

First-time female principals: Perceptions of wellbeing

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2018

Faculty of Culture and Society

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

Abstract

The aim of this research was to critically examine first-time female principals' perceptions of their wellbeing. The term 'wellbeing' has become common vernacular, and recently has been acknowledged in the realm of education, indicating that it was an issue worthy of further investigation. Given the demanding and complex roles of a principal, this study sought to explore the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals. It attempted to interpret their perceptions of how wellbeing impacted on their leadership. Furthermore, the research explored the perceived enablers and barriers to wellbeing for this group in order to substantiate how wellbeing might be enhanced. This narrative research was positioned within a subjectivist ontology and interpretivist paradigm, and it utilised a critical feminist lens, that of a standpoint perspective, to deeply understand the perceptions of the women. Through an in-depth narrative methodology, the voices of four women newly appointed into principalship shared their compelling stories that uncovered their lived experiences of the role and how it impacted upon their wellbeing. This approach revealed three key findings. First, that gender inequality still exists in primary schools, particularly in relation to property matters. Second, that women in the study knew what to do to enhance their own level of wellbeing and took responsibility or action to cater for it, although other demands often took their focus away from this. Third, that positive relationships and an investment in social capital with all stakeholders in a school community was uplifting for wellbeing, but the effort expended in building social capital was at the expense of putting others first and a sense of obligation to all. Overall, the thesis concludes with key recommendations for first-time female principals. First, that the Ministry of Education critically examines the ways in which the nature of property matters that these women experience reinforce gendered inequalities and expectations. Additionally, that Boards of Trustees ensure that the women manage their own wellbeing. Finally, that Boards of Trustees ensure that systems are created so that first-time female principals invest in their social capital to improve leadership effectiveness and levels of wellbeing.

Attestation of authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, 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.

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Signature.

Acknowledgement

I wish to take this opportunity to sincerely show gratitude to everyone who has helped me with this extremely rewarding journey. Firstly, to my supervisor Alison Smith, for your unrelenting support and guidance through the entire process. Your attention to detail, and your astute wit, made for an introduction to an academic adventure. Secondly, to my husband who set me on the path of this journey with his unconditional belief in me, and support. To my children, Nina and Ed, thank you for being ‘there’ before and after school. It was such a precious pleasure being home for you for 32 weeks. Thank you, to my principal Julie Hepburn and Board of Trustees for your full support in my academic journey, and to the TeachNZ study award received in order for me to complete this thesis. Lastly, I am indebted to the four strong and determined women leaders who trusted me to tell their story and I wish you all every success as you continue in principalship.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Background to the research – what is the problem?

This research is concerned with the wellbeing of first-time female principals. The recent research of Riley (2017) has publicly highlighted an issue facing leaders in education, and has been a response to the “perceived health threats” that emerged from global educational reform movements of some of which New Zealand has been exposed to (p. 7). A main stressor identified by Riley (2017) was “increased emphasis by governments on accountability for uniform curriculum delivery along with the devolution of administrative tasks from central to local control” (p. 7). Riley (2017) indicated that wellbeing of principals was compromised. Leaders struggle to manage the stress caused by high work demands and concurrent low decision autonomy through externally imposed deadlines and reporting. Past international studies report on wellbeing in areas such as the mental health status of principals, along with perspectives of their multifaceted roles, knowledge and skills (Dewa et al., 2008; Gentilucci, Denti, & Guaglianone, 2013; Petzko, 2008). Other New Zealand quantitative research such as that of K. White, Schofield, Jarden, and McKay (2013) investigated the science of wellbeing, using measures such as flourishing scales to determine the status of wellbeing. English research such as Allin and Hand (2017) discussed the challenges of measuring wellbeing on a national scale and that “the quality of statistics depends on their fitness for purpose” (p. 4). Hence, wellbeing as a concept has attracted recent research attention but clearly there was considerable variation in how this topic has been approached.

The focus of the research reported in this thesis began as a problem that I faced while in the position of Acting Principal in 2017 at my primary school when I encountered staff who had been experiencing stress and ‘burn out’ for some time. Paradoxically, my job satisfaction significantly increased during this period due to the refreshing challenge. However, when I considered the literature on the topic of stress, the broader studies such as that of Riley (2017) did not detail experiences for women through their own voices, and I started to ponder how principalship for new female principals affected their wellbeing. In order to deeply understand the problematic issue of wellbeing I felt a strong desire to uncover their perceptions through talking with them because the literature that I reviewed did not detail such accounts. Burns and Chantler (2011) argued that feminist research critiques

unexamined assumptions about women. Feminist research and theory such as that of Burns and Chantler (2011) aligned to this study as I endeavoured to gain a deeper understanding and find out what it is like for females embarking on a journey in their first principalship. I care for the equality of women in our society and therefore consider myself to hold feminist views on such aspects such as gender inequalities, biases or expectations for females. Whether or not gender inequalities exist for first-time female principals or if this is a mere assumption, examination through a critical feminist lens provided further insight and consideration to the wellbeing of the cohort.

