This dynamic was generated in the full case analysis with a particular focus on the role of the principal in shaping the LDP vision. It proposes that how the vision is shaped, articulated and shared can affect the process of implementation.

The second is the dynamic of professional learning. This emerged in the full case analysis with specific emphasis on the ability of the principal to lead the implementation of LDP strategically within their school. It also suggests that there are particular skills principals can adopt to successfully implement a sustainable reform. These skills require a comprehensive and appreciative understanding of the following:

- effective teaching practice; and
- meaningful professional learning.

The third dynamic generated was the leadership of culture. This dynamic suggests that a deep understanding of culture and the leader's role in creating and supporting culture is important in terms of implementation expectations.

The fourth dynamic to be generated was the concept of the leadership of change.

Appendix I provides the link between codes, themes, and findings.



## Chapter 7: Discussion of Findings

### 7.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study was to explore the unexpected variation in student achievement across schools participating in LDP while the aim of this chapter is to explore the findings as identified at the end of Chapter 6. The research question directing this study was, “What leadership factors are influencing the unexpected variation in student academic achievement in literacy outcomes across participating schools in the LDP? Furthermore, an investigation of the literature assisted with the development of four sub questions, which guided the study:

1. In what ways did the vision influence student academic achievement in LDP?
2. In what ways did professional learning influence student academic achievement in LDP?
3. In what ways did culture influence student academic achievement in LDP?
4. In what ways did leadership of change influence student academic achievement in LDP?

Given the interpretive nature of this study, it is not the intent to answer these questions definitively, rather to develop propositions based on the four themes that emerged from the full case analysis. The themes identified in chapter 6 are:

5. The Role of the Vision
6. Professional Learning
7. Leadership of Culture
8. Leadership of Change

These themes will be explored in light of the personal, social and situational context of each participant, group, and school, using the symbolic interactionist lens to guide this discussion. As described in Section 4.2.3, there are three important symbolic interactionist

tenets. First, all humans act towards things such as other people, ideas, objects, and events on the basis of the symbolic meaning they have for them. Second, ultimately this meaning may be different from that formed by other people as the experiences of each person may be different for that situation. Third, when humans engage in social interaction, the meaning they each have can change as they influence one another. In this project, teachers, literacy leaders, the co-ordinator, and principals attached personal symbolic meaning to the LDP project which, ultimately, led to their influencing of each other and the changing of their social environment. Hence, these three tenets are reflected in this discussion of the findings.

Thus, this chapter will discuss how teachers, literacy leaders, the co-ordinator, and the principals interpreted their circumstances and attributed personal meaning to the LDP project, how they brought their meaning to social interactions, and how they negotiated meaning in that social context. Of particular interest will be the manner in which participants reviewed and transformed meaning in light of the situation and their interaction with others. This discussion will focus on the small interactions between people and assist with explaining how important aspects of each school community was change or recreated by social interactions.

## **7.2 The Vision**

A vision is ultimately a cognitive construct (Kantabutra, 2010) which clarifies a way forward. It sets a direction for growth. But vision is more than a cognitive dynamic. If it is to be a shared vision with meaning negotiated, it also triggers emotions and values, and ignites inspiration and action amongst staff. This dynamic is reflected in the following definition: “Shared vision is not an idea...it is rather a force in people’s hearts...at its simplest level; a shared vision is the answer to the question ‘what do we want to create?’” (Senge, 2000, p.202). Authentic collaboration is a process that begins with a vision, which creates a clear sense of priority and purpose, which are essential prerequisites for genuine

changes to be undertaken (Fullan, 2001). This section explores the actions of the principal, co-ordinator, and literacy leaders in relation to the creation and implementation of a shared vision for the LDP project.

Whilst there was an initial shared vision created amongst the cluster principals to guide the project with specific aims and objectives, the interpretation of this in each of the participating schools was guided ultimately by the principal's personal beliefs. The group of principals and the co-ordinators had negotiated their different meanings through social interaction and created what they believed to be a collective understanding—a shared vision for the group. However, close attention to the interactions of each of these principals, the co-ordinator, and the literacy leaders with the teachers in their schools indicated that remnants of their personal meaning attached to this vision is played out through the implementation process in their own schools.

The principals adopted multiple, non-uniform strategies in the implementation of the LDP vision. Closer scrutiny of these strategies identified that divergent and, at times, conflicting strategies in relation to the LDP vision were being implemented by the principals. Some strategies supported the agreed LDP vision while others modified, abandoned or only tangentially supported it. For example, the deliberate adoption of collaborative strategies between school leadership and the teachers, as outlined in the agreed LDP vision, was the focus of the principal in school E's practice in the implementation process. One strategy to assist in moving to a collaborative relationship was the public displaying of the agreed vision statement in the staff room. This displayed statement gave rise to daily interaction in terms of enacting the vision of the LDP project, thereby reminding the staff actively about their role in achieving the agreed goals. This was supported by a programme developed by the principal to prompt teachers to work collaboratively with school leadership on the development of programmes to support the

vision. This meant that there was an explicit alignment of the school vision with the LDP vision. Consequently, in this school, all personnel engaged with and supported the LDP. In this school, it is evident that through regular and purposeful social interaction, the principal, co-ordinator, and teachers all negotiated and then adopted a common understanding about the intention of the LDP and how they were to contribute to its ultimate success. This meaning for them was symbolically represented as the LDP as a whole, and this is reflected in the school's high levels of successful outcomes generated by the LDP.

In contrast, in schools A and B, because the principals relied on the co-ordinator to work with staff in the implementation of LDP, there was no direct negotiation of the meaning of LDP between the principal and the teachers. The co-ordinator shared her understanding of the LDP vision with the teachers, while the two principals each remained focused on their pre-existing school vision, and expected the LDP to be implemented in the background. As a result, the teachers experienced not only competing educational visions but also rivalries in leadership between their respective principal and the co-ordinator that only served to hinder the project implementation processes in these two schools.

To provide examples in support this observation, one illustration from each school will be used. Teachers in School A experienced what they perceived to be a top-down approach to the implementation of the project. They were satisfied with this approach while they had the co-ordinator leading them. Upon her departure, however, they were confused as to who was leading the project and what it was that they were supposed to be working on. This confusion was brought about by the fact that the vision had not been clearly shared or developed with them. There was no opportunity for teachers to create a shared meaning and therefore the personal meaning of the individual teacher was the driver.

School B also experienced the loss of the co-ordinator as their primary leader during the implementation process. In this instance, the principal left the leadership of the LDP

implementation process in the hands of her literacy leaders. Although there were two literacy leaders in the school, they did not share the same belief about the project and, in time, began competing for support from the principal and, eventually, the teachers. This highly competitive situation caused a division amongst the teachers so that the implementation process became quite piecemeal.

To exacerbate these situations in schools A and B, the teachers accepted the meaning of the vision that the co-ordinator espoused when she was an integral part of the project, but, upon her departure, these schools experienced a high turnover of leaders and staff. These changes added to the teachers' confusion as they felt they were changing focus with each new leader. Consequently, each teacher, individually, continued to hold their own symbolic meaning for the LDP, which was different for each person. The result of this lack of vision alignment led to ambivalent responses from teachers with some teachers refusing to take an active part in the initiative.

A consequence of this lack of alignment of understanding in these two schools led to conflict in their socially constructed meaning resulting in the formation of separate social groups. Two of these groups were teachers who became antagonistic towards those who encouraged the implementation of LDP. Complicating this alignment of meaning further was another group of teachers who were more half-hearted in their commitment to the project, due to the vision misalignment between that of the principal and the co-ordinator. Whilst they agreed in principle to the new ideas, they failed to initiate new learnings into their classroom practice as there was no shared understanding of what was really expected of them. Moreover, the contrasting perspectives and practices among teachers created division within the staff and limited the collective response that the LDP project aspired to engender. Not surprisingly, this inconsistency of vision alignment also generated unfocused

efforts with everyone believing that what they were doing was right, as the social interaction needed to generate commonly held beliefs had not been successfully implemented.

It was clear that there was a tension in these schools between the maintenance of individually held meaning and the changes necessary for each school's commitment to the LDP. In this situation, dissonance occurred between the conditions necessary for appropriate staff collaboration for project implementation and the individual school agenda promoted by the principal. The process of managing competing visions engenders a sense of confusion, a lack of direction, and a dissipation of energy within teachers. These behaviours are the result of the duality of vision. Due to this, the LDP in these schools never amounted to more than disjointed words and individually-held symbolic meanings. This outcome aligns well with what Robinson (2011) termed as losing power to inspire. Arguably, this outcome was an important contributing factor in explaining why student achievement did not improve to a desired level in these two schools.

