Transition Experiences of First-time School Principals: The Internal Appointment of the Deputy Principal

Rachael Sole

A thesis submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational Leadership

Faculty of Culture and Society

2020

Abstract

This research critically examines the lived experiences of deputy principals who have been promoted internally to the role of principal within their school, by analysing the perceptions of their experiences during transition. It has been established that the role of the principal plays a significant part in the success of a school, its culture and the academic achievement of its students. Whilst the challenges of principals' transitions to the role are well documented and researched both in New Zealand and overseas, there is a distinct lack of literature on the internal transitions of deputy principals to the role of principal within a school. This small-scale, qualitative study analyses interviews with five first-time, internally-promoted principals, who work in primary schools across Auckland.

The reflections of these principals provide an understanding of some of the enablers and challenges of internal transitions to principalship. They also offer an insight into identifying ways that aspiring principals can position themselves to best ensure a smooth transition to becoming a successful principal. The common attributes of these internally appointed principals also provide a background context for successful transitions to principalship.

Several key ideas arose from the analysis of the semi-structured interviews. These included: The importance of preparation for principalship, the support of a mentor, the advantage of being an internal appointment, having experience at leading, and being the 'right fit' for a particular school. The findings and literature further support the complex nature of internal transitions to principalship. A model showing the enabling elements for supporting internal transitions to principalship is presented along with recommendations for Boards of Trustees and aspirant principals and suggestions for improvements in principal preparation courses.

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Name: Rachael Sole

Signature:

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Alison Smith. I am so grateful for your helpful, constructive feedback; your whole-hearted support and belief in me; and the high expectations you had of me, which have lifted my work to another level. Your eagle-eyed proofreading is legendary!

To the first-time principals who participated in this study, thank you. Your insights, reflections and the passion you bring to your roles was inspirational.

My whole-hearted appreciation goes to Virginia Montague and Yolanda East, the Leadership Team and the Board of Trustees at Sunnynook Primary School who have all supported my study leave and covered extra responsibilities in my absence. This time you have allowed me has been invaluable.

To my family and friends, thank you for always supporting my aspirations, especially in the past few years. Thank you for the aroha, the chats, the laughs and listening to my moans. I am truly grateful.

To my amazing children, Matthew and Stephanie, thank you for your love and support. I am so proud of you both and the impact you have had on my life. I love that you are both doing your own bit to make the world a better place.

Lastly, and most importantly, thank you to my amazing husband, Craig. You are my rock, my confidante, my best friend and my proof-reader extraordinaire. Your never-ending support has made the completion of this thesis possible.

This research was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 May 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/138.

Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

This thesis examines the experiences of deputy principals who transition internally to principalship within the same school. The focus is largely on the challenges these leaders face and the experiences that help to shape their transitions. However, the findings and ensuing discussion focus more broadly on the succession strategies which may have aided or further challenged their transitions. This chapter establishes the rationale for the research by examining the pre-requisites for first-time principalship and the barriers that novice principals face, as well as exploring the importance of preparation for principalship. My personal and professional experience in relation to the subject, the relevant educational context, and any perceived gaps in the current literature are also presented. An explanation of the methodology is offered in this section alongside the research aim and questions which are provided with a brief overview of the study. The chapter finishes with an outline of the chapters which presented in this thesis

Rationale for the research

This section of the chapter describes the rationale behind my research. The rationale arises from numerous sources. These include the personal and professional reasons as well as the rationale underlying the research and methodology approaches.

Professional and personal

I have worked as a primary school teacher for twenty-two years, and more recently as a deputy principal for the past five and a half years. During this time, I have worked at eight different schools, both in New Zealand and in the United Kingdom. I have worked *under* ten different principals as either a classroom teacher or a team leader and *beside* one principal as both an assistant principal and a deputy principal. As a deputy principal, I have felt that I worked beside my principal and have been a greater influencer of the strategic direction of the school, which was quite different to working under a principal where I simply did the bidding of the principal with very little input or influence of my own. I have

witnessed first-hand the challenges that these principals have faced, particularly since my promotion to senior leadership within a school. I also know many colleagues who have gone on to apply for and be appointed to principal positions themselves and I have then seen the toll that this has taken on them both professionally and personally. Two of these principals were previously working at the same school as the deputy principal prior to their appointment to principal. Therefore, the experiences of deputy principals when they transition to principalship and which of these experiences enhance or complicate this transition, are of great interest to me as a current deputy principal and aspiring principal. This is one of the reasons I selected this topic to research for my thesis.

Over the last eighteen months I have been preparing and positioning myself and have begun applying for principal positions at several Auckland primary schools. There are times when I have been absolutely sure that this is the next step I want to take in my career, believing that I can make a difference by leading a school. At other times, I have wondered whether I really want the ultimate responsibility of leading a primary school and dealing with the challenges that accompany this role. During these times, I have been reluctant to 'throw my hat in the ring' and have instead remained in my comfortable position as a deputy principal. This is another reason that I am keen to research and reflect upon the enablers and barriers experienced by first-time transitioning principals.

This research looks to explore and understand the lived experiences of deputy principals as they transition to principalship within their own schools.

The context

Leadership succession can be a real challenge for schools and indeed the teaching profession as a whole, both in New Zealand and internationally. Over the past thirty years, schools worldwide have traditionally been run by a baby boomer demographic of principals (Bennett et al., 2011). The impending retirement of these older leaders, along with the lack of willing and suitably qualified candidates applying for the positions, has led

some researchers to believe the education community has a leadership crisis (Bennett, Carpenter & Hill, 2011; Bush, 2011; Sabina & Colwell, 2018).

Since 1989, and the implementation of the *Tomorrow's schools' reforms* (New Zealand Department of Education, 1988), schools in New Zealand have been self-governing. Prior to this primary school principal recruitment and selection was the responsibility of district education boards and this was centralised at regional levels (Brooking et al., 2003). However, the 1989 reforms brought about widespread change in education in New Zealand. District education boards were abolished, and responsibility for recruiting and appointing principals was transferred to each school's community-elected Board of Trustees. Under the Education Act (1989) each school was to be governed by their Board of Trustees, and this board was to be responsible for building and property maintenance, staffing and operational spending, based on the policies each board had established in these three areas. Boards were employees of the staff (as opposed to the district education boards) and the principal was officially the chief executive officer (CEO) of their school, responsible for the day to day running and managing of the school in accordance with the Board of Trustees' policies. This watershed in education signified huge changes in the school principal's role, effectively changing them from being professional leaders to prioritising managerial responsibilities (Wylie, 1997). After a decade or more where school principals were more focused on managing their school than leading the learning at their school, there followed a period where the emphasis on leadership and improvement of teaching and learning in New Zealand schools gained momentum (Robinson, 2004). Principals were expected to develop a vision, build strong school community partnerships, manage their school and do all this in a way that promoted improvement in teaching and learning (Robinson, 2004).

It is against this contextual backdrop that the popularly accepted crisis of recruitment and retention of principals in New Zealand primary schools exists (Brooking et al., 2003). Coupled with the fact that the role of the principal is highly complex, multi-faceted and demanding, it is perhaps understandable why younger middle and senior leaders are

reluctant to take on the role (Bennett, 2017) and therefore why leadership succession is such a vital area for schools and Boards of Trustees to consider. Interestingly, before Tomorrow's Schools, principals in New Zealand were never internally appointed, this is a recent phenomenon. Whilst Tomorrow's Schools has arguably intensified the work of principals, it has also provided the mechanism for Boards to appoint internally, which may in turn help to alleviate the stress and difficulties of the principal's role for a first-time principal.

The research

Within the realms of educational research, the principal's leadership is ubiquitously seen as a vital factor in improving school effectiveness, student achievement and teacher quality (Dinham et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2009). Therefore, the role of the principal and the transition that a deputy principal makes when becoming a principal is an important area worthy of further study. There is currently a wealth of New Zealand research on the complexity and heavy workload of today's principals (Bennett et al., 2011; Ogram & Youngs, 2014; Wylie, 2017). There is also an abundance of literature on transitions to principalship (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brundrett & Gkolia, 2006; Bush, 2011). What does appear to be lacking though, is research on deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school. This is true in both the New Zealand context and internationally. My research seeks to partially address a noticeable gap in the research in regards to internal principal succession and may offer insights into the nature and scope of these transitions to principalship. There is a dearth of research about the internal appointments of deputy principals and how an aspiring principal may best position him or herself to support a smoother transition to principalship. It is hoped that my research may be able to shed light on the experiences of internally appointed deputy principals and determine what has assisted them in their positioning themselves as an aspiring principal who is the 'right fit' for the role of principal.

The methodology

My research aim was to examine the lived experiences of deputy principals transitioning

internally to principalship in their school.

This research is a qualitative study which sits within an interpretive paradigm and a constructivist worldview. My methodology involved engaging in discussions with first-time principals, in order to critically examine their understandings and experiences as transitioning principals. I conducted semi-structured interviews in five different Auckland primary schools with five first-time principals. l explored the perceptions of the principals and developed insights into their transition experiences. A constructivist approach was used to thematically analyse principals' individual thoughts, descriptions of their experiences and meaning-making processes, in relation to the transition to principalship and I organised the participants' responses into key concepts. I used an interpretivist world view in my investigation. One of the ontologies behind the interpretative paradigm is that there are multiple realities enabling individual perspectives to be expressed and understood (Cohen, et al., 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Research aim and questions

My personal and professional experiences, have contributed to the focus of this study alongside the contextual issues which are stated above. The research aim:

- To critically examine the lived experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school.

The research questions are:

- What are the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school?
- What enablers and barriers do these first-time principals experience as transitioning deputy principals?

Outline of the thesis

The following is a brief overview of the six chapters that comprise this thesis.

Chapter One- Introduction: This chapter provides a rationale for the research and outlines the research methodology, aim, and questions**.**

Chapter Two- Literature review: In this chapter I conceptualise and frame the research focus in order to set the foreground (setting/context) for my topic. Four major themes are considered in this chapter. Firstly, I discuss principal succession and define what this encompasses. Secondly, I examine preparation for principalship, discussing why this is important, what the stages of this preparation are and the content and quality of various principal preparation courses. Following this, I look at the period of principal transition and finally, I examine the inherent challenges of first-time principalship.

Chapter Three- Methodology: This chapter begins with a discussion and justification of my chosen methodology and justification for my case study approach (which utilises an interpretive paradigm). The method of data collection and analysis is described. Following this is a short discussion of validity, trustworthiness and ethical issues considered in this study.

Chapter Four- Findings: This chapter presents the data and findings, and introduces the common themes that emerged based on the interview responses.

Chapter Five- Discussion: This chapter critically examines and interprets the significant findings based on the emergent themes from Chapter Four and makes links with the literature reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six- Conclusions: In closing, this chapter draws conclusions from the overall findings of the research and suggests recommendations for practice. The strengths and limitations of the study are identified before areas for further research are considered.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Chapter Two presents a critical review of literature relevant to the topic of the lived experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school. Therefore, this review provides a critical synthesis of the literature I have been able to locate from both New Zealand and international contexts on the following four themes relevant to the aim of the investigation: (1) the deputy principal's internal succession to principalship; (2) preparation for principalship; (3) the transition to principalship; and (4) the challenges of being a first–time principal. Each theme is described and studied and the implications for succession practices are established. To conclude, the relationships between the main themes are discussed in relation to my two research questions.

This literature review begins with a section on the deputy principal's internal succession to principalship, as this could be considered as one pathway to eventually becoming a principal. Leadership succession is also considered for some to be both the first and last challenge of principalship (Hargreaves & Fink, 2006). Succession management in education is the process of ensuring that a pool of appropriately skilled teaching professionals is trained and available to meet the strategic objectives of a school. It is a tool which identifies those who have the potential to assume key positions in an organisation, and to prepare them for the future. It is identified both within an educational context and in the private sector as being essential. A variety of succession plans are discussed; succession plans that are intended to promote continuity of a school's direction and other plans which promote discontinuity. Characteristics of good succession plans are examined as well as the need in New Zealand's de-centralised education system, for Boards of Trustees and principals to make succession programmes a priority within their strategic planning.

Principal succession

Principal succession is an area of literature worthy of review in this thesis as it an integral aspect of the cycle of leadership within a school. It is likely to heavily impact on a deputy

principal's internal transition to principalship in their school and effective succession planning can be a strong enabler for aspiring principals.

Succession planning refers to the deliberate creation of a plan and process to address a future succession event. Rothwell (2001) defined succession planning as "a deliberate and systematic effort by an organisation to ensure leadership continuity in key positions, retain and develop intellectual and knowledge capital for the future, and encourage individual advancement" (p. 6). Succession planning makes provisions for the development and replacement of key people over time. Succession management is much boarder, involving a holistic review of all positions of leadership, and could be seen as a complex puzzle with many pieces. Leadership succession planning and succession management are not new concepts. They have been an area of concern in the private sector since the 1980s (Zepeda et al., 2012). Outside of education, in the private sector, succession planning has a slightly different definition to the educational one. Charan et al. (2010) define succession planning as growing and sustaining a business, by filling the 'leadership pipeline' with high-performing people to ensure that every leadership level has a strong selection of these performers to draw from, both now and well into the future.

Whilst Rothwell's definition was developed for success planning in business, it still holds true for education (Zepeda et al., 2012). Given the importance of the principal to the performance of a school, the succession of school leaders is surely also of equal significance (Zepeda et al., 2012). There is less evidence of succession planning in education compared to business contexts (Fusarelli et al., 2018). However, planning and managing principal succession is essential for continuing or establishing a strong supportive culture and vision at a school (Bennett et al., 2011). Principal succession is crucial because it looks to maintain continuous improvement of a school over the long term, regardless of individual efforts of leaders and their skills (Peters-Hawkins et al., 2018). In other words, succession planning is about putting in place systems and processes which will ensure a school continues to improve regardless of its leader.

Leadership succession is a critical aspect of school improvement and it must be approached from a systemic perspective since it has a huge impact on an entire community (Hargreaves, 2005). However, an examination of the literature surrounding succession, suggests that effective planning consideration, action and professional development for succession is often not happening in schools and that it is more a matter of chance whether this even occurs within a school (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011). Moreover, the authors of this case study of leadership transition suggest that unplanned succession represents one of the most common reasons for schools not progressing. The kind of succession experienced by an internally-appointed deputy principal can have an impact on the whole school community. New principals face distinctive practice challenges depending upon the nature of their successions (Lee, 2015). In her research study, Lee examines how different characteristics of succession situations are associated with specific types of challenges. To categorise the main types of succession situations observed in her research, Lee used Hargreaves and Fink's (2006) framework on succession planning. This framework identifies whether succession is planned or unplanned and whether the succession was intended to establish continuity or provoke discontinuity with the school's current direction. The results suggest that principals in unplanned or discontinuous successions, where an external candidate is moving into a new school as the principal, need increased support in quickly gathering information about their new schools. Principals in discontinuous successions need stronger expertise in promoting transformational change and building trust among colleagues. There is currently limited research on how succession situations differ in schools that need transformation versus schools that need stability or continued progress. However, it is important to understand this connection, in order to select and support new principals which are in the best interest of schools' long-term performances. As part of her findings, Lee (2015) discusses the fact that if succession is well planned and involves significant communication and mentorship from the previous principal, then the new principal will step into his or her role having a great deal of prior knowledge of the school, its staff, students and community. This would certainly be the case where a deputy principal is appointed internally to the role of principal. Having in-depth knowledge of the personalities and

quality of each teacher and understanding of the values of the school's community provides a new principal with a solid foundation from which to build. Additionally, Lee contends that the opposite is also true. If a new principal is provided little information and has a hasty succession to the position, then they are likely to be faced with a more daunting succession situation. Novices then spend much of their first year as principal seeking information about staff aptitudes, school procedures and community values. Nelson et al. (2008) describe this kind of situation as having to find things out the hard way.

Principal succession and succession planning is distinctly different from replacement planning. Replacement planning focuses on an individual replacing another individual. In contrast, succession planning embraces a wider approach towards the training and replacement of numerous individuals (Rothwell, 2001). Therefore, when a principal decides to leave a school, succession planning would not simply be about replacing that principal with another, but also the back-filling of other key roles within the school would be addressed. Rothwell contends that succession planning is a purposeful and systematic process which involves defining leadership requirements. It requires the identification of a pool of high-quality principal aspirants who have the capacity for senior leadership and then developing and growing these individuals through planned work experiences, training, education and personal growth. Goodlad (2004) also believes that "there should be, waiting in the wings, a sufficient number of qualified persons to take over each principalship as it is vacated" (p. 277).

There is much agreement across the literature reviewed as to what constitutes the characteristics of good succession planning in schools. Hargreaves and Fink (2006) emphasise timely preparation long before the resignation of a principal. Many researchers (Bennett et al., 2011; Fuller et al., 2017; Korach & Cosner, 2017) see succession planning as being incorporated into a school's strategic planning and improvement plans. Succession planning in education is about developing an overarching leadership pipeline plan. According to researchers (Fuller et al., 2017; Korach & Cosner, 2017), a pipeline

model involves developing and growing the capabilities of teacher leaders who then become the pool for school leader preparation and selection. A principal pipeline recognises the need to improve both the quality and quantity of outstanding principals. In keeping with what much of the literature examined for this thesis advances as the cornerstone of principal succession, Hargreaves (2005) asserts that there are many ways to improve leadership succession in education. He, along with other advocates (Cocklin & Wilkinson, 2011; Fink & Brayman, 2004), believes succession needs to be well-planned, thoughtful and ethical as an integral part of improvement planning. He also argues that distributing leadership makes succession less dependent on the strengths or weaknesses of a single leader. He suggests that schools need to ease the departure of key leaders and develop leadership capacities of those teachers in the school, from which future successors could be selected. Furthermore, from day one, principals need to think about building leadership capacity and incorporate succession issues into professional learning and leadership development programmes (Aurora Bernardo et al., 2019; Hargreaves, 2005).

In an education system like New Zealand has, principal succession can be more challenging than in other parts of the world. Bush (2011) asserts the idea of leadership succession is more difficult to apply in decentralised systems because career development is the prerogative of the applicant rather than the employer and therefore it is more difficult to adopt a planned approach. A different approach is needed with a focus on promoting the attractions of principalship, offering professional development opportunities for all current and potential leaders, and being flexible in implementing new models of leadership (Aurora Bernardo et al., 2019; Bush, 2011). New Zealand schools are self-managing and almost all the responsibility for ensuring the sustainability of school leadership development rests within each school. Ensuring aspiring leaders are prepared to lead in ways which are attuned and responsive to their school community is important (Bennett et al., 2011). Researchers contend that it is important for school leaders to strategically plan and manage the succession of principals (Fink & Brayman, 2004;

Hargreaves, 2003). It is vital that Boards of Trustees and their principals proactively consider the role of succession planning and management, as an integral part of their role.

The second section of this review highlights the importance of a principal's leadership for ensuring good student outcomes and therefore discusses why preparation for the role is so vital. This specific area of literature is relevant to this thesis research because it is recognised that there is a need for more support for first-time principals in their transition from deputy principalship to principalship. However, once again there is a scarcity of research specifically around the preparation for deputy principals who will internally transition to the principal position.

Preparation for principalship

Preparation for taking on the role of a school principal is essential because of the significant impact a principal can have on a school. Principalship is seen as an extremely complex role and so this is discussed in this section. The moral obligation to prepare a person for this ultimate educational leadership role is also explored in this section of the review. The literature around the professional and organisational socialisation process involved in becoming a principal is addressed in the final part of this section.

Importance of principal preparation

Within the realms of educational research, the principal's leadership is ubiquitously seen as a vital factor in improving school effectiveness, student achievement and teacher quality (Dinham et al., 2018; Robinson et al., 2009). In Robinson et al.'s (2009) *Best Evidence Synthesis* findings were identified and synthesised from 134 New Zealand and international research studies. One of Robinson et al.'s (2009) key findings was that when school leaders promote and/or participate in effective teacher professional learning, this has twice the impact on student outcomes across a school than any other leadership activity. Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that it is principals who make a real difference in the school improvement process and they have a significant, if indirect,

effect on student outcomes (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2004; Robinson, 2004). Therefore, effective preparation for the role of the school leader is essential.

Similarly, the connection between leadership development, school improvement and cultures of excellence, has also been well documented (Hallinger & Heck, 2010; Hargreaves, 2005; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). Leithwood et al. (2004) went so far as to say leadership is second only to classroom instruction among all school-related factors that contribute to what students learn at school. In contrast to this, Cardno (2012) concludes that the linkage between school leadership and improving student outcomes "remains untested except in a few studies" (p. 18). Hattie's (2009) meta- analysis, based on 80,000 studies on educational effectiveness, appears on the surface to align with Cardno's assertion. Some educational leaders were disappointed with Hattie's (2009) findings related to the overall effectiveness of school leaders, as leaders' effectiveness appeared to have less of an impact than other influences on student achievement. However, further analysis of Hattie's results show that it is the type of leadership that is employed that has the greatest influence. Some approaches are more effective than others. The study found that instructional leadership was far more effective in influencing student achievement than transformational leadership (Hattie, 2009). Transformational leadership proposes a more distributed or bottom-up approach, while instructional leadership functions more from the top down (Hallinger, 2003). This almost universal acknowledgement of the impact of direct and indirect school leadership on a school's success and positive student outcomes is largely uncontested (Dinham, Elliott, Rennie & Stokes, 2018; Hallinger, 2003; Robinson et al., 2009) and underscores the ongoing need for effective preparation of principals and therefore the importance of schools appointing an excellent principal.

Preparation for principalship is essential, in part due to the absolute complexity of the position (Bagi, 2016; Bush, 2018; Rimes, 2017). The role of a primary school principal is diverse and complex. The principal is required to be both the CEO of the school as well as being the instructional leader of the school and, as such, is required to lead teaching and

learning (Ogram & Youngs, 2014). Bush (2018) describes seeing a change in thinking in recent educational literature, around the specific preparations needed for principalship. Whilst this research was published in the United Kingdom, Bush has undertaken research across the globe and his observations are internationally applicable. He posits that the reasons for this paradigm shift are partially due to the expansion of the role of school principal, the devolution of powers to school level, the increasing complexity of school contexts, and recognition that effective preparation and development make a difference. This is a change also noticed in New Zealand (Brooking, 2004; Wylie, 2017) with the de-centralisation of education and the expanded role of the principal (Ogram & Youngs, 2014; Wildy, Clarke and Slater 2007; Wylie, 2012). This increased role complexity necessitates effective preparation programmes for school principals and this aligns with much of the current research to date (Dinham et al., 2018; Doneley et al., 2018; Wylie, 2017).