This research critically examined first-time female principals' perceptions of their own wellbeing and how they perceived this to impact on their effectiveness as leaders. In addition, the study determined the perceived enablers and barriers to their wellbeing. After identifying a gap in the literature that has been reviewed, I concluded that there was scant research available on first-time female primary school principals in New Zealand. Thus, this research project began and a subsequent research aim was identified, and the ensuing research questions were posed.

Purpose of the study

The rationale for this research unfolded from a problem of high work demands and stress facing many in education. As a Deputy Principal of a large primary school for several years, the natural next step in advancing my career is to become a principal. While in the position of Acting Principal in 2017, achieving the goal of principalship became more tangible because of the experiences encountered during that time. Given the demanding and complex roles of a principal, and resonant with my own personal situation as a Deputy Principal, this study sought to explore the perceptions of first-time female principals of their own wellbeing. The literature that was reviewed revealed a lack of research for first-time female principals in primary schools. The absence of a direct connection to this cohort and the impact upon their own wellbeing was particularly palpable. A pondering led to this inquiry to surface more rigorous debate and encourage solution-focussed attention to the topical area - that of wellbeing.

The quantitative research of Riley (2017) clearly indicated that wellbeing was compromised for principals. Consequently, my research sought to narrow the focus and delve deeper into the perceptions of wellbeing for the niche group of first-time female principals using a

detailed qualitative approach within a narrative methodology. This allowed for the lived experiences of the cohort to emerge and elicited our nuanced understanding of them while contributing to a body of existing knowledge. It was hoped that addressing questions of wellbeing through a qualitative study involving first-time female principals and interpreting their stories, would add to a body of research for them. It was also anticipated that findings from this research would potentially be of use to the participants and our future female principals.

Research aim, questions and design

The aim of this research was to critically examine first-time female principals' perceptions of their wellbeing.

The research was guided by the following questions:

- What are first-time female principals' perceptions of their own wellbeing?
- In what ways do first-time female principals perceive that wellbeing impacts on their leadership effectiveness?
- What are the perceived enablers of and barriers to wellbeing for first-time female principals?

After consideration of much literature my research was positioned within a subjectivist ontology because I took the position that social reality could be constructed through experiences and shared language (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Chase, 2011; Lincoln, Lynham, & Guba, 2011). In addition, I adopted an interpretivist epistemology because in understanding and comprehending important social action, my worldview is shaped by what can be known about the world. Moreover, people understand their reality from their own perspective. Thus, in order to understand the perceptions of wellbeing, the experiences of the participants provided the knowledge as data. After examining various feminist theories and literature (Alice, 2003; Allan, 2012; Olesen, 2011), a critical feminist lens was applied as I was interested in finding out about experiences of gender expectations and gender inequality, including if the profession or society positions first-time female principals in certain ways. This critical lens enabled an analysis of gender expectations that were revealed within the data, and potential power relations that surfaced between the participants and other stakeholders within their communities. In preparation for any potential issues that may have surfaced required a feminist standpoint to help navigate identifying behaviours and actions, such as unequal power relationships, gendered expectations and stereotypes (Burns & Chantler, 2011). Hence, my standpoint in regard to this research is that through the

influences and expectations of society, gender inequalities may be experienced by first-time female principals.

A rich source of qualitative data was drawn from the narratives about perceptions of wellbeing for the target group through a suitably aligned narrative methodology (Forsey, 2012). This methodology suited the method of semi-structured interviews to occur with four women in their first principalship, which revealed their stories in order to achieve a greater understanding of their perceptions of wellbeing.

Structure of thesis

This thesis is organised into six chapters.

Chapter One

This chapter has introduced the background to the research and explained why the study has been undertaken. Clear research aims and questions are outlined.

Chapter Two

The literature review chapter provides a critical examination of both New Zealand and international research on the topic of wellbeing. Through the identification of the wellbeing issue, the discourse and conceptualisation of it ensued. Analysis of the current available research is reviewed through a thematic synthesis. The final segment of the literature review critiques the themes and gaps that surfaced within the literature.