By turning to a discussion of existing literature it is clear that the manner by which the supposedly agreed vision was understood, interpreted, and applied is an important concept in understanding the variability in the LDP outcomes generated in the different schools. The creation of a shared vision in this instance was established through the process of interaction through collaboration but was limited to the group of principals. Chris led a collaborative process with the leadership team, which allowed each of them to examine their own meaning and, in turn, to negotiate a collective meaning of the project. Chris's ability to create a culture where the leadership team was able to develop this shared understanding reflects the ability to enable the group to collaborate in the creation and implementation of an authentically shared vision. She, along with the leadership team, was able to support the staff in order for each of them to explore their own personal meaning and how this could then move them to commit to the shared vision. The principal, as leader of this process,

specified the importance of having a strong sense of purpose, talked enthusiastically about what needed to be accomplished, spoke optimistically with staff about the way forward, articulated a compelling vision for the future and expressed confidence that together, the goals could be achieved (Robinson et al., 2008). When a vision is not shared, there is confusion about what it is the school is trying to achieve. For the most part, in such a dis-unified situation the teachers will attach their personal meaning to the vision that they connect with and this will lead to disjointed commitment and practice. The vision underpins what it is leaders and teachers are trying to achieve. When there is confusion or a lack of clarity schools are less likely to make the progress they desire. This finding has led to the following propositions:

- Duality of vision leads to confusion and limited achievement of desired outcomes. Improvement initiatives must be driven by a shared vision.
- The leader must provide an opportunity for all participants in improvement initiatives to understand the purpose of the initiative and to co-construct a shared vision.

### **7.3 Professional Learning**

Professional learning in the context of this study refers to the provision of opportunities by leaders to develop the abilities, skills, and expertise of themselves as leaders, and of teachers as individuals and as members of a staff group, to execute or accomplish something specific, such as leading a school-improvement effort or teaching more effectively. In this section I explore the actions of the principal, co-ordinator, and literacy leaders in relation to the provision in each of the participating schools of a professional learning programme for teachers, which aimed to improve teacher practice in the teaching of literacy in order to raise achievement outcomes for the students.

In the exploration of professional learning, it is useful to identify what methods of professional learning increase the knowledge and skills of teachers and which methods are less effective. Design principles for effective and high quality professional learning are identified in the literature (Timperley et al., 2007). Within schools, the principal is in a unique position to influence the implementation of these guiding principles and to affect the overall quality of teacher professional learning. The LDP project aimed to enhance teacher practice through the provision of a professional learning programme, which attempted to address the needs of teachers so that they could confidently and competently implement the LDP. One aspect of highly effective professional learning is that it is collaborative and involves reflection and feedback (Fraser, 2005). Based upon a close examination of the actions taken by the principals in the LDP, it is evident that a variety of school-specific models of professional learning were developed. Teachers indicated that whilst some models appeared to have had an observable influence on their practice, there were other models that apparently failed to engage teachers, and consequently had limited influence on their practice.

For example, School E developed a model of coaching to support teacher professional learning. Initially, the principal identified effective teachers who were both reflective and respected by their peers, and engaged them as coaches for other teachers. This strategy celebrated their expertise in the effective teaching of literacy. It also generated a major resource for the school, namely, a coaching team for the professional learning programme. This programme nurtured the skills that teachers needed to guide colleagues. In particular, they shared in the development of skills in effective questioning, observation and feedback.

As discussed in Section 5.7.1 (p, 136), these coaches identified the process as a positive learning opportunity for themselves and reported improved practices in the teachers



they coached. Initially the nature of the relationship between coach and coachee was a mentor model, and reflected the perspective that the coach role included functional activities such as modelling best practice and observing and giving feedback to improve the practice of their coachee. This perspective changed over time and the coaches came to view the relationship as mutual and supportive. The coachees also believed the process was helpful in supporting their personal professional development and they enjoyed this time with their coach. All teachers in School E reported experiencing an authentic sense of collaboration and challenge with this type of professional learning process. In particular, they felt supported and encouraged in their new learning. The supportive relationships developed through the coaching model enabled both coaches and coachees to negotiate meaning together and influence each other on their learning journey.

This is consistent with the literature where it is described that, “Coaching is a special and reciprocal relationship between at least two people who work together to set professional goals and achieve them” (Robertson, 2008, p.26). The principal’s decision to develop a coaching model to enhance professional learning for teachers was positive and teachers reported a real change in both their practice and their personal beliefs about the teaching of literacy. This reflects the notion that a “successful coaching relationship is always a story of transformation, not just of higher levels of performance” (Hargrove, 2003 p.81).

This can be further explained by the third tenet of symbolic interactionism, which identifies that when people engage in social interaction the meaning they have for things is changed and that they are able to influence each other. In this scenario, the coaches and coachees became learning companions and in so doing, they were able to renegotiate the meaning they had for their professional learning needs and influence the learning of each

other. Over time, the coaches acknowledged that their roles had evolved from coach and coachee to co-learners.

This perspective is consistent with the literature, which identifies that “over time the role of mentor develops into the role of agent of change” (Burks, 2010, p. 26). Such a process dissolves social and professional barriers and replaces them with a culture of collaboration (Burks, 2010). This type of coaching created opportunities for conversations among teachers about appropriate practices to foster student learning. The “coaching process became the catalyst for the school to evolve into an authentic learning community embracing veterans and novices as partners” (Burks, 2010, p. 26). This was possible because the relationship between these coaches and coachees generated high levels of mutual trust and confirms that benefits are derived from approaching the profession of teaching as a collective enterprise rather than as an individual’s obligation (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Kruse & Lewis, 2009). Increased trust changed the nature of the relationships. It developed from *master* and *novice* to coach and coachee to become *companions*. This is an appropriate term. Etymologically, companions means those who share bread. It implies a relationship of intimacy and equality and that the relationship is greater than the sum of the parts.

An alternative approach, “professional companionship” (Degenhardt, 2013, p. 15) is a term used to describe a holistic process of how school leaders are engaged in their personal and professional growth. Whilst this term was originally applied to leaders, it also explains the quality of relationships among the teacher participants in this school. The relationships in this school were not replicated in other schools involved in the project and this is in part due to the nature of the way meaning was negotiated. Through the professional learning offered, the expectations of the leaders and the space provided allowed for the negotiation

of social interaction and construction of meaning where each influenced the other and both ultimately came to a commonly held meaning.

To assist further in understanding why there was a variation in student results, consideration of the professional learning practices of the other schools is now explored. A dual model of professional learning was developed in both School B and School D. The provision of professional learning was not led by the principal in either school. In School B, this process was facilitated by the co-ordinator. In School D, the PLLs orchestrated professional learning programmes. Both schools adopted whole school learning and individualised learning programmes. Whole school learning was experienced in staff meetings as discussed in Sections 5.4.1 (p. 98) and 5.6.1. (p. 123). Many teachers believed this approach was inappropriate because the pace of the learning failed to address the needs of every teacher. For some teachers, the pace was too slow and for others the pace was too fast. This did not allow teachers suitable amounts of time to explore their personal beliefs or negotiate those beliefs in light of the meaning others held for the learning programme. The generic nature of this approach ignored each individual teacher's meaning and generated a sense of frustration, which resulted in teachers not engaging as positively with the process as the co-ordinator and professional leaders of learning had anticipated.

In addition to the whole school approach, School D also introduced an individualised learning model where teachers were able to set their own direction with the support of the co-ordinator or the PLL. This individualised learning model included personal professional inquiry meetings and individual learning pathways. This approach allowed for many differing meanings for the LDP to develop. Whilst many teachers acknowledged the satisfaction they experienced of having some autonomy over their learning, their professional inquiry meetings lacked the opportunity for all the teachers in this school to work as one towards socially constructed meaning.

Teachers in School B also reported positive engagement with the use of individual learning pathways. The pathways were designed in collaboration with the co-ordinator and individual teachers. Teacher's needs were identified and goals were collaboratively agreed upon. Again, individual meaning was promoted at the expense of opportunities for socially negotiated meaning.