Yet for all the research suggests about how important the role is, there are no compulsory preparation programmes or other requirements for first-time principals in New Zealand. The only qualification required is a teacher's practising certificate (Cardno, 2003). In contrast to New Zealand, the United Kingdom had a formal and systematic preparation for principalship, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which began in 1997. It was introduced on a voluntary basis to improve the quality of principalship training. It was created on a competency–driven, management-orientated basis (Kelly & Saunders, 2010). This qualification for aspiring principals was then made mandatory in 2009. It is now still offered to both aspirant and novice principals, but since 2012 it is no longer a compulsory pre-requisite to principalship. Some critics at the time felt that the NPQH under-represented the complexity of school leadership (Male, 2006).

Kelly and Saunders' (2010) research into principal transitions, suggests that leadership preparation is complex and has both explicit and implicit dimensions. This aligns with the findings of Wildy et al. (2007) who assert the need for thorough preparation in order to fulfil the complex requirements of the principal's role. Bush (2018) elaborates and further supports the argument for effective training for principals, with the idea of the moral

obligation of principal preparation. Requiring individuals to lead schools, which are often large businesses, manage staff and care for children, without specific preparation, may be seen as foolish even reckless as well as being unfair for the new incumbent (Bush, 2018). This is relevant to this research topic as it underscores the importance and ethical necessity of establishing more enablers so that principals can transition smoothly into their new leadership roles.

There is currently a dearth of literature on internal successions to principalship. For the most part, the literature seems to talk about principals new to the school rather than perhaps the already incumbent deputy principal. Whether a principal has been appointed internally to the role or has been appointed to the position from outside of the school, the role that they assume is a complex one. This could be due in part to the vastness of the role, workload pressures and demands of the principal's position. Since 1989, surveys of New Zealand school principals document that there is a generally accepted crisis of principal preparation, recruitment, development and retention (Bennett et al., 2011; Brooking et al., 2003). Likewise, Wildy et al., (2007) contend that there is evidence in many countries that schools experience difficulty in attracting leaders to principalship because the role can be seen as too intimidating (d'Arbon et al., 2002; Draper & McMichael, 2000; Rimes, 2017; Wylie 2017). Being a principal in the 21st century is a complex, important and demanding role and so principal succession issues relate not only to attracting and appointing principals, but also to ensuring that they will be supported in their growth and transition into the role of principal (Bennett et al., 2011). Therefore, as well as the difficulty in trying to find capable and willing applicants to fill principal vacancies and supporting them once they have been appointed, there is also the challenge of preparing these principals and building their leadership capacity to reduce the barriers which first-time principals experience as transitioning deputy principals.

The necessity for thorough principal preparation is vital when one considers the immense changes in role which occur during the transition to and the early stages of principalship. An initial process of learning and reflection is needed when new principals begin to

socialise into their roles. Transitioning principals require a certain amount of adjustment to develop their abilities to cope with the complexities of their new roles. This process involves leaving the well-known routines and aspects of an experienced classroom teacher and embracing the complexity and vastness of the new role (Bagi, 2016; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2007). Research and literature on beginning the principalship (Bagi, 2016; Bristol et al., 2014; Bush & Jackson, 2002; Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Wildy et al., 2007), suggests that the step from classroom teacher or even deputy principal to principal is substantially more complex than aspirants had anticipated. This was noticed especially in areas related to relationships, conflict and critical decision-making. This was echoed in other studies (Lee, 2015; Normore, 2004) where surprising challenges were faced by novice principals which included time management issues, feelings of isolation from previous colleagues, and dealing with negativity from parents and community members (Lee, 2015; Normore, 2004).

In some countries, for example New Zealand, Israel and Trinidad and Tobago, principals receive little initial preparation for the role (Bristol et al., 2014; Cardno, 2003). In these settings, if the novice principals are fortunate, they will be offered a short induction programme after they have been appointed. This is considered sufficient and there is a dependence on the new principal to learn their role on-the-job. This suggests that there is, perhaps an often-unwritten assumption that good teachers can become effective managers and leaders without specific preparation (Bush, 2015).

The above contexts and research signal the importance of principal preparation programmes and leadership development for schools, so they can either establish or continue to grow a strong, supportive culture and vision of leadership to facilitate learning within a school. This research seeks to shine light specifically on deputy principals who transition internally to principalship in their schools. It will look at the preparation and leadership development that they have experienced in their journey to principalship.

Stages of principal preparation

Attention to the research around the different stages of principal preparation is relevant to this thesis as it directly relates to the research question regarding the experiences of deputy principals transitioning to principalship. Whilst it is largely agreed that effective principal preparation programmes are necessary, there is disagreement found in the literature as to the stages involved in preparatory activities (Duke, 1987; Hart, 1993; Weindling, 2000). Some of the researchers' findings are expanded upon in this section.

A useful approach to understanding leadership and headship development is derived from Merton's (1968) socialisation theory. Merton postulates that there is a two-way interaction between the new leader and the school situation (with each trying to change and influence the other). In this view of socialisation, there are two main overlapping phases: professional and organisational socialisation. Professional socialisation involves learning what it is to be a principal. A person begins to learn this before being appointed to the position. This learning comes from their own experiences of schooling and teaching as well as through more formal preparation courses. Organisational socialisation only occurs once a leader has begun their principalship in a specific school as this is a process through which one learns the behaviours, values and knowledge required to perform as a principal at a particular school. They learn about the culture and ways of working that only apply at their school (Schein, 1990). Weindling (2000) asserts that professional socialisation includes the preparation period prior to being appointed as a principal and continues into the early stages of principalship. In keeping with what the early literature suggests regarding professional socialisation, Duke (1987) comments that principals do not come out of training programmes fully prepared and completely effective. He sees their development as occurring over time from as early as their own schooling and early teaching careers through to their first positions as leaders. He sees leadership development as a more involved and gradual process of ongoing socialisation. In her book on principal succession, Hart (1993) also describes the preparation for principalship as a stage of professional and organisational socialisation. She contends that this stage begins

in the pre-appointment phase of a school leader's educational career and continues into early post appointment and is education-context specific:

> Each school has a particular context requiring understanding and integration of a complex array of people, policies, processes, and priorities. The need for leaders to fit into the immediate work environment makes organizational socialization more salient and immediate than the experiences that precede it, no matter how carefully organized and consequently tend to replace those learned during professional socialization. (p. 114)

This suggests therefore that internally appointed deputy principals would require a lot less time to socialise into the new environment, as they would have prior knowledge of the people, policies and processes and have already fit into the work environment.

Being a principal is a different role from classroom teaching and requires specific preparation. Bush (2018) describes three phases of socialisation. First, aspiring leaders require professional socialisation; preparing to become a principal. Second, they need to change their identity, from teacher to principal; a process of personal socialisation. Third, they need a period of organisational socialisation; learning to lead in a specific school. In contrast to looking at principal preparation as socialisation, according to the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) research report (Rimes, 2017), the pathway to principalship has traditionally been made up of three strands; experience, professional education and professional support. Aspiring principals will have been experienced teachers; they will have demonstrated their commitment to education through post-graduate study. They also are likely to have been mentored by their principal or the head of another school. One of the main recommendations in an Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) report (Gurr & Drysdale, 2015) on preparing aspiring school principals, describes three broad, sequential stages of learning. The first stage focuses on instructional leadership; developing deep and comprehensive pedagogical knowledge is foundational, begun early in a career, as it is compatible with a teaching role. The second stage is the development of higher order and interpersonal skills; developing skills such as strategic thinking, change leadership, and emotional and social intelligence as these were seen as ongoing skills honed

throughout a leader's career. The final stage focuses on developing management knowledge and skills; this was recommended as occurring just prior to taking up a position as a principal. It follows that skills and knowledge needed to be a principal are developed over time. Professional socialisation experiences prior to and upon appointment are areas of research that many educational researchers have focused on (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; Theodosiou, 2015; Weindling, 2000) and they illustrate the spectrum of experiences that shape principals' transitions to principalship. Theodosiou (2015) identifies four distinct stages from preparation to induction into principalship. At the first stage, a less formal and more personally oriented preparation which includes; postgraduate study, shadowing other principals 'on-the-job' and professional reading. In a more formal capacity at this stage, she describes leadership experiences for example: acting headship; working with model principals; and direct involvement in leadership tasks. The following three stages occur once the principal has begun their appointment. This involves networking, mentoring and coaching from experienced principals and undertaking a training programme for school leaders. In Rhodes and Brundrett's (2009) study, the journey to leadership seemed to echo this view of developing skills and knowledge over time. However, in addition to this, Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) also emphasised the importance of more personalised support for aspirant principals and they too saw the value of work-based learning, whether it is through a formal/nationwide programme or as an informal part of learning 'on-the-job'.

It could be surmised that stages of principal preparation, as discussed in the relevant literature, are not hard and fast. Researchers agree on the importance of thorough preparation and professional socialisation for the position. However, the timing, order and content of these preparation stages vary between individuals and their specific contexts.

Content and quality of principal preparation programmes

The content and quality of various principal preparation programmes is another much discussed area in the literature (Gurr & Drysdale, 2015; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2005; Piggot-Irvine & Youngs, 2011). Throughout the research on principal

preparation, as well as explaining why it is essential, there is much consideration and critique given to the makeup of these programmes (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009; Stevenson, 2006; Wildy et al., 2007). Leadership programmes in many countries have been created to prepare aspiring principals with core understandings of strategic leadership, the leadership of learning and the management of personnel and resources (Bush & Jackson, 2002).

Much of the research regarding the New Zealand context (Cardno, 2012; MacPherson, 2010; Robertson & Lovett, 2016) for principal preparation mentions the *National Aspiring Principals Programme* (NAPP). This programme was never compulsory and in fact was concluded in 2016. It was designed to develop leadership focused on improving student learning outcomes in schools. It was a project funded by the Ministry of Education to develop a pathway from middle school leadership through to experienced principals, training aspiring principals who were already in senior roles. The major elements of the NAPP curriculum were: developing self; leading learning; leading change; future-focused schooling; and understanding the multi-faceted role of the principal. It was based on the *Kiwi Leadership for Principals* position paper (Ministry of Education, 2008) which in turn was strongly influenced by research emerging from the *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why best evidence synthesis* (Robinson et al, 2009). A review of the NAPP (Piggot-Irvine & Youngs, 2011) concluded that overall the programme implementation showed good elements. Many of the principles on andragogy, or adult learning, were incorporated into the programme. The support provided by mentors and through professional learning groups was strong. Excellent outcomes showed an increasing confidence and readiness to become a principal, as well as the acquisition of some of the necessary skills.

So, despite this New Zealand-based programme being well rated by reviewers and participants, it is no longer available for those leaders aspiring to become principals. This contrasts sharply with the NPQH undertaken by principals in the UK. In a similar vein to the UK, aspiring principals in Singapore are also prepared for principalship through the

Leaders in Education Programme (Ng, 2008). If Canada, Chile, China, France, Hong Kong, Malaysia, Singapore and most US states can prescribe leadership qualifications for future principals, why is this not the case in other countries including New Zealand? It appears patterns of leadership preparation and development are highly variable across international contexts, ranging from prescriptive mandatory programmes, as in Singapore, to unorganised, 'on-the-job' learning in many countries. Some programmes on offer are very standardised and therefore consistent across a country whereas others are more personalised and responsive to individuals' needs, but therefore lack uniformity and consistency across a nation (Bush, 2018).

Sometimes principals learn more as they do the job than any training or preparation could offer them. A disconnection has been identified in some of the literature between the practice of principal preparation and the related expectations for the actual practices of principalship (Bristol et al., 2014; Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Brundrett 2000; Rhodes et al., 2009). In research undertaken by Bristol, Brown and Esnard (2014), principals described their preparation and expectations as being ad hoc and ambiguous. They found the principal training programmes did not accurately reflect the reality of their roles and responsibilities as principals. Informal learning was seen by principals in some studies to be valued as much, if not more than structured training programmes (Bristol et al., 2014; Brundrett 2000; Bush, 2013). Bush (2013) noted the importance of equipping new principals with appropriate skills to meet the ever-increasing demands of the 21st century, as part of his research into aspiring principals' programmes in Hong Kong. He concluded that informal learning, such as sharing with and shadowing more experienced principals, may have been more effective than participating in formal training programmes.

As has been illustrated by the variety of programmes reviewed in this literature search, there is not a unanimous view of what professional development programmes for potential and aspiring principals should contain. While there are commonalities there are also differences. The key ideas identified through the literature search into principal preparation included recognition of the increasing complexity of the principals' job; the

moral obligation to train principals for their important responsibilities; and the realisation that there is an adjustment period of professional socialisation needed as new principals begin their jobs. There is an acknowledgement that there is no one size fits all training model for principalship and a number of formal programmes in various countries were identified. These programmes had aspects in common although these were by no means universal. In addition to the formal programmes there was recognition of the informal aspects of principal preparation. It appears that perhaps aspirants to principalship are just as well served by more informal means of preparation than undertaking any more formalised or structured training.

The next section of this review explores researchers' different views on the nature of transitions; including the timing of these and the influence of the different schools' contexts and cultures on transition experiences. The commonalities of these experiences are discussed in both international and New Zealand-based contexts.

Transition to principalship

Throughout the literature the distinction between principal preparation and transition to principalship is unclear; there is an overlap in much of the research (see, for example: Bristol et al., 2014; Brundrett, 2000; and Bush, 2013). Transition could be considered to have begun as soon as a decision to apply for principalship is made, and preparation for the principalship can also merge into the transition period. Gabarro (1987) sees transition to principalship as occurring even before a principal takes up their appointment. This time, he says, is an opportunity for preparation, prior to taking hold of the reins, meaning one is able to hit the ground running once they have arrived in a school. Likewise, Kane and Barbaro (2016) also suggest that the transition process begins once the contract is signed, usually months before the principal takes up the position, and they contend that transition continues throughout a person's first year of principalship. Rimes (2017) also defines the transition period as being, from the time of appointment to the taking up of the role. Other commentators believe transition to principalship occurs as soon as one decides they would like to eventually become a head teacher or principal (Gabarro, 1987;

Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Weindling, 2000). However, Watkins (2003) suggests it is the first 90 days in the role that make up the transition period for a leader in an organisation. It has been said by some researchers that people learn how to be heads throughout their careers (Walker et al., 2006). So, as can be seen there is a distinct lack of clarity around just when transitions occur.

The transition to principalship literature that has been reviewed identifies several common aspects of transition. The first commonality is the background of those coming into principalship. Literature suggests that most school principals enter the occupation typically having had a career in education, marked by success in teaching as well as several years broad experience in school leadership at middle management and senior management levels (Gates et al., 2004; Papa et al., 2002). First-time principals come to the occupation having had an 'apprenticeship of observation' for the principal's job (Lortie, 1976). The second commonality is around the size of the move to principalship. This move into the principal's office represents a sizable shift in workload and sense of responsibility for most first-time principals. First-time principals are likely to experience a distinct and often abrupt change in perspective, expectations and work tasks (Bagi, 2016; Spillane & Lee, 2014). Walker et al. (2006) also refer to the huge gulf between deputy principalship and principalship. Rimes (2017) identified the importance of preparation for being a principal and described the culture shock experienced in transitioning to principalship. Rimes' (2017) study and that of others (Kane & Barbaro, 2016; Weindling, 2000) refer to the third commonality of principal transitions; the variety of experiences that principals have had in their previous roles (often as deputy principals). It was suggested that the most useful transition preparation included: experiences in principal duties, especially the valuable experience of a period as acting head; the need for a variety of experiences, especially as a deputy head; and the need to work with heads who saw deputy principalship as a preparation for headship. Helpful experiences like having a mentor, attending principal preparation workshops and undertaking professional reading and academic study on leadership were other activities that were common to the literature (Kane & Barbaro, 2016; Kelly & Saunders, 2010;

Weindling & Dimmock, 2006). Many new principals in these studies however, felt that they needed more site-specific information and more contact with the outgoing head as part of a thorough induction on-site during the transition process. These studies highlight the importance of positive transition experiences for first-time principals. However, these studies all focus on the transition of a new principal from one school to another. There appears to be no literature that explicitly deals with the internal transitions of deputy principals.

Transitions centre on people and communication (Kane & Barbaro, 2016; Kelly & Saunders, 2010). Although researched through the lens of early childhood transitions to school, Dockett and Perry (2001) identified two main themes as opposed to stages of transitions. They saw transition as a community experience involving a wide range of people. They also asserted that effective transition programs focus primarily on relationships. This sentiment is echoed throughout the research on transitions to principalship (Bush, 2015; Notman & Henry, 2011; Rimes, 2017).

As well as commonalities throughout the literature on transitions, there are also discrepancies in some areas. One of these relates to the linear or otherwise nature of principal transitions. Gabarro (1987) characterised taking charge of an organisation as a series of five predictable, chronological stages of learning and action. Gabarro was not talking specifically about a schooling context; this was aimed rather at the business community. Although he has put a timeline alongside his stages of learning and resultant action, not all research suggests that phases of transition are linear and time-bound. Some of the literature indicates that induction into principalship is not a linear process (Rimes, 2017; Stevenson, 2006). Rimes (2017) contends that the historical, political, cultural and organisational contexts of each school and its particular situation, will all influence the success and length of any transition experiences.

In the New Zealand context, a *First-Time Principals Induction* course is offered to beginning principals by Evaluation Associates (2020) and it is an optional programme. The

course offers timely, tailored and targeted support that enables each beginning principal to develop in their confidence and capability as a leader of learning. Each beginning principal is supported in their own learning journey so they are able to act strategically to achieve the aspirations of their school community and make a positive difference for learners. Leadership advisors are all experienced school principals who are committed to ensuring all beginning principals succeed. Each advisor works with an allocated group of beginning principals. Support is focused principally in the areas of: leading learning, governance, staff and stakeholder relationships and professional leadership inquiry. Each beginning principal is also supported by a mentor. The mentor supports the principal with day-to-day queries. They provide support primarily around the administration and management of the school (Evaluation Associates, 2020). The principles and content of this induction course, along with the wrap-around support, seem to align with current literature on the topic of transitions to principalship which includes organisational and professional socialisation experiences which are prevalent throughout the literature.

In the next section, the review will look particularly into the research around the challenges faced by first-time principals. The sheer volume and complexity of their workload, coupled with feelings of isolation and anxiety are amongst the greatest issues experienced by principals and even more so, for new principals. In de-centralised education systems where schools are self-managing, these challenges can be intensified.

Challenges of first-time principals

Research into the perceived challenges or barriers that first-time principals face, as well as the enablers which help with more successful transitions to principalship, is at the heart of this thesis. This thesis seeks to explore the barriers experienced by deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school. There is a distinct lack of research specifically on these internally-appointed principals.

Principals have the complex task of being the pedagogical leaders of learning, as well as being responsible for the day to day organisation of the school involving a wide

spectrum of policy and operational matters. They oversee property, personnel, finance, health and safety for their community of learners. The New Zealand system requires that principals become the chief executive officers of their organisations. They and their Boards are answerable to the whole school community and local iwi (Ministry of Education, 2008; Ogram & Youngs, 2014). The pressures of the principal role in the first year of principalship take an even greater toll on physical, relational and emotional health. In his research into the experiences of first-time principals in Australia, Bagi (2016) suggests that there are five aspects of the beginning principal's role which were found to be the most challenging: the intensity of the role, staffing issues, understanding the culture of the school community, enrolments and finances and dealing with critical incidents. Spillane and Lee (2014) also assert that beginning principals can feel overwhelmed by the volume, diversity and unpredictable nature of their work. There is currently a plethora of research on the complexity and heavy workload of today's principals (Bennett et al., 2011; Ogram & Youngs, 2014; Wylie, 2017).

It is becoming apparent that many new principals require increased support in their transition to principalship. This includes assistance dealing with the tensions and dilemmas which confront new principals on a regular basis (Clarke & Wildy, 2004). The move from the known role of a teacher of students, to becoming a leader of adults and a manager of systems in an unknown role, requires considerable personal and social adjustment and can be a daunting challenge for novice principals (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2007). This, in part, is what Crow (2007) suggests in his theory of personal socialisation as one transitions to the role of principal.

Increased societal demands placed on schools and principals these days make any principal's role demanding (Montecino et al., 2018). For a first-time principal, this may be intensified due to their lack of experience and emergent managerial skills (Oplatka, 2019). According to their research into problems experienced by both new and experienced principals, problems reported by new principals could be summarised as follows: feelings of being unprepared, unanticipated issues, a legacy of a previous

principal, interpersonal relations with and between staff and feelings of isolation (García-Garduño, et al., 2011). Whilst it is true that the intensity of these problems varies from country to country, of those researched, all identified to one degree or other, with all five issues. Part of the problem faced by these novice principals is the fact that they are dealing with all the issues associated with socialisation into their new school's culture, whilst at the same time trying to change and transform the cultural aspects which might hamper school improvement (Montecino et al., 2018). This same study also spoke of the difficulty for new principals of managing up, for example, dealing with a school Board of Trustees in New Zealand or the Ministry of Education, to whom principals may be deemed to be answerable. The research findings echoed those of an earlier study in the Arab education system (Arar, 2017). Participants described their role as being characterised by an initial sense of shock, intensiveness, multiple obstacles and fear, due to the weight of their work coupled with the difficulty of assimilating into a new organisation.

Closer to home, Bagi (2016) carried out research for his PhD looking at the experiences of beginning principals in Australia. He contends that the greatest challenge for novice leaders is the sheer intensity of the role, which takes its toll mentally, emotionally and physically. The data from this study showed that, on top of the workload itself, it is the ultimate weight of responsibility that beginning principals experience which contributes to the sometimes-overwhelming challenges implicit in the role. Alienation and isolation are repeated themes in the literature on challenges of new principals (Kelly & Saunders, 2010; Rimes, 2017; Spillane & Lee, 2014; Wylie, 2017). The move to the principal's office can make principals feel anxious frustrated and isolated (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003). Beginning principals need a supportive network of peers as they tend to be isolated in school (Hart, 1993). New principals often struggle with feelings of professional isolation and loneliness as they transition into a role that carries ultimate responsibility and decision-making powers. Beginning principals adjust better into the leadership role if a support system is available to them to balance professional demands and personal need (Hart, 1993).