Chapter Three

The research design of this thesis is underpinned by the positioning and methodology proposed through Chapter Three. The ontological and epistemological positions that aligned with this research are justified throughout the methodology section. The intention of this chapter is to outline the small-scale project on the perceptions of wellbeing of four first-time female principals. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and a description of the analysis follows. Furthermore, salient ethical issues relevant to this study are identified and discussed.

Chapter Four

This chapter introduces the four narrators and the subsequent narratives that emerged from the stories of their lived experiences that participants shared during the semi-structured interviews. Each narrative is a compelling story that expresses the perceptions of wellbeing for four women in their first principalship. In keeping with the methodology, a narrative style has been used in association with participant quotes to gain a nuanced understanding

and appreciation of the participants' experiences and perceptions in order to support the findings.

Chapter Five

The purpose of Chapter Five is to critically analyse and interpret the significant findings that are centred around key themes that emerged from the research. To provide a deeper scrutiny, a feminist lens is employed when critically examining the findings. These findings are then linked to the literature that is reviewed in Chapter Two.

Chapter Six

This chapter summarises the overall findings of the research. The summary of the findings surfaces the conclusions and recommendations that align with the themes that are identified. Furthermore, the chapter discusses the limitations to the study. Recommendations and opportunities for future research are discussed, and the closing comments draw the research project to an end.

The next chapter presents a review of the relevant literature.

Chapter 2: Literature review

Introduction

‘Wellbeing’ is a well-used but ill-defined term in research (Carlisle, Henderson, & Hanlon, 2009; Gillet-Swann & Sargeant, 2015). Nevertheless, the nomenclature ‘wellbeing’ has become common vernacular in countries such as England, Australia and, more recently, in New Zealand (Gillet-Swann & Sargeant, 2015). Historically, the concept of ‘wellbeing’ has been strongly connected to health, economics, law and psychology domains. In the realm of educational leadership research, the concept has received recent acknowledgement, albeit arguably with some scepticism. In New Zealand, sector organisations such as the New Zealand Principals Federation (NZPF) have shown concern for the wellbeing of principals, resulting in their conference theme of Hauora in 2017. The New Zealand Educational Institute Te Rui Roa (NZEI) commissioned research very recently on the occupational health and wellbeing of school leaders, that found that the demands of the principal’s role impact on stress and subsequent wellbeing (Riley, 2017).

As Riley (2017) and White (2017) moot, it is timely and relevant to address the wellbeing of leaders in education. This literature review focusses on the wellbeing of principals and, where possible, that of first-time principals. For the purpose of this review, the term ‘first-time principals’ refers to those within the first two-three years of their first tenure. The beginning of the review focusses on the research that defines wellbeing, and this is followed by a review of research on women in leadership roles. Within the literature relating to the wellbeing of both experienced and first-time principals, four key themes have emerged: (i) stress related to performativity and conflict; (ii) the importance of relationships, relational trust, social capital and collaboration; (iii) the impact of support or support challenges; and (iv) building resilience through mindfulness. These sections provide the main body of this chapter.

Defining ‘wellbeing’

It is important to understand what the word ‘wellbeing’ means because there is conjecture internationally over the broad definition of it in various research domains. ‘Wellbeing’ is a multidimensional term applied in a variety of contexts, and ranging in meaning from subjective levels of happiness, to health, and to economic connections (Allin & Hand, 2017; Bourke & Geldens, 2007; Carlisle et al., 2009; Gillet-Swann & Sargeant, 2015).

Psychologists focus on levels of happiness, whereas youth researchers encompass a more holistic perspective that includes cultural and spiritual dimensions, physical health, and emotional and financial wellbeing (Bourke & Geldens, 2007). The study of Bourke and Geldens (2007) explored how youth and youth workers understand wellbeing. In contrast, Gillet-Swann and Sargeant (2015) provided many definitions of wellbeing from other researchers. An example as cited by Shah and Marks in Gillet-Swann and Sargeant (2015) described wellbeing as more than just being happy: “wellbeing means developing as a person, being fulfilled, and making a contribution to the community” (p. 136). Carlisle et al. (2009) argue that “wellbeing is a complex and contestable construct and that, despite intense academic scrutiny and a voluminous literature, its definition remains unsolved (p. 1557). Some New Zealand literature, for example, Hone (2015) has highlighted differences in understandings between conceptualisations of wellbeing by lay people and, conversely, those of academics. Hone’s (2015) study of New Zealand workers, half of whom were working in schools, found that wellbeing was viewed in a more traditional manner such as diet, exercise and physical health, owing perhaps to perceptions gleaned from public health messages. These workers were less likely than academic researchers to consider aspects also important to wellbeing such as achievement, engagement, and optimism. Thus, the research of Hone (2015) highlighted the need for greater clarity of a wellbeing literacy or understanding of what wellbeing meant. For the purpose of this literature review, ‘wellbeing’ will be defined as how people feel and function, their ability to flourish, their sense of vitality and direction while maintaining a positive approach, a reduction of negative emotions, and the resolve to bounce back from adversity (Carlisle et al., 2009; Hone, 2015; Prendergast, Schofield, Jarden, & Mackay, 2015; Rix & Bernay, 2014; K. White et al., 2013).