Teachers in both schools acknowledged that the autonomy they experienced in their self-directed professional learning was a catalyst for their commitment and engagement in the learning process. This finding is not new in self-directed learning, being described in broad terms by Knowles (1975) as:

“a process by which individuals take the initiative, with or without the assistance of others, in diagnosing their learning needs, formulating learning goals, identify human and material resources for learning, choosing and implementing appropriate learning strategies, and evaluating learning outcomes”. (p. 18)

Drawing on this quote, it is clear that being self-directed learners meant that teachers generated personal learning experiences to address areas they believed needed attention. Such a process also generated substantial professional energy from teachers. However, the individual pathways in these schools, whilst energising for each teacher, appeared to be idiosyncratic in that these addressed local school or LDP expectations tangentially at best.

Individual pathways positively influenced the learning that occurred in some classrooms. Individual teachers did gain greater knowledge about the effective teaching of literacy through these pathways, nevertheless, when they were disconnected from the collective learning dynamic, they failed to promote a school-wide learning culture that is called for in the literature (see for example, Newman et al, 2000). Whilst teachers in this situation made personal meaning through their individual learning pathways, and in part,

came to understand that others held a meaning of the project that somewhat differed from theirs, the third tenet of the social interaction was not evident in their learning process. Due to the fact that they did not interact with each other, there was no negotiation of the meanings they held. With no shared meaning they were unable to move forward in a collaborative way to ensure improved learning outcomes across the school. In order to improve practice teachers must be offered professional learning that meets their needs both as individuals and as a whole staff. This finding has led to the following three propositions:

- It must become established practice that principals provide professional learning for teachers that facilitates a process which allows teachers to share their own personal meanings, develop an understanding that the meaning others hold may be different from their own, and which gives teachers the opportunity to interact in a way that then allows them to develop a shared meaning.
- There is a risk that individual pathways create differentiated meanings and as a result, the desired effect of improving whole-of-school academic outcomes is limited.
- Professional learning models that encourage interaction and shared meaning-making enhance processes aimed at improving student academic achievement.

## **7.4 Leadership of Culture**

In this section I explore the role of the principal in implementation of the improvement strategy and the culture created by their leadership practices. It is often assumed that leadership is a naturally inherent aspect of the role of principal; however, there is more to principalship than simply being appointed to the role. Principalship is fundamentally about being principally in charge of developing a holistic learning environment in which teachers and parents are learning along with students. It is about building a community of learning, a learning culture—a PLC in its true sense (Stoll et al.,

2002). In learning organisations, leadership is identified by the quality of the person's interactions rather than the position they hold (Harris & Spillane, 2008). It is inextricably linked to their ability to develop a culture that promotes and celebrates collective learning within the school.

The principals in Schools A, B and D relinquished responsibility for implementing the LDP innovation to the external co-ordinator or internal leaders of learning. In so doing, they unwittingly intimated to their staff that they were not personally committed to the project and viewed it as something teachers and the appointed leaders would implement and manage. Their teachers' view of the role of principal was as a resource manager and liaison person. Whilst these are important aspects of their role, what these leaders paid attention to through their actions, words and behaviours, were a powerful influence upon each teacher in terms of what the staff came to believe was important in their school community regarding the implementation of the LDP (Schein, 1992; Wolfson, 2011).

By not taking part in the professional learning, or working with teachers to critique their practice, these principals gave licence to the teachers then to act on their assumption about the level of importance of the project. While the teachers did commit to the project, they did so to varying degrees and this caused dissatisfaction in the staff. Teachers who were excited about the innovation tried to encourage others to participate and they did their best to support them and guide them in their new learning. However, teachers who were not committed to the change were validated by the inactive participation of the principal. In these schools there was little if any opportunity for teachers to share their personal meaning of the project. There was little collaboration in creating a shared meaning. There were high levels of staff turnover. There were also battles for time, support and resourcing, which caused teachers to struggle to understand the purpose of the project, become disillusioned with their role in it, and eventually give up trying to make sense of the expectations their

principals or other leaders had of them. Thus, this outcome was likely to be a strong contributing cause of students' results remaining below the national average for these schools.

In contrast, the principal of School E was able to engage with the teachers in this school in such a way as to develop a culture, which welcomed collaboration and learning. She personally attended to the primary cultural leadership mechanisms identified by Schein (1992) whereby she was aware that her words, actions and what she paid attention to send a message to her teachers about what was important. They in turn committed to the initiative and worked together to achieve improved outcomes. Due to their engagement with the project and the supportive environment they found themselves working in, the staff turnover was minimal.

The principals in Schools A and B relinquished their responsibility for the project to the co-ordinator and, upon her departure, the schools struggled to keep the momentum of the project running as there was now a leadership void and no shared meaning. In School D, the principal relinquished the responsibility for the implementation to the two PLLs and, without effective support, they were unable to develop a unified understanding of the goals of the LDP with the staff. The principal in School C was committed to the professional learning in literacy and the support of the staff in the new and innovative practices; however, the limitations of her own literacy learning knowledge stalled any growth within the school. Each of these principals understood, in their own idiosyncratic way, how the LDP was to be implemented and their role within it. These understandings were guided by the principal's personal definition of their role and their leadership. They did not engage others in any implementation or meaning-making processes.

In School E, where the principal was connected on a personal level to the project and her teachers, where she was able to challenge and support the teachers, where she took time

to listen to teacher concerns, where she openly related to the teachers, and where she understood and resourced the teachers, the teachers willingly embraced and engaged with the project despite its challenges. She promoted open discussion about these challenges, which permitted a shared meaning to be created and, as a result, enabled positive improvement to be achieved in student learning outcomes. All of these practices allowed this particular staff group to implement the LDP process in a far more comprehensive and coherent way, thereby producing outstanding results. The leadership practices of School E's principal created a professional culture in which the teachers saw the potential of their shared practices and this motivated them to continue in even more positive and collaborative ways.

Many principals who rely on the guidance of the leadership literature can be lulled into a false sense of security where they believe that if they follow the guidelines of some writers in terms of practical tasks and skills – using them as a checklist, they will master what is seen as effective principalship. This false sense of security is evident in this study. Whilst principals in the LDP project believed they were taking the right approach to bring about the change required to improve academic outcomes for the students in their schools, it became obvious during the conduct of this research that they were unaware of the impact their leadership beliefs and behaviours were having on the success of the LDP.

This position can be aligned to the idea of the illusionary zone (Lamb & Branson, 2015) where it is identified that during desired educational change, principals will at times create the illusion that they are committed to the change and that they understand what it is they need to do to lead it and support it in their school. This illusion can go as far as the principals convincing themselves that they are successfully leading the change. This theoretical perspective is also somewhat aligned to the spectrum of consciousness where at one end is unconscious incompetence and at the other, unconscious competence (Burch,



1970). This spectrum of consciousness is a progression of learning where the learner does not know what they do not know to the other extreme where they do not dwell on the fact that they know.

In this study three principals acknowledged their lack of pedagogical knowledge in the teaching of literacy and relinquished the responsibility to lead the literacy learning to the co-ordinator or to the in-school literacy leaders. In terms of the development of literacy within the schools, these principals were consciously incompetent. They admitted they did not know anything about literacy. They were nearing retirement, were not prepared to put in the effort required and made a conscious decision to hand over the control of this aspect of the project to their co-ordinators and literacy leaders. In handing over the responsibility these principals contributed to the failure of the LDP to achieve its desired benefits in their school because they did not provide adequate support to the co-ordinator, PLLs, and teachers needed. The principal in School C, whilst also consciously incompetent in terms of the literacy, was able to acknowledge her lack of pedagogical knowledge and made sincere attempts to engage with the learning along with her literacy leader. In so doing, however, she limited her active participation in the leading of the implementation.

The principals of Schools A, B, C, and D were unaware of exactly what was required of them as leaders in terms of creating an effectively supportive culture for the LDP change. This was evidenced by the fact that these principals focused solely on the technological element of leading change (Blenkin et al., 1997). They believed they had a plan and that they knew how to implement this plan within their own school. There was a belief and expectation that if the plan was implemented then successful results would follow. What they were unaware of was the other elements at play in this change process. The first of these was the socio-political element where there was a need to engage with teachers in such a way as to promote the development of a shared meaning and common

professional practice in the project. Without this shared meaning, teachers did not engage fully with the implementation of the project because they were still being far more influenced by their own pre-existing personal beliefs and habits such that any effort to improve outcomes across the school were limited.