One key challenge for beginning principals is to make adjustments in a new school context (Ng, 2015). In the case of beginning principals, their leadership roles are initially plagued with challenges of having to navigate through norms and practices entrenched in the school where they take on principalship. For some principals who were appointed internally from the position of deputy principal within their own school, they may be able to navigate the school in their new role in a shorter time due to familiarity with the school and its operations (Ng, 2015; Weindling, 2000). A period of role-identity transference (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) is still an essential component of transition for an internally appointed deputy principal to becoming a successful principal. The kind of challenges experienced by beginning principals is heavily influenced by the school context and the dynamics among its stakeholders. Beginning principals have to contend with a multitude of context-specific demands of individual schools. These are often issues that can be discussed in principal preparation programmes, but never adequately prepared for (Ng, 2015).

New Zealand's decentralised, devolved education system, where decisions and self-management of employment, property and finance all occur within the local school, result in the issues of diversity and complexity of the workload intensifying (Ogram & Youngs, 2014). The findings of this research were that the overwhelming challenge experienced by all of the principals in the study was the vastness of their workload. This was due to the demands of the dual role of leading learning and managing the school at a daily, operational level. Cathy Wylie's (2017) findings from the *New Zealand Council of Educational Research National Survey* were quite typical of research carried out in the rest of the world. Whilst it was reported that generally principals enjoy their work and find it very rewarding (Bagi, 2016), it was concerning that so few principals saw their workload as manageable. Only 36% of both new and experienced principals believed it to be feasible (Wylie, 2017). In New Zealand, the duality of the role of principal as both leader of learning and CEO of the entire school community meant principals responded to the survey describing their feelings that too much was being asked of schools and their principals.

Moving into principalship is clearly a huge challenge for a novice, in terms of its scope, complexity, size, as well as the opportunities it affords a person to 'make a difference'. The role of principal is a unique one in that often the skills required to be an outstanding teacher are not directly transferable to that of an outstanding principal. An almost entirely different set of skills and dispositions are needed to fulfil the role and the training for this is not necessarily something that can be learnt from a book, a course or even an ongoing mentorship. From the research covered it would seem that it is a combination of all of the above, as well as 'on-the-job' experience, which sets one up for success.

Summary

This literature review highlights the links and the interrelationship between succession planning, principal preparation programmes, transitions to principalship and the challenges of principalship. It has identified the cross-pollination of the four themes throughout this literature review. To address the issues associated with appointing an effective, high-quality principal to a school, whether this is an internal appointment of somebody already working in the school, or an external appointment of someone from outside of the organisation, all four issues need to be addressed.

Chapter Three: Methodology

This chapter begins with an overview of the methodological approach best suited to my research questions, regarding the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school and the enablers and barriers that they experienced during this time. Chapter three goes on to explain the rationale behind my choice of case study as my preferred approach. I then justify the use of an interpretive paradigm and describe the epistemological and ontological positions underlying this paradigm. The process and rationale for selecting research participants and using semi-structured interviews is given, with a description of the thematic analysis. This chapter ends with a short discussion around issues of ethics, validity and trustworthiness.

Research positioning

This thesis reports on a qualitative, interpretive study. This study reflects multiple realities from the participants' perspectives. This type of research is especially appropriate in an educational context, because it takes place in an environment in which the power of the context is so important. Berliner (2002) notes this when he states that "In education, broad theories and ecological generalisations often fail because they cannot incorporate the enormous number or determine the power of the contexts within which humans find themselves" (p. 18). Educational settings in which aspiring principals work are extremely complex environments that vary greatly from one context to another. Using a qualitative methodology has enabled the principals to convey the very different experiences they have had, which was important to understanding the aims of the research.

Ontology and epistemology

A researcher's own epistemological and ontological position can affect the way a research is conducted. It will also of course be influenced by the aims of the research and the questions that are researched. O'Toole and Beckett (2014) describe research as a systematic investigation, and they acknowledge that the conclusions we draw from our

research are not objectives nor are they absolutes truths. They refer to epistemology as ways of knowing, whereas ontology relates to ways of seeing (O'Toole & Beckett, 2014).

Ontology is the study of being. It describes what can be known and what we believe can exist (Berryman, 2019). The type of research questions we ask grow out of our ontological beliefs. As a researcher, I believe in multiple realities and therefore this informed the research design and methodological approach of undertaking this qualitative form of research. I specifically chose to use semi-structured interviews to provide participants with an opportunity to describe their perceptions and experiences during their transitions to principalship. This study has assumed a constructivist position, that is, people see and construct meaning as they engage with the world (Creswell, 2014). My own assumption, as the researcher, was that in order to understand how deputy principals transition to the role of principal, the subjective perceptions, interpretations and experiences of these participants were central.

Like ontology, epistemology informs the theoretical perspective (Crotty, 1998). Each of these perspectives embodies a certain way of understanding what is (ontology) as well as a certain way of understanding what it means to know (epistemology). Scotland (2012) contends that "Epistemological assumptions are concerned with how knowledge can be created, acquired and communicated, in other words, what it means to know" (p. 9). Interpretivism informed my research design and the methods I used because one of the assumptions is that social phenomena and categories are social construction. This suggests that people see and construct meaning as they engage with the world (Creswell, 2014). Constructivism and interpretivism both view people as meaning makers, who seek out meaning for themselves, rather than being part of a world where meanings are fixed (Hammond & Wellington, 2012).

Because I was interested in developing insights into and gaining a better understanding of how deputy principals transition into their roles as principals, I adopted an interpretive research paradigm. As I was utilising an interpretive approach, it seemed appropriate to

adopt a case study method. Like other methodologies, Somekh and Lewin (2011) describe case study as an approach to research.

> It seeks to engage with and report the complexity of social and educational activity, in order to represent the meaning that individuals bring … Case study assumes that 'social reality' is created through social interaction … and seeks to identify and describe before trying to analyse and theorise. (p. 53)

However, case studies afford researchers opportunities to explore or describe a phenomenon in context using a variety of data sources - in my case the variety of data sources were the five different principals who were interviewed. Case study research looks to derive an up-close or in-depth understanding of a single or small number of 'cases' set in their real-world contexts. The closeness aims to evoke a deep understanding and insight about real-world behaviour and its meaning (Yin, 2009). The case study methodology was chosen because this study sought to address a descriptive question, "What are the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school?" Had my research instead simply been looking at addressing how effective principal preparation courses are in effectively transitioning deputy principals to principalship, then an experiment or quasi-experiment may have addressed this question. If I had been trying to find out how often deputy principals were appointed to principalship after completing a principal preparation course, then a survey might have been a better choice. Zainal (2007) suggests a case study is best used when we want to analyse and describe in detail. The case study method enables a researcher to closely examine the data within a specific context. In small scale case studies where the cases are individuals, the method selects a very limited number of individuals as the subjects of study (Zainal, 2007). Case studies can turn the participants' observations into verifiable and authentic data and are useful when one wants to learn more about a little-known or inadequately understood phenomenon (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001). This aligns well with researching in an area where there appears to be a dearth of literature, both in New Zealand and internationally, regarding deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship. Having been informed by the literature, I decided that a case study was the optimal research method to study my topic, as it was the perceptions of the participants

in this study which I was seeking to understand better. By utilising this approach, I was able to ask questions of my participants to which there was no wrong or right answer. I could ask them to expound on their responses if I felt I needed more information or clarification. This helped to ensure I was gathering rich data. The case being examined here was internal transitions of deputy principals to principalship. This case study is bounded by the recognition that the data gathered from the five participants are unlikely to provide insights that are necessarily generalisable across all deputy principal transitions to principalship.

Research design

Interviews are one of the most common ways to collect data from participants (O'Toole & Beckett, 2014). The interview attempts to understand the world from the participants' unique points of view, and it seeks to clarify the meaning of their experiences and to discover their lived worlds (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). I chose the semi-structured interview as the research method, as I was attempting to collect personalised, non-standard information about my participants' views of their worlds. O'Toole and Beckett (2014) note these strengths of the semi-structured interview. They describe it as the most appropriate tool for collecting data where a researcher wants more qualitative information and varieties of responses. Semi-structured interviews, which is the style of interview I chose to utilise, include pre-written questions but also have the scope to allow more questions to be added during the interview if the researcher deems this to be helpful (Mutch, 2005). This was evident in the interviews in this research, where the principals were able to give specific examples in their responses and elaborate on points for clarification. Social constructivists assume that people seek understanding of the world in which they live and work (Creswell, 2014) and the open-ended questions in these interviews allowed for and revealed such understandings and insight. The 18 semi-structured questions I prepared were based around the themes in the literature which I had identified and were asked in a flexible, open-ended manner. Keeping an open mind and ensuring interview questions are geared towards the main research questions are important (Bryman, 2012). Another advantage of the semi-structured interview is that the

questions allow the researcher to probe for depth and expansion. This probing promotes a deeper discussion and is a means for the researcher to develop a stronger rapport and trust between themselves and the research participants (Hartas, 2010).

The main disadvantage of this type of data collection is how time time-consuming semi-structured interviews are, including the transcription of the responses. Bell (2005) argues that interviewing is a highly subjective technique with potential bias. However, Stake (1995) contends that the semi-structured interview is an opportunity to collect rich and detailed responses and check and encourage depth of responses from participants as well as being open to unexpected patterns of response. Therefore, I chose this tool over a survey or questionnaire. I also felt that the inductive coding that is often used with semi-structured interviews, as well as with other data collection methods, was appealing as I was seeking a deeper understanding of the similar and divergent experiences of the participants. Because I am a deputy principal currently aspiring to be a principal myself, and because I was engaging with other principals, I believed that objectivity, distance, detachment and separation would be difficult to achieve. Wellington (2015) mentions the unavoidable influence of the researcher on the participant, and so I was mindful of this throughout the interview process. I strove to avoid reacting personally to the participants' responses by ensuring I did not share my personal beliefs and experiences with the participants. I was also mindful of unconsciously guiding or shaping my participants' responses as Wellington (2015) notes that interviewees should be allowed to exercise sufficient agency and the researcher should not dictate the direction of the exchange.

The interviews took place in a private room of the participants' choosing. Most of these rooms were at the participants' schools; however, one participant chose to have the interview at my school. Each of the participants had been sent a copy of the Participant Information Sheet (Appendix A) and the Consent Form (Appendix B) was signed by them immediately prior to the interview. Each principal also agreed to me making an audio recording of their interview. These audio recordings were then transcribed by a professional, independent transcriber and they were then coded for analysis.

Sample and participant recruitment

Data gathering is crucial in research as the data is meant to contribute to a better understanding of a theoretical framework (Etikan et al., 2016). It therefore follows that selecting the way the data will be obtained and from whom the data will be acquired is important. Purposive sampling is a method which involves the deliberate choice of participants due to the qualities the participants possess. This was the method of sampling that I believed was most appropriate for my research. Purposive sampling was used to help ensure that I had selected the participants who were most likely to be able to provide the rich data which would meet the aim of the research. The selection criterion was that the participants needed to have initially been deputy or assistant principals in their schools for at least one year prior to being appointed as principal. These principals were identified through my professional networks. I invited six principals to participate in this study, five of whom agreed to take part. This seemed an appropriate number of participants because Braun and Clarke (2013) recommend keeping the sample size manageable, which then allows time to fully immerse one's self in the data, and this in turn helps a researcher to generate clear themes.

It was important to me that I gathered data directly from primary sources, so I needed to engage directly with the principals. The sources in this case study were the actual participants. These principals had, as McMillan (2004) says participants should, a substantial, first-hand relationship with the phenomenon being researched which in this research was the transition experiences of the principals.

Data analysis

Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns or themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It not only organises and describes the data but also interprets various aspects of the research topic (Boyatzis, 1998). Thematic analysis is arguably the most widely utilised method in qualitative data analysis. Inductive thematic analysis attempts to develop an analysis from the data and is not already shaped by existing theory (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Mutch (2013) suggests using the data generated

from interviews to search for iterative patterns in a 'constant comparative' manner. This process, by its very nature is time-consuming since it involves dealing with a large amount of written and audio data. Intensive effort needs to be exerted in an attempt to reduce the information to manageable, comprehensible proportions, whilst still retaining the integrity and quality of the data (Cohen et al., 2007). Thematic analysis emphasises identifying, analysing and interpreting patterns of meaning within qualitative data. It is a useful method for examining the perspectives of different research participants, highlighting similarities and differences and generating insights that might otherwise have gone unnoticed (Braun & Clarke, 2006) . However, one disadvantage of simple thematic analysis is whilst it is flexible, this can lead to inconsistency and a lack of coherence when developing themes which arise through the data (Holloway & Todres, 2003). Cohen et al. (2007) contend that the influence of the researcher in the organisation and analysis of the data can be an issue as the collection and interpretation of the data are unavoidably combined. This suggests that as a researcher my own decisions about which data I chose to present and my interpretation of the data may have been unfairly made. This may have been even more likely given the fact that I am a deputy principal currently applying for principalship myself. It was important that I was mindful of this and gave thoughtful consideration to how I was going to approach the data analysis and present data, so that I could best protect the validity and trustworthiness of the research findings. I chose to use my research questions as a framework around which I could organise and present my analysis. In order to address this possible issue, I ensured that all the data from the interviews were transcribed and then these responses were tabulated to provide all the different participants' answers to each question in one table. This more easily enabled investigation of emerging patterns, relationships and comparisons. Interviews were spread over three consecutive weeks. Following the initial readings of the transcripts, I listened to the audio recording of each interview whilst simultaneously reading through the transcript of the same. At this stage, I made notes alongside the transcripts with any thoughts or wonderings I may have been having. I then followed the same process with the second transcript, comparing what I heard and read to the earlier transcript, a process recommended by Merriam and Tisdell (2015). These initial thoughts, research notes and

observations all contributed to tentatively developing some initial themes which seemed to be emerging from the data. The responses from my participants in the earlier interviews influenced in part my probing of later interviewees, as I had an emerging idea that I was looking to test further. I was able to seek a little more clarity and asked the principals to elaborate a little more with some of their responses.

The first stage of data analysis was the important reading, then re-reading and general familiarisation with the data. This is a process described by Braun and Clarke (2013) as a process of immersion where the researcher really studies the content thoughtfully and begins to take note of things that may be relevant to his/her research questions. It was at this stage that I ensured that each participant was given a pseudonym, so that their responses remained confidential in the final thesis. In the same way, I deleted from the transcripts any mention of people or places to lessen the likelihood of individual participants or their schools being identifiable. I had previously sent a copy of each transcript to the relevant participant for them to approve before any analysis began. I printed out each transcript which had been created for me by a professional transcriber using an audio recording of my five interviews. The transcripts were photocopied in landscape orientation, using double spacing with a wide margin to fit the coding down the right-hand side. I colour coded responses from the different participants as advocated by Miles at al. (2014) as this enabled them to be easily recognised on the computer screen or the typed page.

The coding process can be executed in a variety of ways. One way is the old-fashioned process with handwritten notes and a highlighter. Another method uses a word processor and a programme like Word to organise the data meaningfully into tables. A third way is to use a custom-designed coding software package, like NVivo for instance. Believing I would gain more familiarity with the data if I did the process 'by hand', I utilised the first two methods for my coding and data analysis. A code is most often a word or short phrase that symbolically assigns a summative idea or label to a piece of text. The codes originate from the words and phrases used by the participants in their interviews. This was an

iterative process as re-reading, refining and replacing of codes was done several times. My next step was to rearrange and transfer the transcribed data complete with initial codes, into a table in a Word document, so that each of the participant's answers to each question were grouped together. This made it easier for me to look for similarities and more easily note differences in responses to the same question.

After finding commonalities in responses across questions and participants, I assigned a tentative theme to these and then common themes across the transcripts were highlighted using the same colour. Coding also identifies data which sit outside the already decided research theme. This in itself can be evidence that more data on a particular theme is needed. It also identifies entries which could be deemed worthy of being assigned their own themes (Davidson & Tolich, 2011). It was important that I was discerning in the number of codes I assigned in order to reduce an unmanageable number of themes, and instead to look for the most ubiquitous, pervasive and repeated themes across more than one of the research participants. However, Miles et al. (2014) warn of the importance of negative or disconfirming instances. They recommend following up on negative or atypical responses as it may suggest a sample is too small or that there is a need to clarify concepts. In my analysis, I found much commonality, but I was also aware of some outlying responses or experiences only shared by one of the participants. In the case of only one participant having a particular experience, I ensured that it was clear that this was an outlying, unique response in my findings section.

Finding multiple interpretations on each theme in order that the results become richer and more realistic is important. Creswell (2014) says this also contributes to the validity of the findings. Once I had determined key concepts and themes, I was then able to make links and interpret the data in relation to other findings, concepts and theory in the literature.

Validity and trustworthiness

When researchers talk about validity, they are referring to whether or not the research has investigated and demonstrated what it set out to investigate. In other words that the methods and results have addressed the research questions (Somekh & Lewin, 2011). One of the more pragmatic methods of achieving validity in my interviews was to have a fair amount of structured pre-planned questions. The more structured the interview the more likely it is to have greater validity (McLeod, 2014). Whilst the interviews were semi-structured, I asked all the pre-prepared questions to all of the participants. To ensure the best validity possible of my research findings I was discerning in the selection of participants for my study. One way I attempted to avoid bias and therefore increase my validity was in my identification and selection of research participants. The two most recent schools in which I have worked have both had the deputy principal transition internally to the role of principal. Therefore, based on my selection criteria, they would have been suitable participants for the research. However, I made the decision not to include these principals in an attempt to increase the validity of my findings. I did not want my close relationship with either principal to affect either their responses or my own. I also used a strategy called member checking. I provided my participants with a transcribed copy of their interview, which enabled them to review their detailed responses and verify the interpretive accuracy. Casey and Murphy (2009) contend that participants reviewing the interview increases validity. Minimising bias was important, so I employed a number of strategies in the course of my research. An example of this was trialling my interview questions with a fellow educator to ensure clarity and pre-empt any possible issues. I practiced repeating back what I thought they had said to me in response to the questions to ensure my understanding was not influenced by my own possibly biased perspective.

I deliberately attempted to build a rapport with the participants. There were no obvious social status differences between myself as the researcher and interviewer and the participants, as they were principals and I was a deputy principal. I believe this relationship meant that they were able to relate to me reasonably well in that they had all

been deputy principals themselves in the recent past. I kept my questions as open-ended as possible and encouraged the participants to share their views. Because an interview is a social interaction the appearance or behaviour of the interviewer may influence the answers of the respondent. This is a problem as it can bias the results of the study and make them invalid (McLeod, 2014). So that my perspectives were minimally influencing my participants' views, I remained focussed on one of the most important facets of interviewing - listening. I had to continually remind myself that this was not simply a conversation or mutual sharing of opinions and experiences with a colleague, but was an interview where my views did not need to be shared.

Trustworthiness was also an issue I considered and addressed during the course of the research. The idea of trustworthiness is about establishing the following four things: that the research study's findings are credible, transferable, confirmable, and dependable (McLeod, 2014). Credibility is a confidence in the 'truth' of the findings. In addressing credibility, I sent the transcribed interviews to each of the participants for them to check and approve. The fact that my participants were from five different schools and yet all shared similar experiences of their enablers and barriers in transitioning to principalship is testament to a degree of the transferability of my findings. The vast majority of the participants' responses to the interview questions were all echoed by at least one or more of the other participants. Transferability is about the findings still being applicable in other contexts (Bryman, 2012). In regards to transferability, I mentioned in my ethics application that I hoped that some of the research findings would be of use to Boards of Trustees and possibly also to aspiring principals, and that they could make up their own minds about the findings and use them in their own situations, when either appointing a new principal or being appointed as a new principal. According to Bryman (2012), dependability is associated with the notions of repeatability and consistency. Dependability was considered during the coding of the data from the interviews related to the themes I had identified in the literature review. It was important that a theme wasn't selected based only on one or two of the participants' responses, but a theme was chosen because it arose consistently and repeatedly from among the responses of the participants and often

across more than one of the questions. Confirmability of the data as part of the idea of trustworthiness refers to the degree of neutrality shown by the researcher, so that their own motivation, interest or bias in the topic does not shape the research in any way (Bryman 2012). Ensuring my own personal views and beliefs were kept to myself and not allowing them to permeate the data, helped to ensure the confirmability of my research.

Ethical considerations

There is a moral responsibility associated with research. When seeking greater knowledge and understanding, Cohen et al. (2007) insist that researchers have an ethical respect and a code of behaviour that they follow with their fellow researchers and their research participants. The ethics process is one that needs to be considered throughout the entire research project from the design stage right through to the publishing of any findings (Davidson & Tolich, 2011). The knowledge that is gained from the interview process is very much dependant on the relationship between the researcher and their participants. Research can be plagued with ethical dilemmas. This section will critically discuss the ethical issues I considered throughout the course of this research. It is organised under the five key ethical principles outlined by Davidson and Tolich (2011): voluntary participation, informed consent, do no harm, avoid deceit, and confidentiality or anonymity.

Whilst undertaking research in New Zealand, Mutch (2005) reminds us that it is important to be aware of our unique context. We are obliged as researchers to consider the three main principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi. Participation, partnership and protection needed to be kept at the forefront of my mind during the course of this research. Ethics approval (Appendix C) from the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) was sought at the onset of this research and approval was granted on 14 May, 2019.

Voluntary participation

Voluntary participation in this research was important. It was important to me that participants felt in no way coerced into taking part. I was mindful of the fact that

principals, particularly first-time principals, are extremely busy people. Therefore, I chose to send my participants an introductory email, inviting them to take part in my research. I felt it was easier for them to say no to my request via an email than in person or via a telephone call. In the invitation email, I outlined as honestly as I could the time the interviews and the reading of their transcripts was expected to take. I also gave them an opportunity to ask any further questions about the research before agreeing. I gave them a week to consider their response.

Informed consent

Informed consent is one of the most commonly identified principles of ethical research (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2012; Wellington, 2015). Somekh and Lewin (2011) state "Informed consent means that those interviewed should give permission in full knowledge of the purpose of the research and the consequences of them taking part" (p. 26). The participants in this research were provided with written Participant Information Sheets (Appendix A) prior to their interview. These sheets explained the purpose and process of the research, as well as any possible risks and how these would be dealt with if necessary. They also covered how their privacy would be protected and explained that they had a right to withdraw from the research any time up to ten days after the data collection had occurred. Participants had the opportunity before interviewing began to ask any questions or seek any clarification regarding the nature of their participation or any other area of concern. They also signed Consent Forms (Appendix B) which were given to me before interviewing began.