One aspect that affects wellbeing is the notion of performativity. Principals are currently consumed with the government-mandated performative and accountable environment, and this has perhaps resulted in a level of stress that is impacting on their wellbeing (Ball, 2003; Codd, 2005). In the research of Riley (2017), high workloads of primary school principals in New Zealand accounted for the many hours worked each week and principals’ feelings that workloads were unmanageable and not sustainable. Hence, stress levels were high or extremely high, and notably highest among new principals (Wylie, 2017). In addition to high workloads, principals were challenged by levels of accountability to many stakeholders involved in a school community and for student outcomes (Cardno, 2012; Ogram & Youngs, 2014). Thus, performative measures such as accountability and for student outcomes also

contributed to the stress experienced by principals. Principals' responsibilities also include developing school climates to support teaching and learning (Cardno, 2012; Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). However, Riley (2017) noted that an internal conflict is experienced by principals, due to the lack of time to focus on the leadership of teaching and learning. Furthermore, principals often experience higher levels of emotional demands, which correlate with higher levels of stress symptoms (Beatty, 2007; Riley, 2017). Hence, within performative environments where principals are experiencing stressful workloads, there is a growing awareness that the sustenance of wellbeing for effective principals is an important issue. Indeed, the literature did not detail specific differences for female principals. It raises questions regarding female principals and, in particular, those newly appointed to principal positions and whether the experiences are similar or not. Having defined the conceptualisation of wellbeing and the issue of stress facing principals the next section examines women in leadership roles.

Women and leadership

As my research is concerned with first-time female principals, this section describes more recent research that concentrates on women and leadership. Indeed, Gunter and Ahad (2017) conducted research that involved interviews and discussion with two women in organisational leader roles in higher education in Bangladesh. The findings show that gender inequality does exist, although it is complex and involves social, political, cultural, and economic traditions. The study of Gunter and Ahad (2017) also illustrated that the support from the participants' husbands is important. However, this research interviews only two women in depth and it is based on university level education and not at the primary school level. In addition, the Bangladeshi setting is arguably different to a New Zealand context.

Gender discrimination has been described in research regarding women in leadership. Eagly and Heilman (2016) asserted that a common theme within recent research was that gender discrimination was the main problem that women face when intending to become leaders. Glass and Cook (2016) contested that it was a powerful reason why there was an underrepresentation of women in leadership roles. Eagly and Heilman (2016) concurred, and claimed that stereotyping of women was a source of discrimination because gender stereotypes were not easy to erase as people's belief systems could be firm. Furthermore, Eagly and Heilman (2016) questioned that perhaps the social position of women has changed, but it would seem only gradually. Indeed, women appointed in principal roles in New

Zealand have only recently outnumbered their male counterparts. The latest data from Education Counts (2018) shows that in 2017 more female principals lead New Zealand schools than males.¹ With this incremental shift in gender representation of females now leading schools, albeit only marginally given that primary schools predominantly are staffed by women, it remains unclear whether or not stereotyping or bias are evident within educational contexts, and particularly for female principals in New Zealand. Furthermore, this raises questions regarding gender inequality, such as experiences of stereotyping or bias, and the subsequent connection to the wellbeing of first-time female principals in primary schools.

The research conducted by Glass and Cook (2016) in the United States includes in-depth interviews with 20 women who had broken through the ‘glass ceiling’ by securing executive leadership roles historically held by males. Glass and Cook’s (2016) findings suggested that women end up on the ‘glass cliff’ or, in other words, in leadership positions of companies that were struggling. A lack of support for women in executive leadership roles was also identified. Furthermore, women are found to be under a scrutiny of performance-based measures and pressures, including expectations to uphold flawless physical appearances. Surprisingly, women who faced the ‘glass cliff’ developed strong skill sets that became highly valuable to their companies. While the role may have seemed risky to their career path and may have jeopardised their success, Glass and Cook (2016) found that “their effective leadership through times of crisis led to the cultivation of a reputation as effective leaders for crises, change and transformation”(p. 57). Hence, although the women faced challenges and barriers, the experiences led to successful change management. However, these women came from a range of business executive leadership roles and not from educational contexts, and (2016) research did not detail the effect of these challenges upon their wellbeing. Further research on female principals may add more insight and understanding of this particular group in relation to their wellbeing.