The second element that appears to have failed to enter the consciousness of these principals is the structural element. This element requires the leader to be aware of what external pressures are at play simultaneously with the change (Blenkin et al., 1997). In each school there were significant perceived pressures for the maintenance of existing in-school foci such as Maths, Maori Achievement and Inquiry Learning. For the duration of this project, these principals held on to these foci believing it was an expectation of the Ministry of Education that these would remain in place alongside the LDP project. In adopting this approach to balancing a range of foci, they did not consider or respond adequately to the effect that the layering of these foci had on teachers, demanding that they maintain their work programmes regardless of the effect this was having on them. The multi-layer foci meant teachers were unsure of how much energy to expend on each specific focus. The result of this was a fractured effort across all foci and little evidence that their personal efforts realised the improved achievement outcomes they were seeking from their LDP focus.

By way of contrast, the principal in School E was consciously competent in terms of the literacy development but believed the teaching of the literacy skills was not her priority, rather her priority was the leading of the change where she was unconsciously competent. All three elements of effective change leadership were part of her practice in terms of the implementation. The LDP was implemented into this school according to the agreed plan. The technological element was the first stage of the change. This is where the similarity of this principal's practice to the practice of the other four principals ceased. She was aware

that building a community was a critical step in the implementation process. It is acknowledged that the building of community does not emerge spontaneously, as described in Palmer (2007):

If we are to have communities that explore the discourse of teaching and learning, communities that are intentional about the development and the ground rules that are to be practised we need leaders who can call people to that vision. (p. 161)

and

Becoming such a leader –one who opens rather than occupies space, requires an inner journey into authentic self-hood, a journey towards respecting ‘otherness’ and appreciation for how connected and resourceful we all are. As those inner qualities deepen, the leader becomes better able to open the spaces in which people feel invited to create communities of mutual support. (p. 166)

This is consistent with the third tenet of symbolic interactionism and the approach adopted by the principal of School E where she engaged with teachers, elicited their personal meaning, encouraged their sharing of that personal meaning with others and thereby enabled the teachers to develop a shared meaning. With support and challenge, she was able to *open the space*. In considering the structural element, she made a decision to remove all other foci from the school in order for teachers to put their energy into this new and challenging process to raise the achievement levels of all students in literacy.

The need for a culture open to new learning and ready to change brings many challenges.

This finding offers the following three propositions:

- Complex change will only succeed in a pre-existing suitable professional culture.

- Schools and systems do not attempt to introduce change without first reviewing the culture of the sites to ensure it is conducive to adopting the change.
- Principal development must fundamentally be about learning how to nurture a professional learning culture and this must become a critical aspect of practice in preparation for principalship.

## **7.5 Leadership of Change**

The fourth theme identified in the cross-case analysis was leadership of change. It is clear in the literature that leadership and change are inextricably linked (Burnes & By, 2012). This theme explores leadership understandings and practices that enhance the success of educational change and reform. The first aspect is how leadership is experienced in a changing dynamic. Leaders of change know the distinction between having expertise in a curriculum or pedagogic area, and demonstrating expertise in managing the process of change (Fullan, 2002). The second aspect of leadership concerns the strategies adopted by principals to develop leaders from among teachers in their particular schools in order to advance and sustain change and reform (Fullan, 2002).

The real challenge facing most schools is no longer how to improve but, more importantly, how to sustain improvement. Sustainability depends upon the school's internal capacity to maintain and support developmental work and sustaining improvement requires the leadership capability of the many rather than the few. (Mulford, 2003, p.19). This study acknowledges three of the key elements identified in the educational change literature the technological, socio-political, and structural perspectives (Blenkin et al., 1997; Hopkins & Jackson, 2003; House & McQuillan, 1998). The first element posits that change cannot happen without some form of a plan or strategy being a shared vision. Second, the leader cannot achieve the desired outcome alone. The leader must involve others in order to accomplish this plan or strategy through the empowerment of teacher leaders. Finally, the

leader needs to be aware of the diverse forces or pressures causing the need to bring about change (Branson, 2007).

The change process by its nature challenges the status quo thus it is also the role of the leader to acknowledge that some participants will feel a sense of loss of past practices whilst others may be more willing to take the risk (Bridges, 2002). The role of the change leader is to work through the messiness that change brings and to help others work through the ambiguity (Fullan, 2014). Whilst many writers have supported the technological element of change leadership by developing lists of essential tasks or sets of skills they believe a leader requires in order to successfully lead change (see for example, Fullan, 2006; Hallinger, 2003; Hargreaves & Fink, 2006; Leithwood & Day, 2007; Robertson, 2008) the continued low level of successful change highlights a likely deficiency in such a narrow focus. Although these lists often include specific actions that give some clarification for leaders, it is not so much the actions of the leader but rather their interactions with those bringing about the change that determine the success of the implementation of change (Moos, 2015).

The LDP was a new initiative, which revolved around the teaching of literacy very differently from that previously attempted. This new initiative required each teacher not only to learn new ways of teaching but also to become willing and able to work with other teachers both within their school and across other schools. Here, the inherent assumption is that each participating principal possessed the capacity to lead teachers successfully through this complex change to their existing professional practice where individualism and isolation were far more common expectations. The intended student learning outcomes, and the general strategy to achieve these outcomes, were planned and agreed to by all principals within the group but there was no discussion amongst the principals as to the ideal way to lead the teaching staff through this change. Arguably, it was assumed that each and every

principal possessed the required confidence and capacity to implement the strategy successfully and to lead their staff effectively through the change process. However, due to the range of change leadership beliefs, skills and expertise amongst the principals, the implementation responsibilities proved to be very challenging for some of the principals. Rather than being uniform and aligned in how they led the change, the principals in this study personalised their approach whereby they each practised a range of skills in how they led and managed the change within their schools.

The principal of School E understood the complexity of the change process. She was aware of the need to explain the change because each teacher brought their own meaning to the change. She acknowledged the challenge it would be for staff to come to a common meaning and so she supported them and engaged not only their minds but also their hearts. She was able to assist teachers in the process of understanding the personal meaning they had for the project and its likely professional implications for their teaching, and to understand that others may have held personal views and understandings different from their own. She enabled them to develop strategies to create a collaborative community, which encouraged all to commit to the innovation of LDP.

Her leadership was relational, open and inclusive. This enabled teachers and leaders to be positive and confident about being able to work through and overcome the anticipated professional challenges. In this process she was able to create an environment of trust, where teachers were free to acknowledge they needed assistance and that they would not be judged negatively in the process. When teachers began to acknowledge their gaps, they were able to seek out support from colleagues fully aware that this was a collaborative endeavour. No teacher was alone. As the culture of collaboration and trust improved, teachers were able to see that the focus was about growth—their growth and the growth of their students. The school was a place where all were working together in collaborative

learning that enabled everyone to feel safe. They were able to acknowledge what they needed to learn without fear of ridicule. Teachers in this school owned the need for change; in fact, they became part of the change. This principal took the lead role in developing systems that ensured support. Her ability to think about how the change might affect the teachers was a means for her to create strong support networks through the coaching model, permitting the negotiation of joint meaning-making. By doing this, she was able to help teachers feel safe and supported.

Another important aspect of the practice of this principal was the realisation that teachers would need to focus on this project and that they would need time and energy to do so. In light of this, she removed previous foci to ensure everyone was committed to the same goal and not distracted by other aspects of development. In School E, the vision of the LDP was fully merged with the existing school vision and this made it easier for teachers to focus on the mutually agreed goals.

By way of contrast, the principal in School A showed limited understanding of the process of change. Her lack of understanding of the need to focus on the socio-cultural perspective of change was evident. She did not view her school as a social organisation or understand the need to be concerned with the meaning of the change demanded by the LDP. In her lack of awareness of this she was not able to support teachers to understand the meaning and implications of this change in terms of their practice. She accepted that she did not have current expertise in the curriculum or pedagogic area and relinquished the leadership of the change to the project co-ordinator. The relinquishment of this leadership responsibility did not appear to affect the change process while the co-ordinator was involved with the project. Upon the co-ordinator's departure, however, the changes were no longer supported and many of the newly introduced practices ceased.

The same situation was replicated in School B. The leaders in School B, like those in School A, had been very well supported by the co-ordinator and after her departure they were no longer able to sustain the changes she had introduced. These results indicate that change leadership demands more from the leader than routine leadership practices. It demands the adoption of more complex skills and practices, which the principals in these two schools were unable to call on.