Anonymity and confidentiality

Although anonymity could not be offered to the participants given that the interviews were face-to-face. I tried to minimise the risk of identification regarding the information they shared (Cohen et al., 2007). This was done by ensuring that all information shared with me was kept confidential and shared only between myself and my primary supervisor so that comments could not be matched to specific participants. I also took the further caution of changing the names of the participants to pseudonyms and I deleted any place

names, school names or any other detail which could be used to identify participants from any transcripts or from this final thesis. However, I am aware that despite my efforts I may not have been entirely successful in this area. Despite using pseudonyms and changing identifying details, the reported data may still be recognised by those who know the participants well or work with them. Turns of phrase or examples of practice may well be readily identified and ascribed to specific individuals.

Do no harm

Bearing in mind the ethical researcher's principle of 'do no harm' and because interviewing as a face-to-face activity can be intimidating, McGrath et al. (2019) suggest that the interviewer must be sensitive to the interviewee's reactions when sharing experiences on certain topics. Sometimes participants will be capable of handling these emotions themselves, but at other times the interviewer needs to take action to protect the participant. An example of this was letting the interviewees know that if there were any questions with which they did not feel comfortable or want to answer, then they were welcome to say "Pass" or even to terminate the interview at any stage.

Avoid deceit

I do believe this research was ethical. I have acted throughout this research with integrity and good faith. Hammond and Wellington (2012) note that integrity is not simply in the procedures followed, but in the sense of the respect shown to all participants, the transparency surrounding the purpose of the research and its possible benefits. I demonstrated respect and transparency throughout the research in my dealings with participants. I shared the transcription of their interview only with each participant themselves. I was open and honest in my interpreting and reporting of the data gathered. I believe the way the research is reported must demonstrate a high degree of integrity. The findings I have presented and the conclusions that I have reached are drawn directly from the content of the five interviews with the principals and in relation to the relevant literature on principal transitions.

Summary

This chapter has covered all aspects of the research design used in this project. It began by discussing the ontological and epistemological assumptions underlying the research. It also validated the approach to research design, the case study methodology and the data collection methods which I utilised to explore the five principals' experiences in transitioning to principalship. The method relied on data gained from the transcriptions of semi-structured interviews. The reader was also stepped through the data analysis procedures used with an accompanying explanation regarding the inductive approach based on the themes emerging from both my data and the relevant research in this area. Finally, the ethical considerations surrounding this research were discussed. The following chapter presents the findings of my research and is organised under the 18 questions asked of the participants.

Chapter Four: Presentation of Findings

Chapter Four presents the findings from the semi-structured interviews of principals in five Auckland primary schools. These interviews sought to investigate the principals' experiences of transitioning from the role of deputy principal at their school to that of principal at the same school. Their experiences as deputy principals were examined along with their transition experiences prior to being appointed as principal. Additionally, information was gathered on the preparation undertaken for the principal's role, as well as any more formal handover procedures. I was also interested in the research participants' perceptions about why they may have been appointed to the principal role and any succession planning which may have been considered and/or implemented in their schools.

The data gathering was designed to address the research aim and questions:

Research aim

- To examine the lived experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school.

Research questions

- What are the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school?
- What enablers and barriers do these first-time principals experience as transitioning deputy principals?

This chapter begins with a table showing the demographic information of the participants involved in the research, collected in Questions 1-3 of each interview. This is followed by an outline of the remaining fifteen questions asked in the interviews and a summary of those responses, organised under sub-headings that match the interview questions. The responses are organised for the most part in the order in which the questions were asked. The data are presented in tables according to the common categories emerging from participants' responses to these questions, except where tables are not required because

of the nature of the responses. That is, the responses being either yes/no responses or a single response to which all participants agreed. Responses to several questions have been combined, as these elicited data with obvious commonalities across the participants' responses.

The research findings

Participants' demographic information

Question 1: How long have you been working at this school?

Question 2: How long were you a Deputy principal at the school?

Question 3: Did you start working at this school as a DP / Team leader or Scale A teacher?

Table 4. 1 Participants' demographic information

	Years at current school	Years as DP at the school	First role at current school	DP at other school
Barbara	10	3	Scale A	Yes
Greg	5	4	DP	No
Glenis	15	11	Middle leader	Yes
Penny	7	6	DP	No
Trudy	6	1	DP	Yes

Participants came from five different primary schools in Auckland, two from West Auckland and three from the North Shore. Deciles[1] of each school ranged from decile 3 to decile 10. Female principals were over-represented in this sample, as only one male principal accepted the invitation to participate in this study. While a greater diversity of participants may have been desirable, these were the participants who volunteered and who met the study criteria of being principals who were appointed from having been deputy principals within their school.

[1] Deciles are a measure of the socio-economic position of a school's student community relative to other schools throughout the country. Decile 1 schools are the 10% of schools with the highest proportion of students from low socio-economic communities. Decile 10 schools are the 10% of schools with the lowest proportion of students from these communities.

Three of the principals had been deputy principals at other schools in addition to their current school, while the other two had been deputy principals only in their current schools. The principals ranged in age from 45 years to over 60 years and all of them had at least 20 years classroom experience. Their extensive classroom knowledge and teaching skills give the impression that these are a necessary pathway to principalship. All participants had been at their current school for five years or more. They had all been principals for less than five years, with three of them still completing their first year of principalship. For most of them therefore, this transition was a reasonably recent experience.

Experiences as a deputy principal

Question 4: Can you tell me about your experiences at this school as the DP?

I was interested to see whether there were any commonalities in their experiences as deputy principals and whether these experiences had a bearing on their later transition experiences to principalship.

Table 4. 2 Experiences as a deputy principal

Participant pseudonym	Leadership of curriculum & assessment across the school	Component of classroom teaching involved in their role	Day to day organisation of the school (e.g. relievers, timetables, discipline)	SENCO[2]	Changed from management-style activities /administration to leadership of people
Barbara	✓	✓			
Greg	✓	✓	✓		✓
Glenis			✓		
Penny	✓			✓	✓
Trudy	✓			✓	

Four of the five teachers spoke of teaching and learning responsibilities including school-wide curriculum and assessment tasks. They described their roles as involving data

[2] A SENCO is a teacher who co-ordinates for the provision of students with special educational needs or disabilities in the school.

analysis, dealing with student management systems, and setting up and moderating assessment practices at school.

The most common responsibilities for the participants when they were deputy principals in their schools were related to curriculum and assessment. This suggests that they therefore brought significant working knowledge and understanding in this area to their work as principals. Both Barbara and Greg also had some classroom teaching responsibilities, which contributed to their heavy workloads. Barbara was a team leader and classroom teacher of the senior students and Greg, whilst not teaching fulltime in his second deputy principal role, felt relieved in his second position as deputy principal not to have such a heavy teaching load as this enabled him to be involved in other areas:

> *Being more fully released to have more time to actually do the analysis of data, get more involved with the Board side of things. Particularly property … I took a role in the property committee with the Board. I still maintained a teaching load myself, doing groups and those sorts of things.* [Greg]

Two of the five participants noted having responsibility for the day-to-day oversight of the school in their deputy principal roles. Glenis articulated this very clearly as part of her response to this question:

> *All the day-to-day. And that's really my picture of the deputy principal, is that the deputy principal runs the school each day so the principal can kind of focus on tomorrow.* [Glenis]

The suggestion that the deputy principal, whose role is concerned with the daily running of the school, has a more immediate focus on the management of the school, compared with the principal whose role focuses on future planning for the school, is an interesting idea. This implies that the principal demonstrates strategic leadership as opposed to the deputy whose primary task is more the immediate managerial and administrative work of the school. This also relates to a later comment from Greg expressing that as a principal, his world has now expanded.

Glenis spoke of her role involving timetables, organisation of relievers, and '*lots of checking'*. The role of a deputy principal as she described it, really seemed very much administrative rather than leadership focused. Both Penny and Trudy held the position of SENCO in their schools as part of the deputy principal position. This was more of a pastoral positon and gave them both schoolwide responsibility and leadership. Both pastoral care and administrative tasks are involved in the principal's role so these experiences may have helped in shaping them as future principals. These common responsibilities and experiences as deputy principals seem to suggest that some of their less formal or structured preparation, was comprised of 'on-the- job' learning opportunities.

Penny described her role as a deputy principal as evolving from that of being a manager to becoming a leader, under two different principals. The differences in principals' philosophies of the role and responsibilities of deputy principals are illustrated in the comment below. A change in principal meant that Penny experienced a new development in her role which led to the leadership of learning for the whole school:

> *So, everything to do with the junior school I looked after but was also SENCO for the whole school as well. So, I was completely new to all of that so I learnt on my feet so SENCO took up as it does quite a big part of that role. And then it was the pastoral care of the juniors or you know data assessment and those sorts of things there. It developed a lot more after … new principal came because … there had been a principal here for a long, long time and things were a little bit stale perhaps so my role really developed into going from that manager to the leadership role. So that definitely changed and I had across school leadership of all of the learning across the school. I did that for about three years which was great.* [Penny]

This perhaps describes the general feelings of the deputy principals in this study as they evolved into principals, changing from being a manager to a leader. Greg also talks of this change from management to leadership when he describes the differences in his role from deputy principal to principal:

> *Just because of that CEO really role that you become, you know you're further away from the direct teaching and it's trying to become more strategic. Trying to take yourself out from some of those day to day fires that you fight as DP all the time which is your life is running around and sorting out. Be it relievers or be it*

you know little discipline things or whatever it is and it's trying to step above those to actually you're then controlling the DPs and how they're looking at their role and can you help them to step up and what you know and that just that strategic view. [Greg]

Experiences in applying for principal positions

Question 5: Did you apply for other principal positions before you became the principal of this school?

- Approximately how many principal positions did you apply for?
- What were your experiences in applying for those principal positions?

Question 6: Why did you apply for the principal's role here rather than at other schools?

These questions investigated the experiences of the participants in applying for other principal positions and whether they were also interested in applying for principalship in other schools as external candidates for these positions. This was important because I was interested in seeing whether they were actively seeking a principalship, or whether they only decided to apply for the role when the position became available at their school and they just happened to be in the right place at the right time.

All of the participants had applied for other principal positions prior to being successful in being appointed to the position as principal at their current school, with the exception of Trudy.

I had never had an aspiration to be a principal. [Trudy]

Trudy only applied after she had been the acting principal for five terms, before the then current principal resigned, and the job was advertised. In Trudy's case it appears that her promotion to principalship was unplanned and almost a default appointment, given her reluctance to apply for any other principal positions, and her lack of aspiration to be a principal in the first place.

The other four participants had applied for between one and three positions before being appointed to their current principal role. They all explained that one of the main reasons

they chose to apply to these external schools was the proximity of the schools to where they lived. This implies that principal posts which were conveniently located was a factor when these deputy principals decided to apply for positions outside of their own school:

> *No- why not? I didn't want to drive out of town. And it was close and I really feel a lot of attachment to the school.* [Barbara]

> *The one previous (application) was a school local to where I lived.* [Greg]

Encouragement to apply for principalship

Question 7: At any stage during your time as deputy principal were you encouraged to consider succeeding your then principal in the role?

- Who encouraged you?

In posing this question, I wanted to ascertain whether being encouraged to apply for a position as principal influenced their ultimate decision to apply internally for the role of principal at their school. I wanted to identify the type of people who may have encouraged them to apply for positions and whether they had been tapped on their shoulders by their principal earlier in their careers. This question was answered affirmatively by all principals. Three of them were encouraged by their current principal. Two had members of Board of Trustees who actively encouraged them:

> *I had one of the Board members after a Board meeting tell me I was their succession plan.* [Greg]

It is possible that this forward thinking and planning by a Board member of Greg's school was actually the beginning of a succession plan for the then principal, or it may simply have been an individual board member's off-hand comment. This may have given Greg increased confidence in his ability to be appointed to the position and perform it well.

Table 4. 3 Encouragement to apply for the principal position

Participant pseudonym	Encouraged by current principal	Encouraged by a Board member	Encouraged by another staff member	Encouraged by another principal or mentor
Barbara	✓		✓	
Greg	✓	✓	✓	✓
Glenis	✓		✓	
Penny	✓	✓		
Trudy			✓	✓

Penny also mentioned an ex-Board of Trustees chairperson being her 'champion'.

> *I was encouraged by the chairperson of the Board as well. But I used her as a referee which I thought was a really good referee to use and she certainly encouraged me to. Yes she encouraged me to apply for jobs and you know, she wasn't the chair when I got this job because she finished and then left.* [Penny]

It would seem that this encouragement from both former principals and Board members was often not formal. Four of these principals knew well in advance that their principal was going to be leaving within the next two to eighteen months. All of the then deputies had their current principals encourage them to consider appying for the principalship at their current school. This was with the exception of Trudy, as her principal was no longer working at the school. He had taken a year's leave for a Ministry of Education secondment and did not return to the school after this. As a result, Trudy had been in the acting role of principal for over a year, even though she commented that she never wanted to become a principal. The fact that her current principal hadn't encourage her to apply for this position may have had a bearing on her lack of aspiration to become a principal. When the role of principal was advertised in the participants' schools, other staff members encouraged the participants, with the exception of Penny, to apply for these positions. The idea of having a support person or mentor, especially a current principal, who encourages you to apply for principalships, seems to have had an influence on the participants' aspirations.

***Preparations for principalship**:*

Question 8: Were there any ways in which you were 'trained up' to become a principal, whilst you were a DP?

Question 11: Were there any specific / formal preparation you undertook before you applying for principal positions?

The responses to these questions, regarding the preparations undertaken for principalship, overlapped in parts. For example, Greg mentioned deliberately undertaking tertiary studies to gain a Master's qualification in education as part of his response to Question 8. Penny and Glenis mentioned their undertaking of tertiary study in response to Question 11; hence my decision to combine the answers to both questions into one table about preparation for principalship.

Table 4. 4 Preparation for principalship

Participant pseudonym	Completion of postgraduate study in education	Attendance at, or participation in Board meetings	Principal gave their DP an opportunity to lead	Previous DP responsibilities	NAPP/ 1st time Principals courses	Acting as principal prior to being appointed to the role
Barbara	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓(NAPP)	
Greg	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓(NAPP)	
Glenis	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Penny	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Trudy				✓	✓(FTP)	✓

All of the participants felt that within their role as deputy principals they were each given responsibilities which helped to prepare them for principalship. Three of them used almost the exact same phrase "*My principal involved me*" or "*My principal gave me opportunities*". Others expressed it in different terms. This suggests that principals involving their deputies in whole school leadership opportunities, helped to prepare them for their future role as principals. Possibly this is an informal type of succession planning and it may not have been recognised by the deputy principals at the time. Given the fact

that all of the participants experienced this, hints strongly at this being an enabler which helped them during their transition to principalship:

> *The principal giving me more opportunities to you know, she gave me the roles that were more leadership roles, they weren't just those management roles.* [Penny]

> *My principal was really inclusive so she had a very inclusive style.* [Glenis]

Four out of the five principals were either staff representatives on the Board of Trustees and/or deliberately attended all Board meetings. This suggests attendance at Board meetings and/or involvement with the Board may have contributed to internal applicants' success in being appointed to a principalship. Possibly the Boards in these schools would have known the deputy principal better than any external candidates. The Board members would also perhaps see this attendance as a sign of commitment to the school and they would realise the deputy principal had a working knowledge of how Boards and schools operated. Trudy attended Board meetings as the acting principal, and her current deputy principals attend all of their school's Board meetings, which suggest she also saw value in a deputy principal attending these meetings.

Four of the participants were involved in specific and related tertiary education, with three undertaking masters' papers and one working on her doctorate. This study was undertaken in a belief that this would help them be appointed to principal positions in the future. Trudy was the only principal who didn't do any further study. She said she had never aspired to be a principal and so perhaps did not feel the need to gain an additional academic qualification in order to be appointed to a principalship. The perception is that having studied at post- graduate level is not necessarily the most important aspect of suitability for principalship:

> *I've got my four-year degree, but I've never done any further study. I had absolutely no desire to ever do any more.* [Trudy]

Only two participants were involved in NAPP (National Aspiring Principals Programme). This perhaps suggests that NAPP as a pre-principal preparation programme, was not seen as a pre-requisite for appointment to principalship and this course is currently no longer offered to aspiring principals. Trudy, who had been acting as principal for five terms, was involved in a first-time principal's course before she became the principal. Greg said that whilst the NAPP course was good, it didn't really help him or prepare him for the position. These three questions elicited a wealth of information from the participants regarding their preparations for principalship. Many of these were deliberate actions undertaken by choice and involved a combination of relevant academic study and courses, as well as being given opportunities to 'step up' and be involved in principal work, either in an acting principal capacity or being involved in committees, or other traditionally exclusive principal activities like school finance and personnel.

Three of the participants mentioned having already acted as principal and so they felt that transitioning was a fairly smooth process. Glenis was acting principal for over a year whilst her principal was on a sabbatical. She also had a period of a term when she knew she would be starting in her position as principal at the beginning of the following year, and her current principal agreed to remain as principal until the end of the school year. Glenis described this as an ideal way to transition to the new position:

> *It was good, so things like budget, staffing for the following year, all of the decisions around the following year were mine. Which was really good because you know we started the year as we wanted to and we were already kind of making appointments and doing all of that kind of thing … I've always been part of the budget. I certainly know a lot more about the budget now than I did then. But I've always been included in those meetings. Both times that my principal was away when I was acting we had a building project so I've actually managed the building projects anyway.* [Glenis]

Penny was appointed as acting principal for several months in between her principal having resigned and her being appointed to the position. So, whilst she didn't know whether the principalship would be hers, she was doing the role for several months and this was seen, albeit unknowingly at the time, as her transition period. Trudy had also

been acting for over a year as principal at her school. These three principals all spoke of reasonably smooth transitions, which suggests having extended periods of time in the acting principal role shortens the transition period or certainly makes it a smoother event. Barbara initially spoke of there being no transition experience at all. However, when probed further in Question 13, she mentioned that the Board *"clued me in over finance and property".* There really was no period of acting in the position as the principal left on the Friday and Barbara was appointed over the weekend and officially began as principal on the Wednesday. She described this as a very difficult time.

Feelings of confidence in applying for principalship

Question 10: Did you feel you would be successful when you applied for the role?

From this question, I was trying to get an understanding of the participants' perception of their readiness, and confidence in their success at being appointed to the principal position.

Table 4. 5 Feelings of confidence in applying for principalship

Participant pseudonym	Not confident in securing the position,	Felt confident in securing the position
Barbara	✓	
Greg	✓	
Glenis	✓	
Penny	✓	
Trudy		✓

Once again, four out of five participants were unsure, not confident, had self-doubt and knew there was no guarantee that they would be successful in being appointed to the principal role at their school. Four of the five principals had been acting in the role of principal prior to their appointment. It was Trudy once again, who was an outlier with her response:

> *Yes, I was very confident, I had already done* (the role) *it for a year.* [Trudy]

The others were hopeful, but didn't really know whether the position would be theirs. Despite all their preparations, they perhaps felt there was an element of chance or luck in the appointment of a new principal and simply being an internal candidate did not necessarily mean automatic succession:

> *I had a lot of self-doubt … it was very stressful.* [Barbara]
>
> *I knew there was no guarantee.* [Greg]
>
> *I wasn't confident.* [Glenis]
>
> *I certainly didn't take it for granted … I had my ups and downs*. [Penny]

Reason for appointment

Question 12: In your opinion were the Board of Trustees keen to appoint a principal from within the school?

- Why do you think the Board appointed you?

In this question, I was hoping to elicit from the participants their sense of why they had been appointed to the position over other candidates. Whether they felt that their role as the deputy principal influenced the Board's decision. One principal, Barbara, spoke of her Board wanting continuity for her to continue along the same path as her predecessor. She felt that the Board had even written their job specification with her in mind. Barbara said she believed that they wanted to continue moving the school in the same direction:

> *I knew that when I saw the job description you know the person specification that I matched it very closely. And that was good because I knew that a lot of the things they were saying they wanted to continue with things I'd actually been responsible for. [Barbara]*

Table 4. 6 Reason for appointment

Participant pseudonym	Board wanted continuity	Shared my vision with the Board	Board believed DPs knew the school	Interviewed well	Seen as the right fit
Barbara	✓		✓		✓
Greg		✓	✓	✓	✓
Glenis		✓	✓		
Penny		✓	✓	✓	
Trudy			✓	✓	

Two principals spoke of being the right 'fit'. Perhaps suggesting that the appointments committee had a particular set of characteristics in mind which they hoped their future principal would possess:

> *And so I knew I was a good fit but I did not take it for granted in any way that I would get the job. It was really stressful ... So, in that respect I guess the answer to that would be yes but I think that they were definitely looking for whoever was best fit, best for the job. They were not trying to appoint somebody from internal. It was the best fit with the, you know, with everything that they've done to research in the person specification.* [Barbara]

> *I think they were looking to get the person that they wanted for the role that sort of fitted with the school being very much a community school where we are.* [Greg]

Three principals believed that sharing their vision with the Board of Trustees during their interview helped them to be appointed to the position:

> *In the presentation I wanted to show them (the Board) my vision for the school. And that it was different and yeah that it was about a direction that we hadn't gone*. [Glenis]

> *I'm my own person I've got my own vision and the first thing I did was do my presentation I did to the Board, to the staff. And also to the teacher aides as well.* [Greg]

All principals spoke of the Board being aware that as internal candidates they already "knew' the school. Greg summed this up well with his response:

> *I think probably knowing where the school was and where it needed to move to in terms of updating practice, what the staff were like and how what they valued and therefore knowing what the community valued as well and being a very much community driven school. I knew some things that were key and so gave me advantage in terms of sort of just knowing about the lay of the land a little bit, and where property was and where that vision for the school from a Board perspective was.* [Greg]

Three principals mentioned that interviewing well probably helped get them appointed to their position:

> *I was told that it was the best principal presentation he'd seen.* [Greg]

> *I did a presentation that was all about you know that what the school might be like in the next 10 years. And they said that they could see my passion and obvious knowledge of the school, but that I outshone the other candidates by my questions and the answers and things like that.* [Penny]

> *I think I prepared very well for my interview and I was mentored in that.* [Trudy]

It seems that it was important to the Boards that the applicants provided continuity and were the 'right fit' for the school. Therefore, being the existing deputy principal was perhaps an advantage to being appointed as they were already known by the school community and known if they were the 'right fit'. Furthermore, being a 'known quantity' gave an advantage of openness from the Board, ONLY IF they were the best applicant on their own merits and they also showed that they could move the school forward. There is a sense that these deputies knew they had to 'outshine' external candidates and worked to really 'get appointed' to the job on their own.