Another project involving women in leadership positions is the research of Doucet, Letourneau, and Stoppard (2010). They argued that women’s different roles in society contribute to pressures that impact upon their mental health, such as the expectation to

¹ Education Counts reports that in 2017 there were 1222 females and 1139 males were principals of state or integrated schools in New Zealand.

assume the primary responsibility for care of children or other family members, while also working in full-time jobs. While women's roles in the family could bring a great level of pleasure to women leaders, Doucet et al. (2010) claimed that such roles could create stress. In contrast, the research of Kalysh, Kulik, and Perera (2016) looked at the effects of family-oriented work-life practices for women in leadership positions in Australian contexts. They found that such practices as 'family-friendly' leave provisions and childcare services could have positive benefits. However, women were only offered such benefits after they had spent significant time in an organisation, and only some organisations offered such practices.

Indeed, I did not locate research directly related to female principals' experiences in New Zealand and this suggests the need for further research with this group. In addition, there is scant research that describes the roles and responsibilities of female principals outside of their demanding professional roles and the subsequent impact upon their wellbeing. The next section examines literature that I did locate, and is organised according to following themes: stress related to performativity; the importance of relationships, relational trust, social capital, and collaboration; support or support challenges; and building resilience using strategies such as mindfulness.

Key themes

Stress related to performativity

Much of the literature that is reviewed here focusses on the notion of performativity that has evolved through the emergence of an era of accountability in education. An obsession with what is produced, observed, and measured has unfolded within education (Ball, 2003; Codd, 2005). A significant impact of performativity is that the demands of the principal role have hindered principals' ability to focus on the leadership of teaching and learning (Ogram & Youngs, 2014). Administrative tasks, such as property and finance management, are possible conundrums as most principals want to spend more time leading learning (Ogram & Youngs, 2014; Riley, 2017; Wylie, 2012). These tensions perhaps contribute to lower levels of wellbeing for principals. Paradoxically, performativity perhaps manifests in poorer student experiences owing to stress-related issues within schools. As Cardno (2010) suggested principals are expected to lead change within their schools. Robinson et al. (2009) also described the importance of leading change in schools. However, the role of leading change in a performative environment may contribute to stress that is experienced by Principals. There is a considerable amount of literature that involves leading change, however, none of

the literature that was located discussed the impact on wellbeing of principals, or indeed that of female principals who are charged with leading change. Moreover, if principals are working in performative environments it raises issues regarding the experiences for women as principals and how issues of performativity may or may not affect the wellbeing of that group.

Stress, high work demands and mental health status are areas that are also addressed in the literature that I have reviewed. Stress related to the demands of working conditions for experienced and first-time principals has been described in the literature (Clarke, Wildy, & Pepper, 2007; Dewa et al., 2008; Petzko, 2008), while Dewa et al. (2008) noted that there was a growing body of research that examined the relationship between work place stress and mental health status. The small study of Clarke et al. (2007) used semi-structured interviews with five principals to investigate this, but a limitation evident was that the gender profile of these principals was not defined. In contrast to the methods that Clarke et al. (2007) engaged, Dewa et al. (2008) used a health survey and job satisfaction survey of principals. The findings of Dewa et al. (2008) indicated that approximately 50 percent of participants have a low mental health status. It showed that there was no statistically significant difference ($p=0.642$) in the mental health status between males and females. Although this research differentiated the gender profile; 52% are females compared to 48% males, it did not explicitly determine the differences in mental health status for female principals or first-time female principals, as vice principals were included within the data. Thus, the mental health status of female principals including that of first-time female principals, remains unclear. Furthermore, speculation arises of how wellbeing for this group is positioned within their own mental health.

The varied roles and workloads that principals are faced with, as noted in the literature, present challenges for them. The multifaceted roles of a principal, particularly new principals and the realisation that the demands of it are exhausting, can hinder an appropriate work-life balance (Clarke et al., 2007; Gentilucci et al., 2013). Recent research commissioned by the New Zealand Educational Institute Te Rūi Roa (NZEI) (Riley, 2017), investigated the occupational health and wellbeing of school leaders. A number of principals (20%) were surveyed including deputy principals and assistant principals. The gender breakdown was established showing 69.9% of leaders were female compared to 30.1% male. However, it was difficult to determine if a difference between male and