The principal in School C accepted the role of leader of the change; however, in acknowledging that she did not have the necessary knowledge of the literacy curriculum, she immersed herself in the literacy leaders group in order to increase her knowledge. Her desire to support the change was evident but her ability to move past the technological element of the change hindered any further development within the other two areas. Becoming part of the teacher group and learning with them had a detrimental effect on her ability to engender confidence in her teachers. Whilst her teachers were looking to her for leadership, guidance, and support, they received collegiality and camaraderie. This only led to both the principal and the teachers being confused about the need for change and the process of how the change was to occur in their school. As the principal and leader of change, her role was to model the way, to set goals for teachers, create opportunities for improved teacher practice and, in turn, student achievement outcomes.

The principal in School D accepted the need for change and to support her with the change programme, she enlisted the assistance of two PPLs. In doing so she created the illusion that the team was promoting a shared understanding of what the project required but, in truth, she relinquished the responsibility of the implementation to the PLLs, preventing the necessary interaction that would have resulted in a shared commitment. The PPLs did not have the knowledge or experience to lead this interaction and, consequently,



were unable to succeed. Whilst they attempted to inspire and motivate the staff, the absence of the principal made this challenging and unfruitful.

The exploration of the change leadership employed by the principals in this project clearly identifies that principals in Schools A, B, C, and D focused on the technological element of the change. They believed they had a plan and followed that plan unaware of the need not only to be seen to be personally involved in its implementation but also to explore the socio-political and structural perspectives and implications for the improvement project as a result of this.

The educational change literature also suggests that principals acknowledge the challenge of change and call upon skilled teachers who are already positively influencing their colleagues to support the change process (Sly, 2008, p. 44). This leadership in change perspective includes the development and nurturing of teacher leaders making the change sustainable. Indeed, the acknowledgement of the importance of teacher leadership for enhancing educational change success resulted in the creation of a structure to develop teacher leadership within the LDP. The assigning of the role of Literacy Leader ensured that all schools would participate in the development of teacher leadership. How this role was supported and developed within each school was at the discretion of the principal. The expectation was that the literacy leader would lead all developments of new literacy practices with the support of the principal. This practice was fulfilled in a range of ways and with varying levels of success.

In School E, the principal was aware that unless there was a shared understanding of the LDP it would be challenging to gain traction in terms of improved student achievement. She was aware that she was not able to do the job alone, as identified in the socio-political element of educational change, and realised that the teacher leaders were best placed to effect change in the classrooms. This belief aligns with the view that “how well a principal

utilises teacher leadership is determined by the world view of the principal” (Madden, 2007, p. 213) To this end her decision to create leaders as coaches, to train them for their role, to support them and guide them led to greater commitment from all teachers. This process allowed coaches to share personal meaning and create a shared understanding not only of their role as coaches but also of their role in implementing the goals of the project. The coaches took a lead role in implementing change and, in the process, grew in confidence and competence. As teacher confidence grew the degree of direct influence on colleagues through modelling was the most powerful factor (Reeves, 2008b) in sustaining the momentum of change. They were able to negotiate meaning in a range of settings – in the coaching leaders group, within the coach–coachee relationship, and in the wider colleague group. Since the meaning was negotiated and shared, the coaches were able to effect positive change.

In Schools A and B, the literacy leader worked with the co-ordinator as the principals felt unable to support teachers due to a lack of curriculum and pedagogy expertise. This action was a reflection of their lack of professional capacity and reinforced the notion of relinquishment. While initially the co-ordinator was able to guide and support the literacy leaders, upon her departure they were left to their own devices and lacked the support and knowledge to continue to build skills in other teachers. There was no joint meaning or purpose constructed and the literacy leaders were unable to continue with the development of the LDP. As a result of the lack of shared purpose and effective change leadership, the teachers returned to what was known to them and the LDP was unable to move forward in either school.

In School D, although the principal was involved with the support of the PLLs, she was not the leader of learning and this was of concern to the teachers because they looked to her as the leader of learning and her engagement as a participant disappointed them. The

principal in School D followed the guidance of key practices of effective principals as described by Robinson, Hohepa and Lloyd (2009) which included the key task of participating in professional learning and development either as a participant or a leader. What was seen by the principal as active involvement as a learner was not viewed the same way by the staff who believed that her participation in professional learning was tokenistic as there was no requirement for her to implement any new learning into a classroom, be observed in her practice, or receive feedback from the PLLs. Their response to the LDP was one of suspicion and lack of trust. Whilst the principal believed she was fulfilling the guidelines of effective leadership, in reality, her chosen leadership practice created a negative effect.

School C's principal adopted a more collaborative approach to the role of teacher leadership. She continued to attend meetings with the literacy leader in an attempt to support her in her role. This leader also believed she understood the work of Robinson et al. (2009) who identified that a key task of the principal was the active involvement in professional learning, but what she did not understand was that there is more to it than just being present in the room. This behaviour was similar to that of the principal in School D. It is now clear that the recommendation of Robinson et al. of attending, was experienced as 'merely' attending, and the opportunity for being present in the room with teachers to identify personal meaning was lost. If attendance does not lead to interaction where there is a sharing of each other's personal meaning, there is little chance of being able to develop a shared meaning.

Whilst the principal in School C wanted to learn with the teacher leaders she was also reluctant to share her power and authority in relation to the LDP project. This is not an uncommon outcome as it has been acknowledged that an important obstacle to teacher leadership is the principal (Barth, 2001). Inevitably, the guarding of her 'turf' due to the fear

that the teacher leaders would somehow undermine her authority essentially stalled any sustainable change within the school.

The variation in the ability of the principals across the five schools to develop teacher leaders to assist with and lead the implementation of the LDP goes some way to explaining the variation of achievement outcomes. In School E where teacher leaders were identified, supported and celebrated, the achievement outcomes for literacy improved within two years from being below the national average to being above the national average and were sustained over the time of the project and to this present day. Initial improvements in student achievement levels were unable to be sustained in Schools A and B, where teacher leadership was limited because each teacher held on tightly to their own meaning and change to this status quo was unsupported by the principals after the departure of the coordinator.

Traditional leadership theory is often related to function; however, improved performance relies on what people do, rather than who they are in the organisation. This is even more relevant in terms of the change leader. The change leader must be attuned to the bigger picture, a conceptual thinker who transforms the organisation through people and teams. They display not only enthusiasm and hope but also a way forward. The change leader reinforces the belief that the change can make a difference to student achievement. When enthusiasm or hope is non-existent there is an active sense that change is not possible. This lack of belief in positive outcomes leads to a sense of despondency and a self-fulfilling prophecy with low levels of efficacy. The responsibility for this negative outlook lies with whoever “lives in the principal’s office” (Barth, 2001, p.115). It is their responsibility to nurture and develop teachers to be committed and resilient professionals who see that they can and do make a difference in the lives of their students and who are creators and guardians of the organisational conditions for good teaching and successful learning and

achievement (Day & Gu, 2010). When the person who “lives in the principal’s office” is limited in their knowledge and understanding of the change process the challenge is immense and this finding acknowledges the challenge of this role and offers the following three propositions:

- Leadership of change requires complex skills, focused not only on action but, more importantly, on the quality of personal and professional interactions.
- Principal development must focus on the interpersonal skills required to be a successful change leader.
- The capacity of the principal to be able to fully develop and support teacher leaders in order to ensure a more direct influence on colleagues is a powerful factor in sustaining the momentum of effective educational change.

## **7.6 Recommendations for Further Research**

Findings from this study suggest that a school principal’s capacity to lead a desired educational change effectively and successfully is contingent upon their:

- having previously nurtured a learning culture within the school;
- being able to maintain an engaging vision of the change;
- having the foresight to create— individually and communally—beneficial professional learning activities; and
- possessing change leadership capabilities beyond simply the technological knowledge and skills.

Further research of the influence of these leadership qualities upon the implementation effectiveness of a desired educational change is recommended beyond this case study that focused on only five New Zealand schools solely on the teaching of literacy.

Within this exploration of the influence of leadership as a cause of unexpected variations in student achievement across schools participating in a particular common

literacy learning project, the role of teacher coaches and teacher leaders became apparent. Thus it is recommended that further research be initiated seeking to investigate the benefits and constraints of including the role of instructional coaches in processes that focus on changing pedagogical practices.

Similarly, it is recommended that further research is required in order to better articulate the nature and function of teacher leaders and the essential leadership practices which best support this role.

This research has drawn much attention to the potential affordances and constraints that an existing school culture can have upon the successful implementation of educational change. Hence, it would be valuable to further interrogate the phenomenon of school culture as a contributing characteristic of educational change strategies.