Transition experiences

Question 9: In what way did your DP experiences encourage you to apply for the principal's position?

Question 13: When you were appointed to this position what were your experiences in transitioning from DP to principal in this school?

- Were there any formal or informal hand-over procedures once you were awarded this position and before the previous principal left?
- Can you describe this to me?
- Were there any transition experiences that you felt were beneficial once you were appointed to this position and before you started the job? Can you describe these to me?

From Questions 9 and 13, I was investigating the transition experiences of the participants in the hand-over of the principalship position.

Table 4. 7 Transition experiences

Participant pseudonym	Opportunity to ask questions of retiring principal	Retiring principal involved me in important decision making	Board did the handover to me as the principal had already left	There was no real transition
Barbara			✓	✓
Greg	✓	✓		
Glenis	✓	✓	✓	
Penny	✓	✓	✓	
Trudy				✓

Trudy spoke of no handover or transition experiences as the principal had already left some 15 months earlier. However, once again, having acted in the position seems to have made the transition to actual principalship more of a formality than any large change in their role. The real transition was done whilst in the acting role. Greg spoke of wishing he had asked more questions of the retiring principal and felt the onus was on him to take in as much information as he could. He signed himself up for Ministry of Education courses in Finance (101) and Property (101).

It appears from all the participants' responses that transition experiences depended somewhat on how long the period was from when they were appointed to when they

took up the position and whether or not the previous principal was on hand to help with a handover. For Barbara, Penny and Trudy, their principal had already moved on from the school when they were officially appointed. However, both Greg and Glenis were able to ask questions of their principal and had between several weeks and over a term to be transitioned into their new role by the outgoing principal.

Deputy principal advantage

Question 19: Do you think it was advantageous to have first been deputy principal at the school?

- Could you see any benefits to already working at the school?
- What were these?

I was interested in hearing the participants' perceptions of the possible advantages to them applying for an internal appointment and being the current deputy principal at the school.

Table 4. 8 Deputy principal advantage

Participant pseudonym	Already know the community/ whanau	Already have established relationships with staff and local networks	Already knew the systems structures/processes of the school
Barbara	✓		
Greg	✓	✓	✓
Glenis	✓	✓	
Penny	✓	✓	✓
Trudy	✓	✓	✓

All participants were in agreement that being at the school as the deputy principal was a real advantage. Barbara captured the overall feeling of responses with her reply:

> *Yeah absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely without a doubt. Yes, because I know the community and the people knew me. And there was a lot of support for me as well. The fact that I was just continuing on with being responsible for the things I was responsible for ... a lot of things just continued initially.* [Barbara]

A common theme in responses was that of already "knowing". Knowing the community was mentioned four times. Knowing and already having relationships with staff was also stated four times. Knowing systems, procedures and structures of the schools arose three times. It appears that the principals strongly believe that having prior knowledge of a school's community, staff and systems and processes was a distinct advantage for an internal candidate. This makes sense and, given the known complexity and vastness of a principal's role, already knowing the staff and systems and direction in which the school was moving, would seem to be a strong advantage, and require a few less things for a novice principal to learn about.

Drawbacks to an internal appointment

Question 15: Were there any drawbacks to you being an internal appointment?

In asking this question, I expected to hear more about the difficulties or drawbacks associated with an internal appointment. On the whole the drawbacks were felt to be minimal. Both Barabara and Penny talked about an adjustment time for themselves and some members of staff to acclimatise to the change of relationships with staff. The roles that they used to do as deputy principals were not necessarily going to be part of their role as principals and both staff and the principal needed to adjust to this.

Table 4. 9 Drawbacks to an internal appointment

Participant pseudonym	Change in relationships with some staff	Change of vision	None really
Barbara	✓		
Greg		✓	
Glenis			✓
Penny	✓		
Trudy			✓

Barbara discussed the fact that she was not replaced as a deputy principal due to a falling school roll, and so she felt she had to continue with all her deputy principal responsibilities and take on the new role as principal:

> *Yes, the first thing would be, the fact that they actually didn't replace me … which meant that I had responsibilities that were continuing and people saw them as my responsibilities but I had the new responsibilities as well. So it meant that workload has been very big. You know there's that, part of that is because we're in a, we've been in a falling role situation so we have dropped down to one deputy to build middle leadership but that's still an ongoing thing but that's not properly resolved yet so that keeping like doing two jobs really would be hard.* [Barbara]

Two principals mentioned the change in relationships with staff members. It would seem that Barbara felt her transition from arriving at the school as a scale A teacher and working her way up to team leader and then deputy principal and then finally to principal, meant that her interactions and relationships with some staff became challenging. Penny also found this an interesting aspect of her transition and one of her biggest challenges when stepping up to principalship:

> *Having been at the school for ten years and worked my way up from being a scale A teacher to team leader to deputy to principal ... and that was a different relationship with people, so they have been, not usually, but there's been a couple of times, particularly with one member of staff that finding that balance of now I'm the principal is has sometimes been challenging I'd say*. [Barbara]

> *The relationship with the existing deputy principal you know was really … it took a long time for that to really balance out because we would've had, you know we had deputy principal meetings, the two of us and then suddenly I was in that principal role. And we didn't know that I was going to carry on, so while I was acting that was even more difficult - that particular relationship. I think it's that staff relationship stuff. And it was you know it was things like appraisal ... so I had to really change the way those relationships were with people. So I think that that was probably the biggest challenge.* [Penny]

Greg mentioned a change in the school's vision. Moving from a vision from the previous principal, that he felt bound to support as a deputy principal, to developing his own somewhat different vision, had some of his staff surprised. This could again be related to a change in position within the school meant an adjustment in relationships with staff members:

> *There were lots of changes that I still needed to make around practice and around collaboration and some things like that. But I think probably because you were*

> *part of the previous team, the leadership team, and although you're involved in some of the visioning at the end of the day it's not yours. And I think probably when you start setting your own vision and your own way of working that may have surprised some people in terms of the things that I found, I think are really important. And the priorities may be different from the previous principal.* [Greg]

Neither Glenis nor Trudy felt there were any drawbacks to their internal appointment.

Community response to principal appointment

Question 16: How do you feel the parents/ community have responded to you having been appointed to principal within your school?

I was curious to discover whether communities also felt an internal appointment of a principal was a positive experience and whether the principal felt the parents and community supported the Board's appointment.

Overwhelmingly the response from community and parents was reported to have been very positive with all of the principals reporting positive feedback. These responses seem to suggest that whilst they received plenty of positive feedback, most of the principals were aware that there may be unspoken negative comments out in their communities. This suggests that unless the deputy principal was unliked in the community, then a community very much supported a continuation of the school's leadership by an appointment of the deputy principal rather than an outsider. Could this be a case of 'better the devil you know'? Do these decisions to appoint internally speak of risk aversion by the Board of Trustees? Glenis mentioned that maybe the community don't really understand how the process of principal appointments works. She believed some of the community just thought that when the principal leaves the position automatically goes to the deputy principal:

> *I just had lots and lots of support … It was basically said 'don't waste your time doing this (interview process) - just give it to Barbara'. There was a feeling that you know that that (I) was a popular choice to people.* [Barbara]

> *Well I think I've had some good feedback from parents.* [Greg]

I had really positive feedback. I'm not liked by everybody at all. But yeah really positive feedback. I think many, I think a lot a parents don't necessarily understand the process and I think that there was a perception that it would be me anyway in the community. [Glenis]

The majority of people were, you know, positive. I got lots of positive emails which was really lovely. And because it was announced you know and the chair put a letter out and the next day I got you know, not lots but you know even three or four people that actually took the time to. But also people coming up in the playground you know. I'd had nothing negative, I didn't hear anything. [Penny]

Certainly to my face people on our PTA said things like you know I hope you get that job, they'd be crazy not to give it to you, those kinds of comments. And they were really supportive when I got it. But again you never know what other negative stuff that there is out there at the end of the day. [Trudy]

Succession planning

Question 17: As a principal now, have you considered succession planning for when you may ultimately leave this position?

- Have you or your Board been involved in any succession planning?

In asking this question I was looking to find out about any succession planning the principals may have started, in considering the future success of their school.

Table 4. 10 Succession planning

Participant pseudonym	Not really thought of succession planning	No need for succession planning	Started succession planning by involving deputy principals	Should start succession planning now
Barbara	✓	✓		
Greg			✓	
Glenis	✓	✓		
Penny	✓			✓
Trudy	✓		✓	

Four of the participants responded "*Not really"* to this question. One principal felt that she had started talking to her deputy principals and involving them in strategic planning, property and finance. Another also added that she worked very closely with her deputy principals.

Two of the principals didn't see a need for it. However, their interpretation of what was meant by succession planning may have been different to the others. I would contend that their understandings of succession meant that their responses were perhaps not truly indicative of their growing the capacity of their teachers and leaders to become future, senior leaders within their school. Perhaps they were thinking in more formal terms of succession, in that they hadn't specifically said to a deputy principal or aspiring leader, that they might one day take over the principalship. However, they all have identified within their teachers and middle and senior leaders, aspiring principals or at least those with leadership potential:

> *I think in the current environment any succession planning is ... you know I'm not ready to leave yet. I feel like we've just kind of, we're just hitting our straps.* [Glenis]

> *I would say is that my feeling is in New Zealand well and I've only worked in this school, that actually growing leadership inside the school is something that doesn't (happen), I haven't really seen greatly. So for me that's a big thing for me. But that's not about succession to principal. There's nobody here who would be wanting to do that.* [Barbara]

Penny said she hadn't as she is quite new to principalship:

> *But it would be good to think about right from an early start. Because you never know what might happen*. [Penny]

Two of the principals believed that part of their succession planning involved including their deputy principals in what might traditionally have been exclusively principal-type responsibilities. This is evidently a form of succession planning. Greg articulated this clearly with his response:

> *I've started. I've already started talking to my deputy principals … And I'm just trying to involve them in things like charter, and in property, talking to them about the finances, talking to them about some of the strategic things which I felt I missed out on. So when we come to do the budgets, we'll sit down and do it together so where is all the money coming from, why are we struggling in certain areas because I think that's got to be a part of your vision is how you finance various areas or prioritise areas. And I think that they'll need that but I also things like looking at SUE (staff usage and expenditure) reports. So it's just it's trying to prepare them to be better prepared than I was when I got in. Some of those big issues I found I'm sort of trying to build into their PD as well.* [Greg]

Further information on transition

Question 18: Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your transition to principalship in your school?

Penny, like many principals, felt that it was the issues of personnel and interrelationships that was the most difficult aspect of the job. Perhaps it is the number of interactions, from a wider variety of people than she would have had to deal with as a deputy principal, on a day to day basis that was so daunting for Penny:

> *I think it's that staff relationship stuff … I had to really change the way those relationships were with people. So I think that that was probably the biggest challenge.* [Penny]

Whereas Trudy identified the aspects of her job that she wasn't given an opportunity to be involved in as a deputy principal, for example; aspects of Board protocol, finance, staffing and property. She also mentioned the extra responsibility and stress of the job. However, this was done after the interview had concluded. Trudy was the last participant to be interviewed and she was interested in whether other principals had also mentioned the huge stresses of the job. Trudy has since handed in her resignation as principal and is now leaving the teaching profession all together. It is possible that the combination of never aspiring to be a principal, never really training for the different role, other than 'on-the-job' learning, and finding the whole role exceedingly stressful, led to her own feeling of being personally unsuitable for principalship.

Greg had lots of advice and reflective comment to add. He mentioned the job being a lot harder than he had expected, particularly the actual mechanics of many aspects of the principal role, such as reading a budget sheet. He also mentioned the step up in responsibility and talked about finding the right people to talk to. He had the following reflections and advice to offer:

> *And it's things like getting used to responsibility as well. Knowing who do you talk to and it's not only, not from a well-being point of view but also from a professional point of view. I think … being on those professional development principal groups is really key. It's just dealing with people, situations, families, outside agencies, ministry, in different capacities, it's difficult if you don't know. And I think the problem stepping up is because your world widens and it's a very different job from being a deputy principal, the step from team leader to deputy principal is smaller than from deputy principal to principal. Just because of that CEO role that you become and you know you're further away from the direct teaching and it's trying to become more strategic. Trying to take yourself out from some of those day to day fires that you fight as deputy principal all the time which is your life is running around and sorting out … But again it* (the principal role) *just has to become more and more hands off.* [Greg]

These responses suggest that the step up to being a principal is the biggest step in a teaching career. They are dealing with many more complex issues and people as the leader of a school. The principal is no longer working at grass roots with the students but are a step removed, and are more concerned with the strategic direction of the school. The stresses are greater than anticipated in some cases. Once they are a principal, being part of a principal Professional Learning Group (PLG) was a great support. I wonder whether what responsibilities they had or were given as a deputy principal influenced the extent to which their world was widened as a principal. In other words, if they were already doing many of the roles which are traditionally considered to be within the principal's remit, was the step up to principalship less onerous?

Summary

The key themes I have identified that emerge from the data include: the support given to the deputies for advancement from a mentor or principal; the idea of prior knowledge of the school community as being an advantage for an internal candidate; deliberate, self-

motivated preparation involving academic study; and participation in courses and attending Board meetings. These ideas appear to be contributors to successful preparation. Another theme was the transition to the principal role was eased through being given opportunities to undertake some of the principal's work, for example, acting principal roles, and being involved in strategic leadership activities. Each of these themes consists of a range of barriers and enablers that have been identified in the findings. These are the basis for the next chapter, which will explore the data in relation to the literature on transition experiences of deputy principals. Table 4.11 summarises the barriers and enablers experienced by first-time transitioning principals transitioning to principalship, based on the responses from the participants. I have summarised these findings under four different themes.

Table 4. 11 Barriers and enablers experienced by first-time principals transitioning to principalship.

Theme	Barrier	Enabler
Mentor support	- Not having a current principal who is on hand to offer support (i.e. principal has already moved on to new school or retired) by the time the new principal has been appointed - Difficult if no transition / hand over is done from previous principal to new one - The previous principal wasn't in a position to support the aspirant DP	- Being identified as being a potential leader by a mentor - Having the support and endorsement of current principal - Role modelling of good leadership practices
The internal advantage	- Expectation from some staff that the new principal will carry on in the same direction as the previous principal - Change in relationships, with staff members adjusting to new role of principal - Board consider the known candidate is not the 'right fit' for the school	- Knowing routines and procedures of a school - Having strong connections with staff - Already belonging to the community - Relationships already established across the school - Being aware of the Board's strategic direction and vision through attendance at Board meetings - Board's knowledge of DP as a 'known quantity' and being the 'right fit'. - Knowing tricky staff members
Principal preparation courses and academic study	- Having the extra time to study or attend courses on top of heavy DP/ principal workload - Courses no longer on offer (NAPP) - No motivation for further study	- Connecting with other aspiring or novice principals - Knowledge of best leadership practices from literature - Demonstrating a capacity and ability to use research and a preparedness for a career in educational leadership and administration
Opportunities to lead	- Lack of opportunity to be Acting principal - Too busy with daily running of school to be able to undertake strategic leadership opportunities	- 'On-the-job' learning - Acting principal may be seen as pre-cursor to permanent principalship - Acting principalship seen as a proving ground to Board - Experience with property /finance and other responsibilities of principalship

Chapter Five: Discussion of Findings

Chapter Five will discuss the main findings presented in the preceding chapter. It also provides my interpretation of the results in relation to the relevant literature regarding principal preparation, transitions, challenges of first-time principalship and leadership succession as reviewed in Chapter Two. The discussion is framed by the two research questions:

- What are the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their schools?
- What enablers and barriers do these first-time principals experience as transitioning deputy principals?

Overall, the findings of this research highlight the importance of effective preparation and transitions in 'making the move' to a first-time principal's role. Looking more closely at Table 4.11 on page 69, it is evident that the barriers facing an internal transition to principalship generally come from a perceived lack of something: a lack of a mentor or support person, a lack of prior knowledge, a lack of time, a course not available, and a lack of opportunity. Whereas the actions that have been done for or by the aspiring or novice principals could be considered to be enablers which helped smooth their internal transition. The five major findings or big ideas that have emerged from this research form the structure for each section of this chapter.

Mentor support

The support of a mentor appears to assist aspiring principals to gain their first principal's appointment. All participants in this study had a mentor who was a principal, but several of them had others in their professional and school communities who also encouraged them in their aspirations. This reflects previous research by Kelly and Saunders (2010) who identify the influence of other people on newly appointed principals, particularly former principals with whom new principals had worked during their teaching careers, as being

an important factor in their preparation and transition. The findings from my research would seem to indicate that it is commonly the previous principal of the school who takes on this role as mentor to the aspiring principal. Kelly and Saunders (2010) also suggest that the mentoring and coaching opportunities provided by these former professional relationships are significant, as these can help shape the new principals' thinking. Mentoring is well-known as an important facet of leadership development in several countries (Bush, 2015). One definition that was fairly representative of those given throughout much of the literature was developed by Hansford and Ehrich (2006).

> Formal mentoring is a structured and coordinated approach to mentoring where individuals (usually novices – mentees and more experienced persons – mentors) agree to engage in a personal and confidential relationship that aims to provide professional development, growth and varying degrees of personal support. (p. 44)

This definition would seem to match the experiences of the participants in this study, who each had a more experienced principal as a confidante and mentor, encouraging them and helping them prepare themselves for internal advancement to the principalship at their school. In nearly all cases, the former principal of the school knew well in advance that they were resigning and so had opportunities to plan for their succession.

This research suggests that mentoring would focus more on the relationship the mentor has with the mentee. I would suggest that mentoring concerns the development of professional thinking and practice of a less experienced person through the support, modelling and influence of a more experienced person. The mentor is a champion of the mentee and encourages them to reflect on their aspirations and provides experiences for them which effectively position them for achieving their goals.

A less formal, more personalised approach where skills and knowledge have developed over time seems also to be influential in preparing aspirants for first-time principalship. Mentoring, encouragement or coaching by a principal or by someone else outside of the school appears to be a good support. Both formal and informal mentoring has been

associated with effective succession planning. Zepeda et al.'s (2012) research from the United States into principal succession revealed that being mentored was life-changing and career-changing. This was because mentees were not just told what they wanted to hear, but things they needed to hear were also shown and communicated to them, suggesting that the mentees were being challenged, not just supported. This is perhaps the role of a critical colleague who is prepared to be impartial and facilitate clarification and extend their mentee's experiences. In this research of internally transitioning deputy principals, it was in most cases the former principal of the school for whom the participants in my study worked under as their deputy principal, who became this critical colleague.

This theme of support through mentoring comes through both in the research from the literature reviewed and the responses from this study's participants. The action of support appears to be an enabler for an internally transitioning school leader. Whilst I have been unable to locate literature which specifically mentions mentor support for internally appointed deputy principals, it is important that aspiring principals are aware of the usefulness of this form of support. This may come from a variety of mentors, including a current or former principal, a Board member, or another professional person who is able to fulfil this role.

It is likely that being identified as a potential leader by a mentor will have a positive influence on aspirant principals. This idea is also reflected in the research of Myung et al. (2011). An informal recruitment method which the authors called 'tapping', seems to be what occurred for three of the principals in this research. Tapping involves teachers being approached by school leaders to consider leadership roles. This suggests that identifying teachers in a school who display leadership skills is an essential form of succession planning. It would appear that this is exactly what the principal mentors of the participants in my research did. These deputy principals were identified by their principal as having strong leadership skills and so were encouraged to apply for the vacant principal position at their school. In a similar vein, Brundett et al., (2006) suggest that the

development of leadership success requires the recognition of potential leadership talent in others. They posit that principals need to view themselves as key agents of staff development, and that a culture of leadership distribution should be encouraged. The former principals in my study saw the potential of their deputy principals and perhaps acted as change agents in preparing their deputy principals to take over from them. The mentor principals offered leadership opportunities and experiences to their deputies to take on a variety of roles, which all of the participants believed helped them to prepare for principalship within their current school. Brundrett et al., (2006) also suggest that coaching and mentoring are key mechanisms for leadership development and this is reflected in the findings of my research. Several of the participants mentioned a significant professional who coached them and mentored them in their leadership development. This was in addition to their principal mentor.

Hansford and Ehrich (2006) contend that mentoring can encompass support both in preparation for principalship and once principalship has begun. In New Zealand, as part of the MoE 's *First Time Principals Induction* course (Evaluation Associates, 2020) which is undertaken once a new principal has been appointed, a mentor is assigned to each beginning principal. Part of the mentor's role is to support the principal with day to day queries. This sort of mentoring or internship is seen as a powerful leadership learning experience for both the participants and the mentors/coaches (Bush & Jackson, 2002). It could be inferred that mentoring shouldn't stop once a first-time principal has been appointed to their position, but should continue throughout their early principalship, regardless of whether they are an internally or externally appointed principal.

It seems that the mentoring of first-time principals is valuable both before and during principalship. In fact, mentoring programs are an important type of professional development activity for enhancing the learning and growth potential of novices as well as more experienced principals. The majority of the reviewed studies (Brundrett et al., 2006; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Zepeda et al., 2011) revealed that mentoring provides a range of positive outcomes for mentors and mentees alike. The study also showed that mentoring

was not without its drawbacks. Problems such as insufficient time for mentoring and personality/expertise mismatches can and do undermine the fostering of important conditions required for such a highly interpersonal and developmental relationship (Hansford & Ehrich, 2006). The principals in my research certainly valued the mentoring they received before their appointment to principalship and whilst this wasn't a question that I asked during the interview, two of the principals mentioned that they still contacted their former principal/mentor from time to time to ask for advice and support. The fact that their mentor knew the school and its community well meant that they were able to offer relevant, tailored advice.