female principals was identified here, as the data included deputy and assistant principals, and further gender breakdown of those groups was not apparent. The results indicated that females reported statistically significantly higher scores than males in terms of burn out, stress, and sleeping troubles, but differences for each leadership role were not identified. Riley (2017) also found that many principals in New Zealand were working too many hours; 75% work more than 50 hours a week, while 25% work in excess of 60 hours. Indeed, the internal conflict facing principals with regard to working long hours while maintaining relationships with family and friends was noteworthy (Riley, 2017; Wylie, 2017). Furthermore, it is conceivable that such hours might incrementally reduce productivity as the work week duration extends. However, although the survey of Riley (2017) highlighted that principals in New Zealand work long hours and experience high work demands, it did not determine possible enablers for higher levels of wellbeing for principals, and findings regarding gender were not clear.

Another large scale study by K. White et al. (2013) of over 10,000 participants using 'Flourishing Scales' (Diener et al., 2010), a measure to determine a wellbeing score, gained an understanding of what it means to 'be well' in order to initiate change so that people can get the most out of life. In a compelling insight into the wellbeing of New Zealanders, K. White et al. (2013) noted that older females (aged 50 to 79) show higher flourishing scores. Females were also 1.4 times more likely to score in the 'super wellbeing' group than males. Highest wellbeing scores were examined to determine the factors that define this group. Although gender breakdown was detailed, K. White et al. (2013) did not identify the cohort of a leadership group such as 'new female principals'. In addition, neither of the quantitative studies of K. White et al. (2013) or Riley (2017) used in-depth face-to-face interviews to determine and understand experiences with regard to perceptions of wellbeing (Riley, 2017; K. White et al., 2013). In contrast to these larger studies, the research of Gentilucci et al. (2013) studied eleven new principals in the United States of which six were female. Interviews were conducted and the findings suggested that even though principals expected the role to be difficult, they were surprised at how often they experienced work related stress. However, the research did not offer critique from specific feminist viewpoints such as how work related stress was perhaps compounded by societal expectations of women in leadership roles. Furthermore, the studies did not detail any gender bias that principals' experience or the relationship of this to stress and wellbeing.

Conjecture remains as to whether or not new principals, or first-time female principals, are stressed even though they work in performative environments. One aspect not detailed in the research of Gentilucci et al. (2013) is the interconnection between the stress reported, wellbeing, and job satisfaction. Further exploration of this nexus maybe a worthwhile focus. It is noteworthy that the findings from Riley (2017) report greater job satisfaction of principals and most are positive about their roles when compared to the general population. This is consistent with other findings that suggested being highly satisfied in a job is clearly connected to higher levels of wellbeing (Prendergast et al., 2015; K. White et al., 2013). Therefore, disentangling the interplay between first-time female principals' stress and job satisfaction may provide further insight into their wellbeing. Having considered the impact of performative environments for principals, the next segment discusses another theme pertinent in the literature that is reviewed - that of building, sustaining and maintaining relationships.

The importance of relationships, relational trust, social capital, and collaboration

Another theme relevant in the literature was the importance of relationships. Although productive relationship building by principals with all stakeholders in school communities was critical, research indicated that relationships with principals' own families were fractured due to the demanding hours of work (Cardno, 2010, 2012; Riley, 2017; Wylie, 2017). This tension inevitably impacts on the wellbeing of the school leader in the context of their own lives. K. White et al. (2013) suggested that the ability to connect with others and giving back was a 'winning way to wellbeing' or important to achieve higher levels of wellbeing. Collaborative practice, including principals' relationships with stakeholders in school communities, might impact upon the wellbeing of principals. Current educational discourse has focussed on the notion of collaboration, which has been entrenched in the literature as an umbrella for which the importance of relational trust and social capital were required (McCallum & O'Connell, 2009; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). In other words, social capital can be described as exemplifying relationships and how people relate to others; social capital such as trust may enhance the notion of collaboration. The popular paradigm of collaboration in education, although at times powerful, can be fraught with issues such as being time consuming and reliant upon authentic relationships (Piggot-Irvine, 2012). Surprisingly, within these so-called collaborative environments principals continue to feel overworked. Whether or not collaboration impacts positively on principal wellbeing remains unknown. The toll on wellbeing of building and maintaining professional relationships and social

capital is another factor to be considered (McCallum & O'Connell, 2009). Furthermore, none of the literature that I reviewed looked at the perceptions of wellbeing in relation to efforts invested in social capital from women who are in their first principalship.