Finally, more research that seeks to advance the knowledge and skills of school principals as leaders of professional learning cultures is strongly recommended as an outcome of this research.

## **7.7 Conclusion**

This chapter has enabled me to explore four themes emerging from the full case analysis in Chapter 6 and provide eleven propositions. Arguably, however, an especially important learning outcome from this particular research is a far deeper appreciation of the pivotal role played by the principal in the achievement of successful educational change. There is far more that a principal needs to know and do than merely implement a coherent change plan. This research has identified that educational change is more likely to succeed if a positive learning culture exists within the school. This implies that the nurturing of this positive learning culture is primarily the responsibility and should become their first priority. Also identified is that change is a community effort. This means that the principal must be an integral and highly active member of this community if they wish to confidently

initiate a change. The principal must be able to interact positively and regularly with members of the school community so as to inspire and support them throughout the duration of the change process. In addition to having a coherent and manageable change plan, the principal also needs to have a personal vision for how the change can be seamlessly woven into the school's existing vision so as to develop a shared vision, which forms the essential solid platform for the desired change. But every change will always require new learning and so the principal must not only be committed to providing all of the necessary professional learning but must also be astute enough to know how best to offer such learning. Professional learning is not only about enhancing the professional knowledge, skills and dispositions of the individual, it must also address the opportunity for collegial interaction, which enables groups to create shared meaning and take purposeful action.

This being so, this research calls into question a far more fundamental issue that has its genesis in tradition. The traditional way of becoming a principal of a New Zealand primary school is largely through positive classroom and middle management experiences. A teacher can rise to the position of school principal if they are viewed as a highly skilled classroom teacher and a very responsible, reliable and effective Deputy principal. There is no mandatory requirement to have formal academic qualifications in educational leadership or human resource management. Of concern also, is that there is no guarantee Boards of Trustees, who are responsible for the appointment of the principal, are qualified to judge the skills and abilities required by a principal in terms of educational leadership or the leadership of educational change. For most New Zealand principals much of their knowledge about the nature and practice of leadership is from 'on the job' observations of the principal(s) under which they have served or through the guidance of a mentor or principal liaison upon appointment to the role.

But, as this research has clearly shown, far more is now expected of today's principals. Furthermore, such expectations are calling upon principals to act very differently to their predecessors. Today's schools are being held to account far more, for the quality of the teaching occurring in them than ever before. This means teachers are now required to undergo regular, rapid and deep professional changes to ensure the quality of their teaching meets community and national expectations. Hence the school principal is now being challenged to lead teachers through such important educational changes without having previous personal experience to draw upon. Simply, the traditional way of preparing and selecting teachers to become school principals in New Zealand is inadequate. A far more strategically specific preparation and leadership programme is required and while this was somewhat addressed with the National Aspiring Principals Course, since this programme's demise there is a vacuum in terms of preparation and leadership development programmes for current and future principals in New Zealand schools.

Happenstance, and ad hoc collegial conversations during principal conferences, will no longer suffice, if the learning needs of every New Zealand student are to be most effectively supported in a rich learning culture. This study highlighted the high degree of variability in the professional capacity of the participating principals to effectively lead a common educational change. This variability was not explicitly deliberate or intentional, but it did have a clearly observable impact on the achievement outcomes of the students in the respective schools. This should not be the case. What prevents current and potentially future principals from being highly capable leaders of educational change must be overcome so that each and every student has the opportunity to achieve their best. This research has provided some significant insights and some important recommendations in how this current unsatisfactory situation can be rectified.



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# Appendices

## Appendix A: Participant Letter



### INFORMATION LETTER TO PARTICIPANTS Principal

TITLE OF PROJECT: An exploration of the variation of achievement in LDP

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin  
STUDENT RESEARCHER: Sue Jury

PROGRAMME IN WHICH ENROLLED: Doctor of Education

Dear Principal,

You are invited to participate in a research project which explores the variation of achievement across schools participating in LDP. This study adopts a case study approach involving teachers from five schools in the region. Individual and focus groups interviews will be undertaken.

If you agree to participate in this study you will be invited to participate in a one hour interview as well as a one hour focus group interview within your school and a focus group that brings people in the same role as you from across the five schools. Both these will be audio recorded with your permission. The time location and day of the interview will be at a time suitable to you.

A possible risk associated with your participation in this study is discomfort due to being audio recorded. You have the right to deny authorisation for audio recording. If in the event you do feel discomfort a counsellor is available to assist.

As the researcher is a principal at one of the schools included in this study there exists a conflict of interest. This is managed by having an independent interviewer undertake all the interviews in the researcher's school. The interviews will be transcribed by this independent interviewer and all identifiers removed to ensure the possibility of identification is minimised.

It is anticipated that your participation in this study will directly benefit you as an educator by offering you an increased appreciation in ways that you may better promote student learning. It is also anticipated that this research will contribute to current New Zealand knowledge and offer educational leaders a more nuanced appreciation of how New Zealand teachers and principals can be supported in their teaching for improved outcomes for students. The research conclusions will be published in a thesis as well as through the Cognition Institute.

You may refuse to participate without having to justify your decision or to withdraw your consent and discontinue in the study at any time without giving a reason. Your withdrawal will not prejudice your position in any way.

All information generated in focus group and individual interviews will be treated with absolute confidentiality. The conduct of the research complies with the requirements of the Human Research Ethics Committee of Australian Catholic University (ACU). Your identity will remain anonymous and will be protected during the conduct of the research and in any report or publication arising from it. This research will use pseudonyms for the school and individual participants. The gathered data will be stored securely by me and archived regularly during the data gathering process with my supervisor.

Faculty of Education  
Level 8, 250 Victoria Parade  
East Melbourne, VIC 3065  
Locked Bag 4115 | Fitzroy MDC | Fitzroy Victoria 3065  
T: Telephone F: Fax E: Email

Australian Catholic University  
ABN 15 050 192 660  
CRICOS registered provider:  
00004G, 00112C, 00885B

Any questions regarding this project should be directed to the Principal Investigator (Supervisor) and the Student Researcher:

A/Professor Denis McLaughlin  
School of Educational Leadership  
1100 Nudgee Road  
Banyo 4014  
(617) 3623 7301

Ms Sue Jury  
Doctor of Education Student  
School of Educational Leadership  
1100 Nudgee Road  
Banyo 4014  
0273156057

All participants will be offered the provision of appropriate feedback on the progress of the project.

This study has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee at Australian Catholic University.

In the event that you have any complaint or concern, or if you have questions that the Supervisor and Student Researcher have not been able to satisfy, you may write to the Chair of Human Research Ethics Committee care of the Brisbane branch of the Research Services Office:

QLD: Chair, HREC  
C/- Research Services  
Australian Catholic University  
Brisbane Campus  
PO Box 456  
Virginia  
QLD 4014

Tel: 0061 7 3623 7429  
Fax: 0061 7 3623 7328

Any complaint or concern will be treated in confidence and fully investigated. You as the participant will be informed of the outcome.

If you agree to participate in this project, you should sign both copies of the Consent Form, retain one copy for your records and return the other copy to the Student Researcher.

.....  
Associate Professor  
Denis McLaughlin  
Principal Supervisor

.....  
Ms Sue Jury  
Student Researcher

CONSENT FORM  
Copy for Principal Participant

TITLE OF PROJECT: An exploration of the variation of achievement across schools participating in LDP

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER : Sue Jury

I ..... (the participant) have read (or, where appropriate, have had read to me) and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in an individual interview Yes

I agree to participate in focus group within my school Yes

I agree to participate in a focus group with others in the same role as me Yes

I agree to be audio taped Yes

I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences for my position in the school. Yes

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. Yes

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....

SIGNATURE .....

DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin .....

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Sue Jury .....

DATE:.....

CONSENT FORM  
Principal  
*Copy for Researcher*

TITLE OF PROJECT: An exploration of the variation of achievement across schools participating in LDP

PRINCIPAL SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin

STUDENT RESEARCHER : Sue Jury

I ..... *(the participant)* have read *(or, where appropriate, have had read to me)* and understood the information provided in the Letter to Participants. Any questions I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in an individual interview Yes

I agree to participate in focus group within my school Yes

I agree to participate in a focus group with others in the same role as me Yes

I agree to be audio taped Yes

I realise that I can withdraw my consent at any time without adverse consequences for my position in the school. Yes

I agree that research data collected for the study may be published or may be provided to other researchers in a form that does not identify me in any way. Yes

NAME OF PARTICIPANT: .....