In summary, the mentoring of aspiring principals is crucial. The findings from this research suggests that those principals who are appointed internally from the deputy principal position at their school still found being mentored by a previous principal to be an enabler in helping them both to secure a principal's position and to help them during the period of their transition to principal. Evidently, this indicates that perhaps successful deputy principals who gain principalship are life-long learners who believe they always have more to learn and are able to learn this by collaborating and networking with others. Even though they had had experience in their school (as internally appointed deputy principals) and despite having had the opportunity to be an acting principal, it would appear that mentoring of both aspiring and newly appointed principals is *still* considered important. This is because despite the fact that the deputy principals have a vast knowledge of their school, and its community, this is outweighed by the fact that the role of principal is so complex and challenging that one cannot always know the best way to respond to each situation. A new principal does not have the depth of experiences to draw upon as that of an expert, veteran principal. Regardless of the experience and familiarity of the internal candidate with the school and principal's role, mentoring seems to be a strong enabler for transitioning deputy principals. The need for mentoring seems not to be outweighed by the prior knowledge and experience of a candidate, as is discussed in the following section.

Prior knowledge and experience or the internal advantage

Prior knowledge of a school and its community seems to be an important advantage to the internal applicant for the role of principal. One of the most pervasive phrases that appeared in the responses to the question regarding why principals thought they were appointed by Boards was 'I already knew'. This makes sense when one considers that this study was undertaken in regards to the internal appointment of a deputy principal who was already working in the school. The advantage that all the participants recognised was that being an internal candidate meant that they had prior knowledge of the inner workings of their schools and had already developed relationships with staff and families within their schools. The advantages of an internal candidate arise throughout the literature (Buckman et al., 2018; Chan, 1996; Walker & Kwan, 2012) in two main times during the principal transition period - at the time and decision of appointment, and once their new position begins.

Being an internal appointment to the principalship (by having already been a deputy principal in the same school) appears to make for an easier transition to the role. The literature suggests that when internally appointed deputy principals take up principal positions, they already know a considerable amount about that school and therefore, many of the usual problems first-time principals experience, will be alleviated (Spillane & Lee, 2014). Research into new principals' transitions suggests that already being familiar with their school usually means that these principals have the advantages of information and staff cooperation (Brown-Ferrigno, 2003; Bush, 2011; Spillane & Lee, 2014). This would seem to align with the experiences of all the participants in my study regarding their prior knowledge of the school and many facets of its operation.

Knowing a candidate is the 'right fit' might also be viewed as a risk-averse strategy by schools. Being a 'known quantity' at a school could be perceived as an advantage to the internal applicant and new principal. All the principals in my research stated that their Boards of Trustees (who are responsible for the appointment of principals in New Zealand schools) already knew them. All the principals had regularly attended Board of Trustees'

meetings and been involved in wider school activities and so were 'known quantities'. Gronn and Lacey's (2006) research appears to echo this sentiment. Selection panels that act on behalf of their schools and communities are trying to ensure that the people to whom they give senior level responsibilities are known, as distinct from unknown, quantities. This tendency is a way of trying to guarantee that new appointees fit a preferred mould or are mouldable (Cranston, 2012; Gronn & Lacey, 2006; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). This implies that moulding is likely to have already occurred if appointees come from within the school where they have already been socialised in preferred ways in prior lead-up roles consistent with the overall leadership culture of a school. The principals in this study were seen as a good personal fit for their schools having already proved themselves as capable deputy principals.

Prior knowledge of the school's directions and vision also appears to be an advantage and an enabler for a person seeking appointment to principal. Internal applicants are better positioned for employment advancement within their schools than external applicants (Buckman et al., 2018; Chan 1996). Buckman et al.'s (2018) research concludes that potential advancement within a school may be attributable to knowledge and experience obtained while working in the same environment. Furthermore, the practices and experiences of internal candidates may be more aligned to the school protocols and give internal applicants an advantage over external ones. Their internal experiences with the development of a school's culture, vision and goals may have positively impacted their chances of promotion. This finding reflects to some extent the responses of two of the principals in this study. However, one of the principals felt that his vision for the school departed from the previous principal's, and he wanted to start setting his own vision. This suggests that whilst the internal candidate for principal may have knowledge and internal experience of developing the school's culture, vision and goals, they may not always choose to follow their predecessor's vision or specific direction for the school.

It has been proposed that a possible disadvantage to being an internally appointed principal was that relationships had to be renegotiated. The literature (Garcia Garduna et

al., 2011; Kristof-Brown et al., 2005) also seems to support this proposition. In his book on the first 90 days of leadership, Watkins (2003) warns transitioning leaders that the experience of changing roles may be different if they are hired from within rather than from outside of their organisation. He contends that those promoted from within may have to invest significant amounts of time renegotiating pre-existing relationships with co-workers. In my findings, renegotiating of relationships was certainly a challenge for three of the participants. All three of them spoke of the change in relationships and the tricky conversations through which they had to navigate, in establishing themselves in their new roles.

Watkins (2003) contends that another disadvantage with being an internally appointed principal, is that they may receive even less support than external hires. It could be assumed that because they have worked closely with the previous school principal, they know what to do (Watkins, 2003). More than one of the participants in this study suggested that they would have liked more support from the Board and/or the Appointments committee during their transition to and first year of principalship. Participants alluded to the fact that they believed the Board of Trustees felt they knew what they were doing and just let them get on with it, checking in less frequently than they might have done had the new principal come from outside of the school.

In the main, prior knowledge of a school and its community was generally perceived by participants as an advantage, particularly in securing the position of principal. It was also seen both in the literature (Buckman et al., 2018; Ng, 2015; Weindling, 2000) and in the lived experiences of the research participants, as a benefit and enabler for new principals transitioning into their first few months of principalship. However, barriers for internally appointed principals included the re-negotiation of pre-existing relationships with those within the school's community, and a feeling of less support being offered by the Board of Trustees for the internally appointed principal as opposed to a principal who may have been appointed from outside of the school.

Principal preparation courses and academic study

Principal preparation courses seem to be of limited value for aspiring principals. This was seen both in the literature (Gurr & Drysdale, 2015; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Hess & Kelly, 2005) and reflected in the findings of this study. There appears to be a disconnect between the practice of principal preparation and the related expectations of the actual practices of principalship (Bristol et al., 2014). The results from this study of principals in Trinidad and Tobago seem to also support international literature on the topic (Garcia Garduna et al., 2011; Hess & Kelly, 2005). Participants in principal preparation programmes or new principal induction programmes, speak of the limited helpfulness of these in terms of practical know-how for the position. However, as a networking opportunity, participants in this study appreciated the contacts they made and the professional networking that these courses enabled. It is widely acknowledged that the role of principal preparation programmes is to make participants better prepared for their job (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Shelton, 2010). However, criticism of these programmes has shown a variety of weaknesses. The most frequently cited weakness refers to the practical knowledge taught in principal preparation programmes. It is commonly agreed that these programmes provide few relevant practical skills for leading a school (Bristol et al., 2014; Oplatka & Waite, 2010). Principal preparation programmes have been criticised for not adequately preparing principals for current, complex school environments (Bristol et al., 2014; Shelton, 2010). Many training programmes do not adequately prepare principals to lead improvement in teaching and learning. These programmes often fail to respond to local needs, they provide inadequate follow-up support, and they don't track the newly appointed principals into the workplace in order to continually improve their programme (Shelton, 2010). These seem to align with the responses of participants in my research, when they spoke of the *National Aspiring Principal's Programme* (NAPP) as not really being helpful in terms of the practical nature of their roles in finance and property management. None of the principals in my research spoke of any follow up from the courses they attended whilst transitioning to the principal role. The courses they did attend were not tailored to their specific, local needs and even though the principals in

this study were all appointed internally from the position of deputy principal, they still felt to varying degrees, unprepared for principalship.

Having gained a principal's position there is still much support needed for a fledgling principal. The early difficulties facing first-time principals are well documented (Bagi, 2016; Bennett et al, 2011; Ogram & Youngs, 2014; Wylie, 2017) and include the feelings of being unprepared, the handling of unanticipated issues, measuring up to the legacy of a previous principal, managing interpersonal relationships with and among staff, and feelings of isolation (García-Garduño, et al., 2011). This feeling of being ill-prepared for principalship was expressed by all the participants in this study. It has been suggested that professional development activities should have closer links made between principal preparation, and ongoing principal professional development in order to strengthen the continuity of learning experiences framed around principles of instructional leadership (Peterson, 2002).

In New Zealand, whilst there are no compulsory courses that a school principal must complete, there is currently a new support package offered to beginning principals. It is offered by Evaluation Associates who have been contracted by the Ministry of Education, and called *Leadership Advisor Support* (Evaluation Associates, 2020). This support is context-based rather than taking the form of a predetermined programme. The feedback from beginning principals thus far has been overwhelmingly positive, despite this programme only being introduced last year. Principals self-nominate and a leadership advisor meets with each beginning principal to understand their context. Over the course of two years they both respond to the new principals 'just in time' needs and provide in-depth support. While the support is always responsive to current needs, the support is deliberately spread over time in order to build the beginning principal's capacity as a leader of learning. The leadership advisors have found that while beginning principals seek support in a range of areas, the most common areas are strategic planning and reporting, staff and stakeholder relationships, personnel, property and finance (Manners, 2019). This type of course was described as the sort of support, which all of the principal participants

in this study said they needed. The help with the 'nuts and bolts' of running a school especially in areas of finance and property enables a better transition for these internally appointed deputy principals. If the participants in my research had been offered this ongoing support at the beginning of their principalship, as part of a transition programme they may have had an easier transition. Despite being internally appointed and knowing the school's systems and processes, and despite knowing their school's community, the principals in this study still felt a gap in their knowledge and experience regarding finance and property that principal preparation courses had failed to provide.

It seems that academic preparation before entering the principalship and qualifications obtained for the role of principal are highly valued by transitioning deputy principals. In New Zealand, since the 1989 introduction of *Tomorrow's Schools (*Department of Education, 1988*)* with its self-managing schools, there are no formal requirements or pre-requisites for becoming a principal beyond a teaching certificate. However, all the participants in this research undertook various forms of more formal preparation to position themselves optimally for principalship. All except one participant deliberately studied educational leadership at post-graduate level, with two completing a Master's qualification and one working towards finishing her doctorate in education. It perhaps also indicates that these particular internally appointed principals are pro-active self-starters who had strong aspirations for principalship and worked steadily towards achieving their goals, like many other aspirants who want to transition to their next career. Attempting to implement practice-anchored theory in their study perhaps helped them to cope successfully with the challenges of management before becoming principals (Normore, 2004; Oplatka, 2019). Similarly, Rimes (2017) contends that aspiring principals will have demonstrated their commitment to education through post-graduate study. One barrier for all deputy principals in New Zealand is that there is currently no *pre-principal* preparation course available. Notwithstanding the fact that these courses were reportedly of limited support to aspirant principals, they did offer networking opportunities for participants to make contacts with fellow teaching colleagues who were also seeking to become principals. In place of these courses, aspiring principals, including those in this

study, can and have undertaken ongoing formal academic study. This was perceived as an enabler by the majority of the participants in this research. They felt this assisted them with their appointment and/or transition to principalship. Perhaps reflecting the New Zealand situation, where once appointed, principals make their own choices regarding professional development, the principals in this study have continued to seek avenues of professional development which they believe will grow them in their leadership. They have been involved in a myriad of professional learning opportunities including: attendance and participation in first-time principal courses, being members of an ongoing professional learning group, attending Ministry of Education courses on finance and property, and taking part in principal conferences and symposiums. These new principals have personalised their support and growth based on their ongoing needs and have made the most of opportunities to connect with other principals. Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) believe that more personalised support is essential and a larger perspective of individual journeys and the key elements fostering successful transition to leadership and leadership action may help in avoiding unnecessary derailment. So, even though these internally appointed deputy principals in this research had already worked in their schools and knew the routines and procedures and had already made important connections with their community, they still felt the need and the benefit of continuing to develop themselves professionally in order to be the best leaders they could be for their schools.

In summary, the lack of principal preparation courses, or the lack of truly effective and relevant principal preparation courses does not appear to have curtailed the aspirations and indeed successes of these internal applicants in being appointed to principal positions. I believe an important observation regarding the character of four of the five principals involved in this research is that these principals were self-motivated drivers of their own professional development and academic advancement and positioned themselves well to take on principalship within their respective schools. Interestingly, the one principal who did not choose to undertake any tertiary study and who explained that she had never aspired to be a principal, is now no longer a principal and has recently moved into being self-employed in an industry outside of education.

Opportunities to lead

The opportunity of being an acting principal sometimes appears to give some aspiring principals an advantage over possibly more academically qualified external candidates. However, an experienced principal may be more likely to be externally appointed to the position over an internal candidate. 'On-the-job' experiences, reported by principals in Hess and Kelly's (2005) study, have been more helpful in preparing principals for their current positions than their graduate school studies.

The opportunity to be an acting principal possibly eases a transition to principalship for an internally appointed deputy principal. Participants in this study all identified experiences which they believed helped ease their transition to principalship. These experiences were many and varied. However, one thing they all had in common was that these experiences involved some component of leadership. Perhaps most obvious and all-encompassing of these was the opportunity to be the acting principal for a period of time. For two of these principals it was a significant period of more than a school year, five terms in fact, and for a third principal it was for several terms. These opportunities to act in the role of principal took place whilst the principal was on leave or when the principal had resigned and left the school. However, as identified earlier, this 'acting up' opportunity was still not sufficient to overcome several of the new principals' self-identified deficits in financial and property management. This aligns with Rimes' (2017) Associated Heads of Independent Schools, Australia (AHISA) research report on transition to headship. The 22 participants in her Australian study of transition to headship responded that the three most helpful forms of preparation were study, mentoring and experience. In terms of experience, the most noted opportunity was acting as principal in the principal's absence. Other mentions included experiences gained as a deputy principal; working with the Board and attending Board meetings or subcommittee meetings such as: finance and property; other within-school opportunities for exercising leadership; and having responsibility for large elements of the school's operation. These mirror the experiences of the principals in my research. This suggests that internal promotion to principalship has a component of 'being in the

right place at the right time'. If a deputy principal has had an opportunity to be in the role of acting principal it may increase the likelihood that they will be appointed as principal at that school. The more experiences and opportunities an aspirant has in dealing with aspects of the school's operation, the more likely they are to be appointed to principal and to have a smoother transition into the role. In this study four out of the five participants were in the role of acting principal for an extended period prior to taking up the reins as principal. Acting as a principal appears to be a highly authentic experience, as the person is actually doing the job of the principal, and this is training that is unlikely to be replicated by any programme or academic qualification (Draper & McMichael, 2002). It is possible that this 'acting' experience was recognised by the appointment committees of the participants in this research.

There appears to be a dearth of literature on the topic of acting principalship. Back in the early 2000s, Draper and McMichael wrote several articles on acting headship in Scotland (Draper & McMichael, 2001; 2002; 2003). However, acting heads in the United Kingdom are appointed by a local authority, not from the school itself necessarily, for a variety of reasons such as illness of the principal, secondment to a local authority project, and retirement or resignation of the current head. This is quite different from the New Zealand setting where the school and Board of Trustees usually only appoint an acting principal from within the school itself. This is usually given to the current deputy or assistant principal. In the United Kingdom, acting posts may be seen as a way of solving a short-term problem rather than as an opportunity for the development of staff. The findings reported by Draper and McMichael (2003) suggest acting headship can be both. Some of the acting principals in their study had been excited by their experience of acting headship and wished to be permanent heads. This included some who had not had headship as a career goal prior to their acting experience. This may well have been the case with two participants in my study who had never aspired to be a principal, but after over a year of each of them acting in the role, they both decided to apply for the principal position. A period of acting experience gives not just the incumbent, but also the employer an opportunity to see someone in a leadership post (Draper & McMichael, 2003). The four

participants in my study, who had all had periods of acting in the role of principal, were all seen by their appointing Boards of Trustees to be capable in that role and perhaps were appointed to the role permanently on the basis of this opportunity which allowed them to prove themselves.

Building leadership capacity across a school helps with deputy principal transitions to principalship by offering more opportunities to lead. The participants in this study identified many opportunities, including being involved in what would normally be considered exclusively a principal's domain: property and finance committees and related activities. The building of leadership capacity in those areas is an effective means of improving and sustaining an organisation (Fullan, 2003). The opportunities afforded these deputy principals may have been effective in two ways: as an opportunity for the aspirant to experience the role of the principal in administrative areas that the deputy hadn't previously had experience with; as well as being a way of building leadership capacity across the school. Therefore, the opportunities to lead which were made available to the participants in this study, and the fact that these opportunities were taken up, support the proposition that as well as helping to build leadership capacity they also were a means of facilitating succession planning across a school. Furthermore, the identification, recruitment and training of leaders could guarantee an ongoing leadership pipeline, and the role of succession planning could be strategic and purposeful in building leadership capacity (Bennett, 2017). Building leadership capacity is the key to effective succession and sustainability in an organisation. Such practices create layers of leaders who are prepared to take over and sustain the organisation when key people leave (Mansour, 2011; Matte, 2012). Bush (2011) refers to this notion as growing your own leaders and also links it to a wider provision for leadership development. All participants in my research had numerous opportunities to gain in-school experience prior to taking up their school principalship. This reflects the findings of a United Kingdom case study by Kelly and Saunders (2010) which examined transitions to primary school headship. The participants in their study all had experiences which provided a valuable base of pre-service knowledge and skill. These same principals, like their New Zealand counterparts in my study, had

engaged in a range of whole school initiatives and were coached by their heads to play a significant part in school leadership through engagement in improvement planning, evaluation and work with governors, a role similar to Boards of Trustees in the New Zealand setting. This was alluded to by the participants in my study, where the sense of ultimate responsibility which they then felt on their appointment to the principal role was mentioned by a few of them in their final reflections of their transition to principalship.

It would seem that these experiences and opportunities described by principals in this study may have been mutually beneficial to both the school, in terms of growing leadership capacity within their schools as part of their succession planning, and equally beneficial to the principals themselves in terms of preparing them for their roles as future principals. The experiences certainly seemed to enable the principals to grow in confidence in their ability to take on the role of ultimate school leader as well as giving them an opportunity to hone their leadership skills in a familiar setting.

The linking piece

Each of the four themes could be considered important elements which prepare and position an internally appointed deputy principal for principalship. However, it seems that there is not one element on its own which is sufficient to ensure a smooth transition to principalship for these deputy principals. Rather it is a particular combination of most of these key elements that contributes to transition. Figure 5.1 visually represents how these four elements which are represented by four cogs - mentor support, the internal advantage, opportunities to lead, and academic study/preparation - support and ease a smooth internal transition to principalship for deputy principals.

This research suggests that it is likely that this smooth transition will only occur if the right conditions are met. The cogs and the central linking piece all work together with the central piece, 'the right fit', being the crucial piece. In this model, the central piece is the toothed rod which helps to move or transition a deputy principal towards the principalship. Despite the fact that the other four cogs or elements of a successful

transition are present, if the candidate's personality or character is not perceived as the 'right fit' for the school community, then it is unlikely that a successful transition will be made. The 'right fit' refers to an individual's skills, abilities, or values that fill a gap in the needs of the school community. The 'right fit' for the deputy principal would be a school which is able to meet the aspirant's needs by providing rewards or experiences which they seek. This is deemed a good mutual fit for both school and principal.

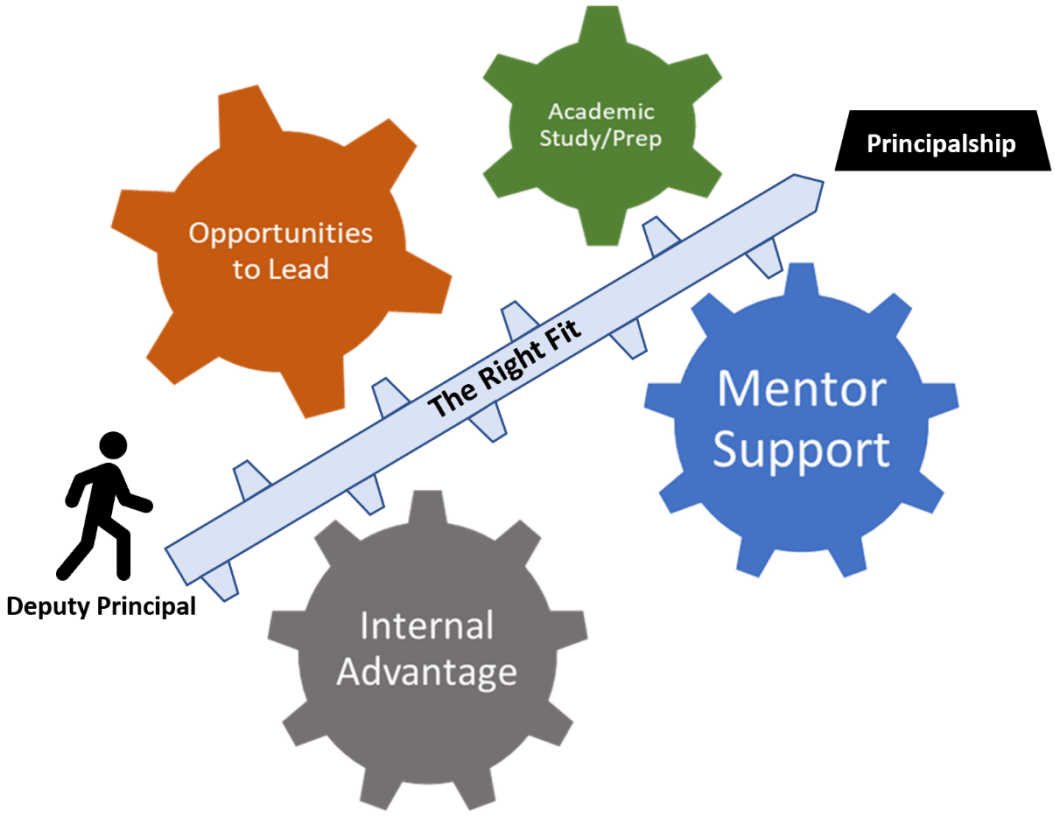

Figure 5. 1 Enabling elements for supporting internal transitions to principalship

The inclusion of each of the cogs adds specific support to the transition. There is an element of interdependence between the cogs in that they all need their teeth to mesh with the teeth of the 'right fit' cog to ensure strong movement in the right direction. In other words, whilst being the 'right fit' for a school is essential, if a transition to principalship is to be successful, then the other cogs also have a part to play. If one or even two of these enabling cogs were missing, a transition to principalship could still occur

but this process may be more difficult with other cogs needing to play a major role. The combined strength of each of the four cogs enables an increased movement towards principalship for the deputy principal and would be likely to result in a more positive transition experience. The torque, or turning force, is an unseen element in the model. However, this research suggests that this force may be provided by the internal motivation of the deputy principal. The 'mentor support' and the 'internal advantage' cogs are the largest, and therefore the most important and, along with the 'opportunities to lead' cog, represent the enablers most commonly identified by the participants in this study.