The importance of relationships is also noted in the study of Notman and Henry (2011) who claimed that New Zealand principals had effective skills in interpersonal connectedness within school communities. In contrast to this research, the art of handling relationships for new principals was expressed by Ng and Szeto (2016), and suggested a need for them to build capacity in human resources management. In the Hong Kong study by Ng and Szeto (2016), sent an open ended questionnaire to 52 new principals with a return rate of 62%. Fifteen participants were then chosen for individual in-depth interviews. There was a proportionate distribution with regard to gender, and the research delved into the principals' perspectives through the use of interviews. However, this study focussed on the professional needs of new secondary school principals and not of primary school principals. It did not specifically focus on the wellbeing of principals or the impact of wellbeing on their effectiveness as a leader. Ng and Szeto (2016) did not examine experiences for first-time female principals, or potential fractured relationships within school communities. Furthermore, there was no feminist perspective that explored possible power imbalances, or gender inequalities that might exist within relationships that could be experienced within this cohort.

The notion of social capital and the importance of it for principals can present them with some challenges as noted in the literature. Even though social capital was important, Beatty (2007) contended that it could be a challenging dynamic for principals in building and maintaining trusting relationships with all stakeholders. Principals often masked their true emotions, and they ironically ran the risk of reducing their ability to connect with others as genuine relationships could be lost (Beatty, 2007). However, Goleman (2006) argued that managing such emotions was known as 'emotional intelligence'. In contrast, Sachs and Blackmore (1998) argued that the issue of emotions remained highly gendered as women leaders abided by emotional rules and ethos within organisational contexts. In the study of Sachs and Blackmore (1998), change management and the emotional investment of negotiating change was also discussed. Although this research is somewhat dated, it raises plausible debate if emotional investments remain the current status quo for new female leaders in education and how such investing may impact upon their wellbeing. Determining

the connection between first-time female principals' wellbeing on relationships and emotional investments may be discerning. Since the discourse relating to relationships and social capital were discussed, the following theme that was debated within the reviewed literature was the notion of support.

Support or support challenges

A pertinent theme in the literature that I reviewed was the need for support to enhance the coping strategies of newly appointed principals. As Ng and Szeto (2016) contended, networking with peers and working with mentors were valuable experiences for new principals. This was an important component to upholding the wellbeing of this niche group. As Riley (2017) and Wylie (2017) highlighted, the majority of principals in New Zealand sought support from their own networks and conferences, with approximately half taking part in professional learning groups. However, the findings of Riley (2017) indicated that new principals needed more support than they currently get. However, the research was limited in the information connecting direct support to enhance the wellbeing of female principals.

The notion of constant learning is another area that is identified within the literature. Notable in the findings of K. White et al. (2013) was the importance to wellbeing of continuous learning for the general population. In contrast to the research of Riley (2017), it was apparent in the results of Macpherson's (2010) study of 28 leaders, eight who were newly appointed principals, that historically there were a range of funded support opportunities for first-time principals so that they could continue to learn. However, some of the literature (Bush, 2015; Macpherson, 2010) also explained that principals learn 'on the job', with experiential learning occurring. Indeed, even though learning through experience was a common way to become prepared for principal roles, principals also value collaboration through professional development. In addition, although the research of Macpherson (2010) considered new principals and the subsequent support that they received, the gender breakdown of respondents was unclear, and it did not associate a lack of preparation to the general wellbeing of principals, or consequential effect on their leadership. Indeed, a more detailed examination of support, or lack of it, for new female principals may perhaps enlighten a deeper understanding of how it affects wellbeing for this group. Another theme relevant to the literature that was reviewed was that of resilience.

Building resilience - strategies such as mindfulness

Strategies such as developing resilience to enhance greater levels of wellbeing have attracted a plethora of research, and the resilience theme featured in much of the literature that was reviewed (Bourke & Geldens, 2007; Clarke et al., 2007; Gilbert, Skinner, & Dempster, 2008; Gillet-Swann & Sargeant, 2015). The ability to cope, particularly in more turbulent times, appeared to be a key determinant of wellbeing across this research. Certainly, the ability to give due attention to wellbeing was identified as an enabler to deal with life's challenges (K. White et al., 2013). The concept of accrued wellbeing, as mentioned by Gillet-Swann and Sargeant (2015), discussed the traits that were developed in childhood such as coping, problem solving, conflict resolution, and resilience, as important skills that could be transferable to adulthood. In contrast to the literature of Gillet-Swann and Sargeant (2015), other authors (Clarke et al., 2007; Gilbert et al., 2008) considered resilience in relation to newly appointed principals. While Clarke et al. (2007) argued that principals had perhaps underestimated the personal resilience that was needed, Gilbert et al. (2008) proposed that principals were indeed fully aware of the need to strike the right balance between work and personal lives. Moreover, principals in the research of Gilbert et al. (2008) could list strategies to assist them in reducing stress levels such as allocating time to things other than school. Indeed, the ability to use resilience to cope with an unpredictable role was found to be fundamental to foster positive wellbeing, and remove feelings of disconnectedness and frustration. While Gilbert et al. (2008) argued that there was a growing body of literature relevant to new principals, the majority of it focused on males, and perhaps assumed that the perspective from this cohort could be transferred to that of female principals. These assumptions remain debatable, as Alice (2003) claimed that feminist theory disputes binary approaches that generalise research on men to women. In order to ascertain the experiences of first-time female principals, a study that involves discussion directly with them may highlight strategies such as levels of resilience that may help to maintain higher levels of wellbeing. This may surface a deeper understanding without making broad assumptions based on the reported experiences of men.