SIGNATURE .....

DATE .....

SIGNATURE OF SUPERVISOR: Associate Professor Denis McLaughlin .....

DATE:.....

SIGNATURE OF STUDENT RESEARCHER: Ms Sue Jury .....

DATE:.....

## **Appendix B: Guiding Questions for Individual Interviews**

### **Guiding Questions for Individual Interviews**

- 1) What was your role in the school during LDP?
  
- 2) What were the high points of the LDP project for you?
  
- 3) Were there disappointments? Can you tell me about these?
  
- 4) What professional development opportunities were provided for you during the LDP?
  
- 5) What was your experience of these opportunities?
  
- 6) What are your personal reflections on the implementation of the LDP?
  
- 7) What are the current practices you have that have their origin in the LDP?
  
- 8) How would you describe the LDP's effect on teacher capacity?
  
- 9) Are there any comments you would like to make about any aspect of the LDP?

## Appendix C: Focus Group Questions

Focus group (School D)

Number of Foci

- 1) What was it like for you when there was a singular focus within the school?
- 2) What is it like for you now there are more foci within the school?

Role of Principal

- 1) What is the role of the principal as you see it in the implementation of LDP initiatives?
- 2) You all identified that your Principal is a learner alongside teachers – what effect does this have on your perception of his role?
- 3) What do you see as a role of the principal in implementing WELD initiatives?

Inquiry Meetings (teacher directed) vs PD Leader Directed

- 1) Many of you talked about the positive effect of the PD in particular the Syndicate inquiry meetings. Can you clarify what you see as the greatest benefits of this model?

## Appendix D: Coding Sample

Interview with _____	
Could you comment on your preparation for weld? How did your school prepare you for weld?	coding
Do you mean the PD sessions and things? They were very focused right from the beginning on what they want to achieve there. They were very aware of what they want to achieve there and as teacher I felt they had a clear end goal so that PD was very sequential this to where we wanted to go what we wanted to do the. I think the fact that they were so focused they seem to know what they were doing.	Focus clear goals
So who was the <i>they</i> ?	
Alison and Raewyn and Jenny it was regular and it was program so that was regular so you knew these meetings were coming up and this is what we are focusing on the PD meetings we had were really relevant what we were doing in the classroom so was have a look at this takeaway do it in the classroom come back talk about 70 do something different	regular Meeting focus PD
Did you notice a change in PD?	
I think the PD did change but I think it was initially because Jenny was leaving and so when Alison and Raewyn started to take it there was a change because when it was Jenny she was giving us more of the theory and Allison and Raewyn and were giving us more of the practical hands on staff and then we went away from whole staff PD to individual learning pathways that was we are I found the most benefit from me was because I was no longer was just learning what everyone else was learning and taking so long so I was learning what I need to take my classroom	Group Individual
How did they set things up?	
They did observations of practice and from those observations with the feedback together we got identified we want to go next in Jenny came in and talk to us about what we could do with Alison and Raewyn the as well think was mostly Alison to me	Feedback observations clear →
And so then you had I LP and you monitored that	
Yes I monitored and I had to well not really report on but come back and once a term meet and said this is we got to this is what I've done this is what I need to do and then when they came to do the observation they would you see what I had implemented in the classroom	observe then implement then debrief
And everyone in the school had one?	
As far as I knew everyone in the school had one to varying degrees.	
Did you feel are you were well prepared?	
In the beginning weld just have arrived and I think we were quite unsure what it really was going to entail and what was going to happen in classrooms how much time and how much it was can affect our practice and as we got a deeper understanding of it as everybody got on board they could see the benefit of it and then we started to feel see sort about really it was the initial period of not knowing and that upset of what does this mean to me as a	Lack of preparation  At first

Not clear



## Appendix E: Ethics Approval



Human Research Ethics Committee

### Approval Form

**Principal Investigator/Supervisor:** A/Prof Denis McLaughlin

**Co-Investigators:**

**Student Researcher:** Ms Sue Jury

**Ethics approval has been granted for the following project:**

An exploration of the variation of achievement across schools participating in LDP

**for the period:** 31 December 2011

**Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) Register Number:** Q2011 19

This is to certify that the above application has been reviewed by the Australian Catholic University Human Research Ethics Committee (ACU HREC). The application has been approved for the period given above.

Researchers are responsible for ensuring that all conditions of approval are adhered to, that they seek prior approval for any modifications and that they notify the HREC of any incidents or unexpected issues impacting on participants that arise in the course of their research. Researchers are also responsible for ensuring that they adhere to the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research*, the *Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research* and the University's *Code of Conduct*.

Any queries relating to this application should be directed to the Research Ethics Manager ([resethics.manager@acu.edu.au](mailto:resethics.manager@acu.edu.au)).

Kind regards



Date 18/10/2017

**Research Ethics Manager**

**Research Ethics | Office of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor**

**(Research)** Australian Catholic University T: +61 2 9739 2646

E: Res.Ethics@acu.edu.au

W: [ACU Research Ethics](#)

## Appendix F: Reading Scenario with Data

### Appendix F: Needs Analysis Tool – Reading Comprehension Scenario A

Name:

School:

Class year level/s:

Number of years you have been teaching:

Length of time in present school:

Please read the following classroom reading scenario. Initially you will be asked to respond to some student data from this class. You will then be asked to rate aspects of the teaching in the chart that follows the scenario. As you do this, bear in mind what you (and the teacher) know about this class from the recent assessment results (below).

**Aspects to be rated:**

- Explicit teaching of reading processing and comprehension strategies
- Teacher’s interactions with children’s ideas, including feedback
- Informed and shared learning intentions
- Explicit links to prior knowledge, both world and literacy knowledge
- Catering for diverse literacy needs

**The scenario**

The syndicate that this year 4/5 class is part of, has focused on extending children’s comprehension. They decided to set an asTTle test based on three curriculum functions: understanding, connections and inference. The assessment data below, an asTTle Curriculum Levels Report, is from one of the classes.

**1. Making sense of the data**

Initially look at the data provided. These show what percentage of the class is at each curriculum sub-level (you will see that Level 2, for example, is divided into Level 2 basic, Level 2 proficient and Level 2 advanced) for each of six curriculum functions and processes.

What would you draw to the teacher's attention as the ONE main thing the data tells about the curriculum function "Connections"?

1.

What THREE key points would you expect the teacher to mention in a summary about the performance of the class from the data as a whole?

1.

2.

3.

What ONE thing would you expect the teacher to focus on next in their reading programme? Give your reason.

1.

Reason:

## **2. The teaching**

Here is a lesson that happened after the teacher had had a chance to examine the reading comprehension data from asTTle and think about it. The teacher uses shared reading with this class to introduce difficult text, new concepts and higher order thinking. In this teaching the teacher uses shared reading with a social studies text.

Initially, the teacher discussed the title and the photos on the cover as the introduction to the text. He shared the lesson objective with the class, which was to read about how families live in cold climates like Iceland. He reminded them that they had enjoyed other books in the same series, especially the one on how families live in Russia, and pointed to the colourful class posters on the wall.

Before the teacher opened to the table of contents he asked the children to predict what kinds of information would be in the book. He then proceeded to read it with expression. To check their understanding, he asked the children questions about the family, such as how many children there were, and where the town was that they lived in. To encourage the children to think about the ideas in the text, turning

back to the page about school in winter, the teacher asked, 'Would you like to go to school in the dark?' The children responded, 'It would be too scary!' 'No it wouldn't, you would have a torch.' 'It would be too cold to get out of bed.' The teacher responded, 'They're all good ideas. I'd feel like that too.'

He then picked up a pile of black line masters and said, 'Now what I want you to do, is take this outline (web like diagram). See it has headings like the contents page – clothes, housing, school, and food – and summarise one interesting fact about each. In 20 minutes time, at 2.30, we'll come back together and share our ideas. If you finish before then, there are some books on Iceland over here for you to read.' While the children worked independently, the teacher responded to those individuals who were seeking help.

**Rating schedule**

Rate the quality of these aspects of the scenario by ticking the appropriate box.  
Initially you will be asked to explain your rating.  
Given that there are many ways of approaching teaching, you will then be asked to provide an alternative teacher move for each aspect.