All four cogs working together could make it more likely that the transition to principalship will be easier. The 'mentor support' cog relates to the importance of an advisor, guide or critical colleague for a principal, both before appointment to principalship and during the early stages of a first-time principal's appointment. This support may have a significant impact on the success of the internal principal's transition. The 'internal advantage' cog refers to the knowledge of the school systems, knowledge of the community and already established relationships with key personnel. These elements may enable a smoother and possibly faster transition for the new internally appointed principal as they are socialised into their role. The internal advantage would of course only occur if the appointing Board wanted the school to continue in the direction it has been going and is not seeking to 'turn around' the school in any major way. The 'academic study and preparation' cog refers to the participation in principal preparation courses or programmes, the gaining of higher academic qualifications and the ways in which the networking opportunities and deeper levels of thinking afforded by these experiences may support the transition from deputy to principal. The 'opportunities to lead' cog refers to the leadership experiences, especially that of being an acting principal for an extended period within the school, which may be offered to deputy principals prior to being appointed to the role. The figurative 'spoke in the wheel' of this diagrammatic process, which would cause gears to grind and possibly reverse, would be the barriers to transitions which are discussed earlier in this chapter and also in the conclusion.

Summary

This findings chapter has looked at the four themes that emerged from the findings. The four themes - the support of a mentor; the internal advantage; academic study and preparation courses; and leadership opportunities - were discussed in terms of the barriers and enablers presented in the findings and the literature. The discussion of each theme was based on the perceptions and experiences of the participants in relation to the current literature and analysed in regard to the wider implications of deputy principals transitioning into the role of the principal. This led to the presentation of a visual model of the key elements which support an internally appointed deputy principal making a smooth transition to the principalship. The model noted the requirement of a deputy principal to be the 'right fit' for the school in order to allow the enabling elements to assist with both gaining the principal's position in the first place and to support the internal transition to principalship. The main conclusions and recommendations from this study are discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusions and Recommendations

This research has critically examined the lived experiences of deputy principals transitioning to principalship in their schools. Chapter Six presents the five key conclusions from this study. These are discussed in terms of the wider implications for schools, Boards of Trustees and government policy. Recommendations for further research are made alongside the identification of this study's strengths and limitations.

The research questions for this study were:

- What are the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school?
- What enablers and barriers do these first-time principals experience as transitioning deputy principals?

This small-scale, qualitative study involved interviews with five primary school principals from across Auckland, all of whom had transitioned internally from the position of deputy principal in their school to the position of principal. In summary, this study provides an insight into the enablers and barriers faced by these particular first-time principals who have transitioned from deputy principal roles within their school. These experiences illustrate the possible ways for aspiring principals to position themselves to ensure the smoothest internal transition to principalship.

Key Conclusions

Mentor support

The importance of the support of a mentor for an internally transitioning deputy principal, both as an aspiring principal and throughout a first-time principal's early years in the role, was one of the foremost conclusions of this research. Having a critical friend or colleague, especially one who has been a principal themselves, appears to be an effective enabler for transitioning deputy principals. Literature (Bush, 1995; Hansford & Ehrich, 2006; Kelly & Saunders, 2010) supports the contention that the coaching, influencing and championing of an aspiring or novice principal is helpful in growing the leadership capabilities of the mentee. This is especially true if the mentor is the current or former principal at the

aspiring deputy principal's school. The mentor is then able to offer advice that is specific to the school and community of the mentee. This study suggests that this gives the internal appointee an enhanced advantage.

Mentorship of a deputy principal has been associated with effective succession planning in schools. An aspiring principal being identified as a potential leader by a mentor also has a positive influence on the aspirant. Principal mentors need to view themselves as key agents for staff development. Mentoring is a key mechanism for leadership development and is a strong enabler for ensuring better transitions for internally appointed deputy principals in their move to the role of principal.

Conversely, a lack of mentoring could also be considered a barrier for an internal transition to principalship. If an aspirant deputy principal does not have the current principal at the school, maybe because they have already moved on to another school or retired, this could mean that mentoring would not occur. This could be a distinct barrier for the aspirant. Pre-emptive succession planning in a school would help to alleviate this barrier.

Internal advantage

Being internally promoted to the role of principal from that of deputy principal in the same school can be a real advantage. Prior knowledge of how a school operates and already having established relationships within the school community can be seen as a definite benefit for enabling a strong and smoother transition to principalship. Many of the usual problems which first-time principals experience can be alleviated by a familiarity with the school's processes and procedures and by already having staff members' cooperation and the community's backing. Prior knowledge of the school's direction and vision is also advantageous for an internally appointed principal. The professional and personal socialisation process has already occurred to a great extent for the internally appointed principal, before they even begin their new role.

The research suggests that there are also disadvantages to being an internally transitioning principal. One of these is that certain already established relationships between the new principal and staff members may need to be renegotiated. This may involve significant amounts of time and emotional energy. However, already knowing the way their staff members operate could help in saving time for the internally appointed principal. The other disadvantage that this study suggested was that some Boards perceived that the internally appointed novice principal would require less support than if they had been an external appointment. Boards perhaps felt that the internal appointment meant the new principal knew what they were doing and therefore did not need the assistance of the Board to the same extent as an externally appointed principal and so did not check in on them as frequently. Ensuring that Boards of Trustees appreciate the enormity of the move from deputy to principal, even within the same school, could increase the likelihood that internally appointed principals still receive adequate support throughout their transition.

Academic study and preparation courses

Study at a tertiary level and obtaining a post-graduate qualification before entering the principalship was valued by the internally appointed principals in this study. Professional reading may enable aspirants to demonstrate an ability to use research and to gain knowledge of best leadership practices from literature. Academic study may show a certain type of preparedness for a career in educational leadership and administration.

Principal preparation courses such as NAPP were of limited value for deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship. Once a principal preparation course is completed, there is no further follow-up or checking in on the novice. If attendees at these principal preparation courses used these as networking opportunities, they would at least be able to follow up with each to offer mutual support and advice.

It is possible that any recent professional learning the deputy principal has received will be aligned with the school's strategic direction. This means that academic studying and

principal preparation courses may equally help both external and internally appointed deputy principals in their transitions to principalship. However, this study seems to show that the internally appointed principal with their more relevant, in-school professional learning may have an enhanced advantage in transitioning to principalship over an externally appointed principal.

A difficulty or perhaps barrier for deputy principals undertaking further training or academic study is having the time to do this. Given the heavy workload of a both a deputy principal and a principal in the day to day running of the school, it is hardly surprising that they may have neither time nor energy for further study.

Opportunities to lead

One of the findings from this research is that the more opportunities a person has to experience principal leadership and responsibilities, especially in the role of acting principal, the more effective their transition to the role of principal will be. This finding may possibly be transferable to other settings, but due to this being a small-scale study, this is not certain. Acting in the role of principal, especially in the school at which they eventually become principal, is a highly authentic experience; the person is actually doing the job of the principal and this is unlikely to be equalled by any preparation programme or study. Research shows many examples of how 'on-the-job' experiences have been helpful in preparing principals for their role (Hess & Kelly, 2005; Kouzes & Posner, 2017; Zemke, 1985). Experiences and opportunities to act in a leadership role are mutually beneficial to both the school and the aspiring principal. By creating a leadership pipeline, a school is able to grow the leadership capacity within their school, as well as this being an important part of its succession planning. The aspiring principal benefits from being offered leadership opportunities as this gives them a taste of their future role, and an opportunity to hone their leadership skills in a familiar environment. It can help them to grow in both skill and confidence in their ability to take on the role of principal. It also positions them well for being internally promoted to principalship, as the appointing

board is aware of the leadership opportunities the aspirant has experienced authentically leading in the actual school at which they wish to become principal.

However, it is not always possible for a deputy principal to have an opportunity to be an acting principal as the principal may not take any extended leave or be sick for a period of time. Furthermore, the opportunities to lead may work against an internal aspirant. If their leadership performance in these acting higher roles is considered poor, perhaps because they already have a full load as well as these additional responsibilities, then this may be remembered in the school community and count against them when attempting to transition to principalship.

Right fit

This study seems to suggest that in many cases, without the 'right fit', regardless of any other qualifications or skills a person may have, a strong transition to principalship will be unlikely to occur. The 'right fit' refers to an individual's skills, abilities, or values which can fill a gap in the needs of the school community and is also able to meet the needs of an aspirant by providing rewards or experiences which they desire. This is deemed a good mutual fit and seems to be central to a successful appointment and internal transition to principalship.

This fit also refers to the candidate's personality or character. An internally appointed deputy principal is already known to the appointing panel to some extent and the 'right fit' may already have been determined. The questions of whether this person will get on with other members of staff and fit with the unspoken, unarticulated culture of the school may have already been answered for the internal candidate. The 'right fit' can be that elusive, hard to pinpoint quality that a Board is looking for when looking to appoint a new principal. It can also be a determining factor in the ease at which a principal transitions to their new role and is the central piece (see Figure 5.1) to a smooth internal transition to principalship.

The findings suggest that the 'right fit' is a factor in deputy principals being internally promoted. This suggests that deputy principals who are in a position to apply internally for the principal's role, need to be extremely sensitive to how they might maximise their positioning as being the 'right fit' to be the next principal. While this might be an advantage, it could also be a considerable disadvantage if their actions or their practice somehow reduce their standing as the 'right fit'. Or if a single event occurs that is perceived by an appointing board as reducing the candidates 'right fit-ness' temporarily or more permanently, this could be a distinct disadvantage. Therefore, while being the existing deputy principal might be seen as an advantage, this can be a precarious position.

Recommendations

The main recommendations that emerge from this study fall under three categories. The first regards governmental policies, the second category is recommendations for Board of Trustees and the final category is recommendations for aspiring principals.

Government policies - Preparation for principalship must be more relevant and responsive to needs

The government must acknowledge that the role of the principal is vast and complex with many barriers and stresses to cope with on a daily basis. This issue has been evident since the reforms of Tomorrow's schools were introduced to New Zealand over thirty years ago (Department of Education, 1988). It is a big step for any deputy principal, whether internally or externally appointed, to become the CEO of a school as well as be the leader of learning for that same establishment. Those aspiring to be principals need the best preparation possible so that their promotion and transition to the ultimate leadership role in a school is the most effective it can be. Principal preparation courses should be more practical in nature, and ensure they cover aspects of the job that a deputy principal would not normally have experience in. For example: following multi-million dollar budgets which include property planning, assets and curriculum spending, as well as understanding the process for developing and maintaining such budgets. These preparation courses should be responsive to the needs of first-time internally appointed

principals and could be mandatory for deputy principals who are aspiring to principalship at their school.

The support of a mentor or coach for aspiring principals would be extremely valuable. Just as trainee teachers have associate teachers and beginner teachers have tutor teachers, so too could aspirants have mentors, who are paid to offer advice, practical support and be a confidante for aspiring principal both before and throughout their transition to principalship. An experienced current principal or an ex-principal would be ideal. This critical colleague is essential to ensure that those who are striving to become principals are fully aware of the role for which they are preparing. The first-time principal would benefit from an experienced mentor who can talk through tricky situations with their mentee and hopefully reduce the burnout which is evident in so many of our New Zealand principals. The *New Zealand Principal Job Shadow* (http://www.teachnz.govt.nz/professional-development/principal-exchanges/new-zealand-principal-job-shadow-pilot/), a professional development opportunity established by the Ministry of Education in 2019, allows six principals or aspiring principals to shadow an experienced principal for four weeks. This could be an excellent opportunity which would provide aspirants with a mentor. The internal transition to principalship could be enabled if an aspiring deputy principal were to shadow their own principal.

A final recommendation is that the Ministry of Education could consider ways of better supporting deputy principals to transition to principalship within their own schools. They could provide training to principals and Boards of Trustees on the importance of and need for succession planning in their schools so that internal appointments of deputy principals to principal become an attractive and viable option for Boards who may currently have suitable, aspiring deputy principals.

Boards of Trustees - Increased support is critical for internally appointed principals

Internally appointed principals deserve to be better supported by their Boards. This requires Boards of Trustees ensuring that their support is responsive to the needs of the

internally appointed principal. It is essential that Boards budget for ongoing professional development for their principal and check in regularly to see how the new principal is assimilating into their new role. Difficulties with re-negotiating relationships and roles with current staff can be an issue for internally appointed principals. Another issue can be an internally appointed principal sharing their new vision for the school with their staff, who may assume that the school's current trajectory will continue. Boards also need to be aware of the increased workload of their first-time principal and ensure that their well-being is a priority.

Principal succession is an area all Boards must consider and the need to establish systems to manage these changes is essential. The identification, recruitment and training of leaders would help create an ongoing leadership pipeline, and the role of succession planning would be strategic and purposeful in building leadership capacity. These systems should be established before they are needed, as a change in school leadership can have an adverse effect on school culture and student achievement.

Aspiring principals – Proactivity in their own leadership development is needed

It is vital that those wishing to become principals position themselves optimally to ensure a smooth and effective transition to the role. Making the most of any leadership opportunities would serve an aspirant well. The most authentic leadership experience would be a period as acting principal. Any opportunities to learn more about the multi-faceted role of the principal should be grasped, especially regarding aspects of the role that a deputy principal would not normally experience. Regular attendance at the school's Board of Trustees' meetings is a means of ensuring a deputy principal understands the wider operation of a school. The added benefit of this for a potential internally appointed deputy principal would be ensuring that the Board of Trustees (some of whom will be members of a future appointing committee) know who they are and of what they are capable. Proactive aspiring principals would be well advised to find their own mentor. This might be their current principal, an experienced principal from another school or former principal.

Recommendations for future research

An examination of the lived experiences of internally appointed deputy principals transitioning to principalship has shed some light on the enablers and barriers which are experienced by these people. Further research, with an increased sample size for example, on deputy principal transitions in the New Zealand context may give a wider perspective. Similar research in different contexts such as at secondary schools or 'hard to staff' schools would be valuable to see if the findings are reflected in these contexts. Further studies which involved interviewing the staff at a school that had their deputy principal transition to principal in their school would be worthwhile. The voices of those who have worked through and under such transitions would be captured and analysed and offer a school-wide perspective and a broader representation of these transitions.

This study also calls for more research which illustrates the complexity of the internal transition of deputy principals to principalship, and how this impacts on both the individual leader and the teaching and learning in a school. Longitudinal studies which follow principals in their first five years of principalship in New Zealand schools could be undertaken in order to understand and capture the full cycle of transition as opposed to a moment in time which was captured by this study.

Strengths and limitations

The use of the semi-structured interview to collect rich data from my research participants was a strength of this study. Its use gave an opportunity for the principals to openly share with me their perceptions and insights regarding their transitions. Critical examination of their responses was possible through the use of a qualitative research design and by situating this research within an interpretive paradigm. The careful selection of a small number of appropriate participants meant that the principals' authentic responses were able to be analysed in greater depth than would be possible with a larger group of participants. However, this strength could also be considered a weakness as I interviewed five principals, a relatively small sample size, and the qualitative methodology means my findings cannot be generalised. The principals who were interviewed were all white,

middle class leaders which may have distorted my findings and had I a more culturally diverse sample of participants my results may have been different. The influence of factors like these is difficult to gauge in a study of this nature.

The fact that I am currently seeking my first principalship could be a possible bias in my interpretation of participants' responses. Braun and Clarke (2013) suggest that this is a possibility when undertaking thematic analysis. I do hope however, that this study does fairly represent the experiences of the transition which were shared by the principals interviewed in this study. It is hoped that the findings described in this study are somewhat transferable and that new, first-time principals who may read this thesis discover in part, some shared experiences in the descriptions given (Creswell, 2014).

Final conclusion

This study suggests that there may be an advantage in already having been a deputy principal in the school when one moves into first-time principalship at that school, as key relationships are already established and prior knowledge of how the school operates has already been acquired. To be hired as the principal, an applicant needs to be the 'right fit' for the school and internal applicants have already demonstrated this fit one way or another. I am hopeful that this study contributes in some way to shedding light on these complex yet vital transitions. It is hoped that as well as highlighting the challenges and barriers faced by transitioning deputy principals, that this study also emphasises the value of the enablers which were identified by the participants. This underscores the importance of the support needed by aspiring and novice principals in order to best prepare them for arguably one of the most influential roles in the education of our young ākonga. This support may be in the form of participation in responsive professional development including tertiary study and principal preparation courses, as well as being offered opportunities to engage in principal leadership activities such as acting as principal for a period of time. Support may consist of an experienced mentor for a first-time principal, who is there to listen and advise them in all the complex issues facing a new

appointee. Alternatively, it may be simply support in the form of checking in as to the well-being of a novice principal.

This research has critically examined the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school. What has become evident to me throughout this research is that transitioning to principalship is an important issue. The role of the principal is complex and extremely influential in the success of a whole school community and so it is crucial that those individuals who decide to become principals and lead a school are prepared and positioned optimally to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

Kāhore taku toa i te toa takitahi, he toa takitini
We cannot succeed without the support of those around us

References

Arar, K. (2017). How novice principals face the challenges of principalship in the Arab education system in Israel. *Journal of Career Development*, *45*(6), 580–596. https://doi.org/10.1177/0894845317726392

Aurora Bernardo, M., Nest, T. van der, & Smith, L. (2019). Conceptualising leadership for principals of Catholic schools in Aotearoa, New Zealand. *International Studies in Catholic Education*, *11*(1), 80–95. https://doi.org/10.1080/19422539.2018.1561135

Bagi, S. (2016). Beginning principals. Why do they need support? *Independence*, *41*(2), 6–8, 10. https://independence.partica.online/independence/independence-vol-41-no-2-october-2016/flipbook/10/

Bell, J. (2005). *Doing your research project: A guide for first time researchers in education, health and social science* (4th ed.). Open University Press.

Bennett, F. (2017). Who will lead? Principal succession in New Zealand's faith-based integrated schools. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, *32*(2), 3–15.

Bennett, F., Carpenter, V., & Hill, M. (2011). Passing the baton: Principal succession in schools. *Leading and Managing*, *17*(1), 28-44.

Berliner, D. (2002). Educational research: The hardest science of all. *Educational Researcher, 31*(8), 18–20. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X031008018

Berryman, D. R. (2019) Ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods: Information for librarian researchers. *Medical Reference Services Quarterly*, *38*(3), 271–279.

https://doi.org./10.1080/02763869.2019.1623614

Boyatzis, R.E. (1998) *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, *3*(2), 77–101. https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2013). *Successful qualitative research: A practical guide for beginners.* Sage.

Bristol, L. S. M., Brown, L., & Esnard, T. (2014). Socialising principals: Early career primary school principals in Trinidad and Tobago. *Journal of Educational Administration and History, 46*(1), 17–37. https://doi.org./10.1080/00220620.2014.855178

Brooking, K. (2004). *New Zealand Boards of Trustees' selection of primary school principals.* (Unpublished Doctoral thesis). Deakin University.

Brooking, K., Collins, G., Court, M., & O'Neill, J. (2003). Getting below the surface of the principal recruitment 'crisis' in New Zealand primary schools. *Australian Journal of Education*, *47*(2), 146–158. https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410304700204

Browne-Ferrigno, T. (2003). Becoming a principal: Role conception, initial socialization, role-identity transformation, purposeful engagement. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *39*(4), 468–503. https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X03255561

Brundrett, M. (2000) The question of competence: The origins, strengths and inadequacies of a leadership training paradigm. *School Leadership & Management, 20*(3), 353–369. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632430050128363

Brundrett, M., Rhodes, C., & Gkolia, C. (2006). Planning for leadership succession: creating a talent pool in primary schools. *Education 3-13, 34*(3), 259–268. https://doi.org/10.1080/03004270600898919

Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods* (4th ed.). Oxford University Press.

Buckman, D. G., Johnson, A. D., & Alexander, D. L. (2018). Internal vs external promotion: Advancement of teachers to administrators. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *56*(1), 33–49. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-01-2017-0003

Bush, T., & Jackson, D. (2002). A preparation for school leadership: International perspectives. *Educational Management & Administration*, *30*(4), 417–440. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263211X020304004

Bush, T. (2011). Succession planning in England: New leaders and new forms of leadership. *School Leadership and Management, 31*(3), 181–198. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632434.2010.545383

Bush, T. (2013). Leadership development for school principals: Specialised preparation or post-hoc repair? *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 41*(3), 253–255. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143213477065

Bush, T. (2015). Preparing new principals: Professional and organisational socialisation. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership, 44*(1), 3–5. https://doi.org/10.1177/1741143215620317

Bush, T. (2018). Preparation and induction for school principals: Global perspectives. *Management in Education*, *32*(2), 66–71. https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020618761805

Cardno, C. (2003). Emerging issues in formalising principal preparation in New Zealand. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning*, *7*(17). https://hdl.handle.net/10652/1940

Cardno, C. (2012). *Managing effective relationships in education.* Sage.

Casey, D., & Murphy, K. (2009). Issues in using methodological triangulation in research. *Nurse researcher*, *16*(4), 40–55. https://doi.org/10.7748/nr2009.07.16.4.40.c7160

Chan, W. (1996). External recruitment versus internal promotion. *Journal of Labor Economics*, *14*(4), 555–570. https://doi.org/10.1086/209822

Charan, R., Drotter, S., & Noel, J. (2010). *The leadership pipeline: How to build the leadership powered company* (2nd ed.). John Wiley & Sons.

Clarke S., & Wildy, H. (2004). Context counts: Viewing small school leadership from the inside out. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *42*(5), 555–572. https://doi.org./10.1108/09578230410554061

Clarke, S., Stevens, E., & Wildy, H. (2006) Rural rides in Queensland: Travels with novice teaching principals. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 9*(1), 75–88. https://doi.org.10.1080/13603120500471958

Cocklin, B., & Wilkinson, J. (2011). A case study of leadership transition: continuity and change. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership*, *39*(6), 661–675.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education* (6th ed.) Routledge.

Cranston, J. (2012). Exploring school principals' hiring decisions: Fitting in and getting hired. *Canadian Journal of Educational Administration and Policy*, (135), 1–35.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). Sage.

Crotty, M. (1998). *The foundations of social research: Meaning and perspective in the research process*. Sage.