	1 Highly effective	2 Effective	3 Partly ineffective (but generally effective)	4 Partly effective (but generally ineffective)	5 Ineffective	6 Highly ineffective
Explicit teaching of reading processing and comprehension strategies						
<p>Your reason for this rating:</p>   <p>What explicit teaching could you have planned for this lesson?</p>						
Teacher's interaction with children's ideas (including feedback)						
<p>Your reason for this rating:</p>   <p>What sort of feedback would you give in addition to what the teacher did?</p>						

	1 Highly effective	2 Effective	3 Partly ineffective (but generally effective)	4 Partly effective (but generally ineffective)	5 Ineffective	6 Highly ineffective
<b>Informed and shared learning intentions</b>						
<p>Your reason for this rating:</p>   <p>Construct an alternative learning intention for this lesson based around the same reading context (living in cold climates).</p>						
<b>Explicit links to prior knowledge, both world and literacy knowledge</b>						
<p>Your reason for this rating:</p>   <p>Suggest alternative ways links could be made to prior knowledge.</p>						
<b>Catering for diverse literacy needs</b>						
<p>Your reason for this rating:</p>						

How would you cater for diverse literacy needs?



	<b>1</b> <b>Highly effective</b>	<b>2</b> <b>Effective</b>	<b>3</b> <b>Partly ineffective (but generally effective)</b>	<b>4</b> <b>Partly effective (but generally ineffective)</b>	<b>5</b> <b>Ineffective</b>	<b>6</b> <b>Highly ineffective</b>
<b>How would you rate this lesson in being responsive to the assessment data?</b>						
<p>Your reason for this rating:</p>          <p>If you had to make ONE change in the way this lesson was structured or executed, in order to increase its likely effectiveness, what would it be?</p>						

Thank you

## Appendix G: Reading Observation with Evidence Boxes

Reading	Strong evidence	Some evidence	No evidence
<p><b>Learning Intentions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear &amp; specific learning intentions (literacy learning as opposed to 'doing') with success criteria</li> <li>• Oral and written statements</li> <li>• Students can articulate</li> <li>• Referred to throughout the lesson</li> <li>• Task is aligned to the learning intention</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Links to prior knowledge</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific and focussed, scaffolds new learning to previous</li> <li>• Includes personal experience, content/topic knowledge and literacy related knowledge.</li> <li>• Linked to learning intentions</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Teacher's response</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral feedback encourages learners' active participation.</li> <li>• Specifically linked to learning intention/success criteria</li> <li>• Affirms, informs and guides future learning supporting students to identify next learning step.</li> <li>• Vocabulary used encourages rich language from students and challenges learners – reflecting high standards.</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Catering for diverse needs</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Range of instructional groupings</li> <li>• Clear and appropriate language</li> <li>• Success criteria differs according to children's needs</li> <li>• Strategies to extend or support are evident</li> </ul>			
<p><b>Appropriate selection of text</b> Text selection &amp; planned use aligned with learning intention</p>			
<p><b>Opportunities to think about quality reading</b></p> <p>Evidence of reading processes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attending and searching</li> <li>• Predicting</li> <li>• Cross-checking and confirming</li> <li>• Self-correcting</li> </ul> <p>Evidence of comprehension strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making connections</li> <li>• Forming and testing hypotheses</li> <li>• Asking questions</li> <li>• Visualising / creating mental images</li> <li>• Inferring</li> <li>• Identifying author's purpose and point of view</li> <li>• Identifying and summarising main ideas</li> <li>• Analysing and synthesising</li> <li>• Evaluating ideas and information</li> </ul> <p>Strategy is specifically taught in authentic context – not over taught at expense of meaning &amp; enjoyment. Rich conversations – active readers not just responsive.</p> <p><b>Concluding lesson</b> Opportunities to reflect and evaluate – promoting student self monitoring encouraging articulation of processes in learning. Opportunities provided to practise learning in new areas.</p>			
Links reading to writing			

## Appendix H: Theme Table

Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
Little consultation (P) Uninformed (T) Non participation (P) Management (P) Feedback (Coord) Supported (Coord) Opposition (T) Shared Learning (T+Coord) planned learning (T+Coord) Pace of learning (T) Change after departure (Coord) Driver of project (Coord) Resource manager (P) Workload (T) + (DP) No forward planning (P) Lack of support (P) Greater understanding data (T) Analysis (Coord) Influence on practice (Coord) Staff Turnover Withdrawal (T) Cross school support (T) Sharing ideas and best practice (Xschl T) Collegiality (T)	Address needs (Coord) Observation (coord) Shared understanding (coord) Experience (coord) Respect (coord) Support (Coord) New learning (T) Focus developed and shared (Coord) Critique of practice (Coord) Growing awareness (T) Individualised learning (Coord + T) Learning circles (Coord+T) Collaboration (Coord + T) Personal responsibility for learning (T) Increase workload (T) (LL) Sustainability problems (LL) Support of others (LL) Frustration (LL)	Acknowledge impact of PD (P) helpful (T) Develop plans (P)\ Change in PD practice (Coord+P) Individualised plans (Coord+P) Reluctance to change (T) Support (Coord+T) Commitment (P) behaviour Influence (P) New Learning (P) Increase workload (T) Staff turnover Pressure on Teachers (Project) Continuity of development Increased participation (P) Slow progress (P) Personal choice to get on board (LL) Constant retrace of steps for new staff (P+LL) Role changes (T+LL)	Mixed reaction (T) Confidence (Coord) Positive (Coord) Threatening (LL) lack of acceptance of LL(T) Self protective (T) Professional leaders of learning reflective practice positive (T) Motivation (T) Growth in confidence (PL) Inconsistence of value of new learning (T) Workload (T) No modelling of learning by leaders (T) Pace of learning (T) Layer upon layer (T) Sense of being overwhelmed (T) Implementation affected by workload(T) Frustration (T) High workload normalised (PL+P) Unreasonable requests (PL +P)	Team approach (T+Coord) Clarity (T) Shared (P+Coord+LL+T) Coaching Helpful learning (LL) Challenge (LT) professional Culture (C+Co) Supported in new learning (C+Co) Satisfying learning (LT) Positive (C+co) Empowerment (C+co) High level trust (LT + C=Co) Collaboration – XSchl) Diverse needs (X Schl) Enhanced relationships (X Schl) Review of progress (LT) Compliance (XSchl)

Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	Site E
Collegiality (T) Positive relationships (Xschl) Support (XSchl P) Professional talk (all) Teacher expectations (P) Key person (Coord)	Frustration (LL) Needs not met (LL) Supportive and focussed (Coord) Innovative environment (T) High trust (Coord) Shared learning (T) Change in leader impact (L) Separation of staff-disunity (LL) Decrease in sharing (LL) Staff turnover Initial energising practices (LL) Unreasonable expectation (LL) Leadership relinquished (P) Isolation (LL)	reluctance to let go (LL) Transience (Leaders) Sustainability (Leaders) Supportive (principals) Following departure of coord: Isolation (P) Frustration (P) Withdrawal (P)	Reverting practice (T) personal choice (T) Variation in perception (T) Disconnect (T+PL) Support (P) Resource Manager (P) Learner(P) Liaison (P) Authenticity (T of P) Cares about children (P) Sustainable leadership (P) Distance from experience (of PL by T)	Variation in pace of uptake (LL) High expectations (P) Clearly articulated aims (P) Shared knowledge (P) Inquire inot practice (P) Shared knowledge (X Schl) Shared leadership (LT) Empowerment (LT) Collective responsibility (LT) Constant movement in achievement (T) Exploration of beliefs and assumptions (P+LT) Commitment to project (P) Pursitu for success relentless (P) Supportive (T) Challenged (T) growing together (LT) team Culture (LT)

## Appendix I: Links from Codes to Findings

Codes	Themes	Findings
Shared vision	Vision	The Role of the Vision (See Section 7.2)
Expectations		
Workload	Professional Learning Opportunities	Professional Learning (See Section 7.3)
Staff Turnover		
Professional Learning	Implementation Workload	
Pace of Learning		
Consultation		
Coaching	School Culture	Leadership of Culture (See Section 7.4)
Trust		
Shared planning		
Shared knowledge		
Shared language		Leadership of Change (See Section 7.5)
Culture		
Collegiality		
Collaboration		
Focus on achievement		
Management versus Leadership of change	Role of the Principal	
Role of principal		
Role of Co-ordinator		
Role of Literacy Leader		
Credibility		
Relinquishment of responsibility		
Commitment		
Sustainability		