Crow, G. M. (2007). The professional and organizational socialization of new English head teachers in school reform contexts. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, *35*(1), 51-71.

d'Arbon, T., Duignan, P., & Duncan, D. J. (2002). Planning for future leadership of schools: An Australian study. *Journal of Educational Administration, 40*(5), 468–485. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230210440302

Davidson, C., & Tolich, M. (2011). *Social science research in New Zealand: Many paths to understanding.* Pearson Education.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2005). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.). (pp. 1–32). Sage.

Dinham, S., Elliott, K., Rennie, L., & Stokes, H. (2018). *'I'm the principal': Principal learning, action, influence and identity*. ACER Press.

Dockett, S., & Perry, B. (2001). Starting school: Effective transitions*. Early Childhood Research & Practice*, *3*(2). ERIC database. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED458041

Doneley, L., Jervis-Tracey, P., & Sim, C. (2018). Principal succession and recruitment: Trends and challenges. *Leading and Managing*, *24*(1), 59–72.

Draper, J., & McMichael, P. (2001). *Acting headship: A professional opportunity* [Research report]. University of Edinburgh.

Draper, J., & McMichael, P. (2002). Managing acting headship: A safe pair of hands? *School Leadership & Management*, *22*(3), 289–303.

Draper, J., & McMichael, P. (2003). Keeping the show on the road: The role of the acting head teacher. *Educational Management & Administration, 31*(1), 67–81.

Duke, D. (1987). *School leadership and instructional improvement*. Random House.

Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics*, *5*(1) 1–4. https//.doi.org/ 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

Evaluation Associates. (2020). *Leadership advisor support for beginning principals.* Retrieved March 26, 2020, from http://www.evaluate.co.nz/projects/support-for-beginning-principals/

Fink, D. & Brayman, C. (2004). Principals' succession and educational change. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(4), 431–449.

Fullan, M. (2003). *The moral imperative of school leadership.* Corwin Press.

Fuller, E. J., Reynolds, A. L., & O'Doherty, A. (2017). Recruitment, selection, and placement of educational leadership students. In M. D. Young & G. M. Crow (Eds.), *Handbook of research on the education of school leaders* (2nd ed., pp. 77–117). Routledge.

Fusarelli, B. C., Fusarelli, L. D., & Riddick, F. (2018). Planning for the future: Leadership development and succession planning in education. *Journal of Research on*

Leadership Education, *13*(3), 286–313. https://doi.org/10.1177/1942775118771671

Gabarro, J. (1987). *The dynamics of taking charge.* Harvard Business School Press.

García-Garduño, J. M., Slater, C. L., & López-Gorosave, G. (2011). Beginning elementary principals around the world. *Management in Education, 25*(3), 100–105. https://doi.org/10.1177/0892020611403806

Gates, S. M., Guarino, C., Santibanez, L., Brown, A., Ghosh-Dastidar, B., & Chung, C. (2004*). Career paths of school administrators in North Carolina: Insights from an analysis of state data.* RAND.

Goodlad, J. (2004). *A place called school.* McGraw-Hill.

Gronn, P., & Lacey, K. (2006). Cloning their own: Aspirant principals and the school-based selection game. *Australian Journal of Education, 50*(2), 102–121. https://doi.org/10.1177/000494410605000202

Gurr, D., & Drysdale, L. (2015). An Australian perspective on school leadership preparation and development: Credentials or self-management? *Asia Pacific Journal of Education*, *35*(3), 377–391. https://doi.org/10.1080/02188791.2015.1056589

Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge Journal of Education, 33*(3), 329–352. https://doi.org/10.1080/0305764032000122005

Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2010). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. *School Leadership & Management, 30*(2), 95–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663214

Hammond, M., & Wellington, J. J. (2012). *Research methods: The key concepts.* Routledge.

Hansford, B., & Ehrich, L. C. (2006). The principalship: How significant is mentoring? *Journal of Educational Administration*, *44*(1), 36–52. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230610642647

Hargreaves, A. (2003). *Teaching in the knowledge society: Education in the age of insecurity.* Open University Press.

Hargreaves, A. (2005). Leadership succession. *The Educational Forum, 69*(2), 163–173. https://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00131720508984680

Hargreaves, A., & Fink, D. (2006). *Sustainable leadership*. Jossey-Bass.

Hart, A. W. (1993). *Principal succession: Establishing leadership in schools.* SUNY Press.

Hartas, D. (2010). *Educational research and inquiry: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.* A & C Black.

Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Routledge.

Hess, F. M., & Kelly, A. P. (2005). *Learning to lead? What gets taught in principal preparation programs. PEPG 05-02* [Report]. Program on Education Policy and Governance. ERIC database. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED485999

Holloway, I., & Todres, L. (2003). The status of method: Flexibility, consistency and coherence. *Qualitative Research, 3*, 345–357 http://doi.org/10.1177/1468794103033004

Kane, P. R., & Barbaro, J. (2016). Managing headship transitions in U.S. independent schools. *Peabody Journal of Education*, *91*(5), 616–627. https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2016.1227184

Kelly, A., & Saunders, N. (2010) New heads on the block: Three case studies of transition to primary school headship. *School Leadership & Management*, *30*(2), 127–142. https://doi.org/10.1080/13632431003663180

Korach, S., & Cosner, S. (2017). Developing the leadership pipeline: Comprehensive leadership development. In M. Young & G. Crow (Eds.), *Handbook of research on the education of school leaders* (pp. 262–282). Routledge.

Kouzes, J. M., & Posner, B. Z. (2017). *The leadership challenge: How to make extraordinary things happen in organizations*. John Wiley & Sons.

Kristof-Brown, A. L., Zimmerman, R. D., & Johnson, E. C. (2005). Consequences of individuals' fit at work: A meta-analysis of person-job, person-organization, person-group, and person-supervisor fit. *Personnel Psychology, 58*(2), 281–342. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2005.00672.x

Kvale, S., & Brinkmann, S. (2009). *Interviews: Learning the craft of qualitative research interviewing.* Sage.

Lee, L. C. (2015). School performance trajectories and the challenges for principal succession. *Journal of Educational Administration*, *53*(2), 262–286. https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-12-2012-0139

Leedy, F., & Ormrod, J. (2001). *Practical research, planning and design* (7th ed.). Merrill Prentice Hall.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Walstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning* [Report]. University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement; University of Toronto, Ontario Institute

for Studies in Education. https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/How-Leadership-Influences-Student-Learning.pdf

Lortie, D. C. (1976). Schoolteacher: A sociological study. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *12*(1), 104–110.

MacPherson, R. (2010). Neophyte leaders' views on leadership preparation and succession strategies in New Zealand: Accumulating evidence of serious supply and quality issues. *Leading and Managing*, *16*(1), 58–75.

Male, T. (2006). *Being an effective head teacher*. Paul Chapman. https://doi.org/10.4135/9781446213285

Manners, D. (2019, June). New package of support available for established principals. *New Zealand Principal*, *34*(2), 29–31. http://nzprincipal.co.nz/wpcontent/uploads/2019/05/NZP_T2_2019-web-part-4.pdf

Mansour, A. (2011). *Building leadership capacity for sustained school improvement* [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. University of Leicester.

Matte, J.V. (2012). *Building school administrator capacity: The relationship between leadership development and administrator self-efficacy* [Doctoral dissertation]. South eastern Louisiana University. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED551202

McMillan, J. H. (2004). Educational research: Fundamentals for the consumer (4th ed.). Pearson.

McGrath, C., Palmgren, P. J., & Liljedahl, M. (2019) Twelve tips for conducting qualitative research interviews. *Medical Teacher*, *41*(9), 1002–1006. http://doi.org/10.1080/0142159X.2018.1497149

McLeod, S. (2014). *The interview method.* Retrieved April 23, 2020, from https://www.simplypsychology.org/interviews.html

Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.

Merton, R. K. (1968). *Social theory and social structure* (1968 enlarged ed.). Free Press.

Miles, M. B., Huberman, A. M., & Saldaña, J. (2014). *Qualitative data analysis. A methods sourcebook* (3rd ed.). Sage.

Ministry of Education. (2008). *Kiwi leadership for principals: Principals as educational leaders* [Resource document]. http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/Leadership-development/Key-leadership-documents/Kiwi-leadership-for-principals

Ministry of Education. (2020). *Information for first-time principals.* Retrieved March 28, 2020 from http://www.educationalleaders.govt.nz/First-time-principals

Montecinos, C., Aravena, F., & Bush, T. (2018). Moving the school forward: Problems reported by novice and experienced principals during a succession process in Chile. *International Journal of Educational Development*, *62*, 201–208. https://doi.org./10.1016/j.ijedudev.2018.04.004

Mutch, C. (2005). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guide to getting started*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Mutch, C. (2013). *Doing educational research: A practitioner's guide to getting started* (2nd ed.). New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Myung, J., Loeb, S., & Horng, E. (2011). Tapping the principal pipeline: Identifying talent for future school leadership in the absence of formal succession management

programs. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *47*(5), 695–727. http://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X11406112

Nelson, S. W., de la Colina, M. G., & Boone, M. D. (2008). Lifeworld or systemsworld: What guides novice principals. *Journal of Educational Administration, 46*(6), 690–701. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230810908280

New Zealand Dept. of Education. (1988). *Tomorrow's schools: The reform of education administration in New Zealand*. ERIC database. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED299040

Ng, P. T. (2008). Developing forward-looking and innovative school leaders: The Singapore leaders in education programme. *Journal of In-Service Education, 34*(2), 237–255.

Normore, A. H. (2004). Leadership success in schools: Planning, recruitment, and socialization. *International Electronic Journal for Leadership in Learning, 8*(10), 1–22.

Notman, R., & Henry, D. A. (2011). Building and sustaining successful school leadership in New Zealand. *Leadership & Policy in Schools, 10*(4), 375–394. https://doi.org/10.1080/15700763.2011.610555

Ogram, M., & Youngs, H. (2014). The expectation and the reality: Issues of sustainability and the challenges for primary principals in leading learning. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice, 29*(1), 17–27.

Oplatka, I. (2019). The nature of school leadership: Global practice perspectives. *Educational Review*, *71*(5), 670–672. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131911.2019.1603924

Oplatka, I., & Waite, D. (2010). The new principal preparation program model in Israel: Ponderings about practice-oriented principal training. In A. H. Normore (Ed.), *Advances in Educational Administration: Vol. 11. Global perspectives on educational leadership reform: The development and preparation of leaders of learning and learners of leadership* (pp. 47–66). Emerald Group Publishing.

O'Toole, J., & Beckett, D. (2014). *Educational research: Creative thinking & doing* (2nd ed.). Oxford University Press.

Papa, F. C., Lankford, H., & Wyckoff, J. (2002). *The attributes and career paths of principals: Implications for improving policy*. Teacher Policy Research Center. https://cepa.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/Career_Paths_of_Principals.pdf

Peters-Hawkins, A. L., Reed, L. C., & Kingsberry, F. (2018). Dynamic leadership succession: Strengthening urban principal succession planning. *Urban Education*, *53*(1), 26–54. http://doi.org/10.1177/0042085916682575

Peterson, K. D. (2002). The professional development of principals: Innovations and opportunities. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 38*(2), 213–232. http://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X02382006

Piggot-Irvine, E., & Youngs, H. (2011). Aspiring principal development programme evaluation in New Zealand. *Journal of Educational Administration, 49*(5), 513–541. http://doi.org/10.1108/09578231111159520

Rhodes, C., & Brundrett, M. (2009). Leadership development and school improvement. *Education Review, 61*(4), 361–374. https://doi.org/10.1080/00131910903403949

Rimes, J. (2017). Transition to headship. *Independence, 42*(2), 38–40, 42. https://independence.partica.online/independence/independence-vol-42-no-2-october-2017/flipbook/42/

Robertson, J., & Lovett, S. (2016). Self-assessment and coaching in New Zealand aspiring principals' development. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, *31*(1/2), 4–19.

Robinson, V. (2004). New understandings of educational leadership. *Set,* (3), 39–43.

Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why best evidence synthesis* [report]. New Zealand: Ministry of Education. https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/publications/series/2515/60170

Rothwell, W. (2001). *Effective succession planning: Ensuring leadership continuity and building talent from within* (2nd ed.). American Management Association.

Sabina, L. L., & Colwell, C. (2018). Challenges of principal succession: Examining the challenges of hiring internal vs. external candidates. *Athens Journal of Education*, *5*(4), 375–395.

Schein, E. H. (1990). Organizational culture. *American Psychologist, 45*(2), 109–119. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.45.2.109

Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, *5*(9), 9–16. https://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9

Shelton, S. (2010). *Strong leaders strong schools: 2009 school leadership laws* [report]. National Conference of State Legislatures. https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/2009-School-Leadership-Laws.pdf

Somekh, B., & Lewin, C. (2011). *Theory and methods in social research (2nd ed.).* Sage.

Spillane, J. P., & Lee, L. C. (2014). Novice school principals' sense of ultimate responsibility: Problems of practice in transitioning to the principal's office. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, *50*(3), 431–465.

Stake, R. E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Sage.

Stevenson, H. (2006). Moving towards, into and through principalship: Developing a framework for researching the career trajectories of school leaders. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*(4), 408–420. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230610676604

Theodosiou, V. (2015). *Looking into early headship: The socialisation experiences of new primary headteachers in Cyprus* [Doctoral thesis, University of London; UCL Institute of Education]. British Library EThOS. https://ethos-bl-uk.ezproxy.aut.ac.nz/ OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.655220

Walker, A., & Kwan, P. (2012). Principal selection panels: Strategies, preferences and perceptions. *Journal of Educational Administration, 50*(2), 188–205. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211210549

Walker, A., Weindling, D., & Dimmock C. (2006). Sitting in the "hot seat": New head teachers in the UK. *Journal of Educational Administration, 44*(4), 326–340. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578230610674949

Watkins, M. (2003). *The first 90 days: Critical success strategies for new leaders at all levels*. Harvard Business School Press.

Weindling, D. (2000). *Stages of headship: A longitudinal study of the principalship*. ERIC database. https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED451591

Wellington, J. J. (2015). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches* (2nd ed.). Bloomsbury Academic.

Wildy, H., Clarke, S., & Slater, C. (2007). International perspective of principal preparation: How does Australia fare? *Leading & Managing, 13*(2), 1–14.

Wylie, C. (1997). *At the centre of the web: The role of the New Zealand primary school principal within a decentralized education system*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Wylie, C. (2012). *Vital connections: Why we need more than self-managing schools*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research.

Wylie, C. (2017). *Principals and their work: Findings from the NZCER national survey of primary and intermediate schools 2016*. New Zealand Council for Educational Research. https://www.nzcer.org.nz/system/files/National%20Survey_Principals_Nov17.pdf

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods*. Sage.

Zainal, Z. (2003). *An Investigation into the effects of discipline-specific knowledge, proficiency and genre on reading comprehension and strategies of Malaysia ESP students.* [Unpublished Doctoral thesis]. University of Reading.

Zemke, R. (1985). The Honeywell studies: How managers learn to manage. *Training, 22*(8), 46–51

Zepeda, S. J., Bengtson, E., & Parylo, O. (2012). Examining the planning and management of principal succession. *Journal of Educational Administration, 50*(2), 136–158. https://doi.org/10.1108/09578231211210512

Appendices

Appendix A: Participant information sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:
24 March 2019

Project Title
Transition experiences of first-time school principals: The internal appointment of the Deputy Principal

An Invitation

Kia Ora, my name is Rachael Sole and I am a deputy principal currently working at Sunnynook Primary School and also studying for my Master of Educational Leadership. This research will contribute to me completing my thesis in this qualification. I would like to invite you to participate in the research that I am undertaking.

What is the purpose of this research?
This research aims to critically examine the lived experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school.

My research questions are:

What are the experiences of deputy principals transitioning internally to principalship in their school?

What enablers and barriers do these first-time principals experience as transitioning deputy principals?

This research may be able to shed a small amount of light on the issue of the possible benefits or pitfalls of appointing the current deputy principal of the school, to the role of principal.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You were identified by either myself or my supervisor, Alison Smith, through our professional networks, as being a first-time principal in an Auckland primary school who was promoted to principal within the school where you had previously been the deputy principal for at least one year prior to your appointment as principal.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

There is a formal consent form which I will email to you. Please read through this form thoroughly to ensure you understand what is expected of you. The signing of this form indicates your consent to participate in my research. However please remember that your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

This research project involves a 60-minute semi-structured interview with me about your experiences as a first –time transitioning principal. This interview can take place at your workplace, a meeting room at an AUT campus, or at a mutually-agreed venue.

I will be doing an audio recording of this interview which I will then have it transcribed by a professional transcriber. A copy of the transcription of your interview will be provided to you for your approval. This may take up to an hour of your time to read through and make any amendments you feel necessary.

What are the discomforts and risks?

It is not anticipated that there will be any discomfort or risk to taking part in my research project. In final reports the data from the five participating principals will be aggregated to ensure every effort to keep confidentiality. No names will be used to identify the principals in my research. Nor will any school names or other easily identifiable information be used throughout my research. Your responses to interview questions and the transcript of your interview will not be shared with any other participants, nor anyone outside of the research team. However due to the relatively small pool of potential participants in this research, and the fact that the interviews may occur at your place of work, only limited confidentiality of your participation in this research can be assured.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

It is not anticipated that there will be any discomfort or risk to taking part in my research project. However, if the discussions we have bring up any distressing thoughts or feelings please be assured that you do not need to answer any questions which make you feel uncomfortable.

What are the benefits?

It is hoped that you will benefit through your involvement in the semi-structured interviews through open and honest discussions and the sharing of information. You are also being afforded an opportunity to voice your opinions and perceptions about whether an internal candidate for the role of principal has been advantageous to the school and to you as the principal and your fellow teaching staff

Potentially, this research may be able to reveal a small amount of information regarding the possible benefits or pitfalls of promoting the current deputy principal of a school to the role of principal. This may be helpful for Boards of Trusteess to consider when appointing new principals. It may also offer insights for deputy principals aspiring to principalship.

The likely output from this research of this research are my completed thesis for my Master of Educational Leadership, a possible journal article, or possibly a conference paper.

How will my privacy be protected?

Confidentiality practices will be enforced throughout the research. No names will be given of either participants nor their schools or any other identifying factors at any stage of the research. Participants will only be able to read their own transcripts- not those of others. It is unlikely people at other schools will be able to identify you.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There is no cost to you for taking part in this research. However, I do realise that your time is valuable and comes at a cost to you. Interviews will last a maximum of one hour and then you may want to take additional time later in the research process to read through and approve the written transcript of your interview.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

I would like to give you a week to think through your response to this invitation to participate in my research.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

At the end of my research project, a summary of the findings of this study will be offered to you as a participant- via either electronic format or a paper hard copy version, whichever you prefer.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Alison Smith 921 9999 ext. 7363

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext. 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Primary Researcher: Rachael Sole **Ph**: [redacted] **Email:** [redacted]

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Project Supervisor, Alison Smith [redacted]

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on14 May 2019, AUTEC Reference number 19/138

Appendix B: Consent form

Project title: Transition experiences of first-time school principals: The internal appointment of the Deputy Principal

Project Supervisor: Alison Smith

Researcher: Rachael Sole

- ○ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 24 March 2019.
- ○ I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- ○ I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- ○ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ○ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ○ I agree to take part in this research.
- ○ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes○ No○

Participant's signature: .....

Participant's name: .....

Participant's contact details (if appropriate):
……
……
……
……
Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on Tuesday 14th May 2019
AUTEC Reference number 19/138
Note: The participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix C: Ethics approval

14 May 2019
Alison Smith
Faculty of Culture and Society

Dear Alison

Re Ethics Application: **19/138 Transition experiences of first-time school principals: The internal appointment of the Deputy Principal**
Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC).
Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 14 May 2022.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project. AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation, then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.
For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz
Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Appendix D: Indicative interview questions

Research title: Transition experiences of first-time school principals: The internal appointment of the Deputy Principal

I. How long have you been working at _____ school?

II. How long were you a Deputy principal at the school?

III. Did you start working at this school as a DP / Team leader or Scale A teacher?

IV. Can you tell me about your experiences at this school as the DP?

V. Did you apply for other principal positions before you became the principal of this school? (if the answer is no go to Question 6)
   a) Approximately how many principal positions did you apply for?
   b) What were your experiences in applying for those principal positions?

VI. Why did you apply for the principal's role here rather than at other schools?

VII. At any stage during your time as deputy principal were you encouraged to consider succeeding your then principal in the role? Who encouraged you?

VIII. Were there any ways in which you were 'trained up' to become a principal, whilst you were a DP?

IX. In what way did your DP experiences encourage you to apply for the principal's position?

X. Did you feel you would be successful when you applied for the role? Why/Why not?

XI. Were there any specific / formal preparation you undertook before you applying for principal positions e.g. NAPP, post graduate tertiary study, being mentored by a current experienced or retired principal.

XII. In your opinion were the Board of Trustees keen to appoint a principal from within the school?
   a) Why do you think the Board appointed you?

XIII. When you were apopoined to this position what were your experiences in transitioning from DP to principal in this school?
   a) Were there any formal or informal hand-over procedures once you were awarded this position and before the previous principal left? Can you describe this to me?

b) Were there any transition experiences that you felt were beneficial once you were appointed to this position and before you started the job? Can you describe these to me?

XIV. Do you think it was advantageous to have first been the DP at the school?
Could you see any benefits to already working at the school?
What were these?

XV. Were there any drawbacks to you being an *internal* appointment? Can you share a few examples with me?

XVI. How do you feel the parents/ community have responded to you having been appointed to principal within your school?

XVII. As a principal now, have you considered succession planning for when you may ultimately leave this position- have you or your Board been involved in any succession planning? If so, what did this involve? Can you give me some example

XVIII. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your transition to principalship in your school?

Appendix E: Confidentiality agreement

For someone transcribing data e.g. audio-tapes of interviews

Confidentiality Agreement

For someone transcribing data, e.g. audio-tapes of interviews.

Project title: Transition experiences of first-time school principals: The internal appointment of the Deputy Principal

Project Supervisor: Alison Smith

Researcher: Rachael Sole

- ✓ I understand that all the material I will be asked to transcribe is confidential.
- ✓ I understand that the contents of the tapes or recordings can only be discussed with the researchers.
- ✓ I will not keep any copies of the transcripts nor allow third parties access to them.

Transcriber's signature: [redacted]

Transcriber's name: [redacted]

Date: 7 June 2013

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Alison Smith alison.smith@aut.ac.nz **Phone**:921 9999 ext 7363

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on type the date on which the final approval was granted AUTEC Reference number type the AUTEC reference number

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form