Another area reported on within the literature was mindfulness. Given the demanding nature of educational roles, Lomas, Medina, Ivztan, Rupprecht, and Eiroa-Orosa (2017) noted that some effort was underway to develop strategies in order to improve the wellbeing of educators, such as the development of interventions based on mindfulness. It is described by various authors as a quality of mind or form of meditation to cultivate that particular state by

intentionally focussing on the moment, and adopting an acceptance of it (Kabat-Zinn, 1982; Lomas et al., 2017; Rix & Bernay, 2014). The notion of mindfulness has burgeoned in recent times and, as Lomas et al. (2017) advocated, it seems a valuable intervention for educators to employ given their exposure to stress. As K. White et al. (2013) suggested, taking notice and appreciating life, and living in the present, were associated with better wellbeing for the general population. However, research using strategies such as mindfulness to foster wellbeing for new female principals has not been located. Indeed, Rix and Bernay's (2014) study on mindfulness and children, also alluded to limited research in New Zealand. However, a case study of five primary schools conducted by Rix and Bernay (2014) showed that teachers also benefit from mindfulness. Hence, it is conceivable that principals, including women principals, may benefit from interventions of mindfulness as a strategy to enhance their wellbeing. Further exploration with first-time female principals' to understand their experiences of strategies to enhance their wellbeing is required. The following section of the review focussed on the critical examination of the themes, connections that arose, and gaps that became apparent while reviewing the literature.

Critiquing connections, themes, and gaps

The literature commonly concludes that principals' roles are multifaceted, complex, and sometimes likened to a chaotic world of unpredictability. Undoubtedly, school leaders experience stress as a result of the complexity and the scope of their role. Much of the literature I located extrapolated the feelings of stress and onerous work demands for principals. This factor raises a further debate about whether or not they are all stressed. Furthermore, although I located some literature relating to both experienced and newly appointed principals, the shortage of studies focussed on first-time female principals and wellbeing, including the consequential effect on their leadership, was notable. In the literature that was reviewed the paucity in relation to females was evident. The scarceness of focus on the direct impact of wellbeing on first-time female principals was particularly palpable. Although sector organisations have shown an interest in the wellbeing of principals, and larger studies are dedicated to the science of wellbeing (Hone, 2015), there is scant qualitative research undertaken that focuses primarily on first-time female principals in New Zealand.

As Blackmore (2013) contended, rather than studying females as leaders in a generic sense, it is imperative to view social relations of gender and how these are produced or reproduced in

school systems. Hence, engaging the critical pedagogy of a feminist perspective on female leaders in education in relation to their wellbeing may provide a broader analysis. The science of wellbeing has received intense academic scrutiny (Carlisle et al., 2009), and also from broader studies involving the general population in New Zealand (Hone, 2015; K. White et al., 2013). However, a notable gap in this literature is any connection to first-time female principals and wellbeing. Using a more in-depth methodology to determine the perceptions of wellbeing may lead to a greater nuanced understanding for this cohort.

The four key themes identified are interrelated, and may be interpreted as barriers to effective wellbeing. However, the themes that refer to collaboration and productive relationships, including that of developing resilience and mindfulness, may also be viewed as possible enablers of principals' feelings of happiness and their ability to take control of their wellbeing instead of grappling with feelings of disempowerment. A factor not identified in the themes, but noted as a 'winning way to wellbeing', was that physical activity and being active boosted wellbeing (K. White et al., 2013). Support and collaboration were connected themes, particularly in association with perspectives of leadership. The notion of collaboration as promoted by Raelin (2011), focussed on the idea of 'leaderful practice', involving the support through a group of people and how it was collaborative in nature. Hence, determining the impact of collaboration on first-time female principals and whether it contributes to greater levels of wellbeing and their perceived leadership effectiveness, may provide further insight.

A connection across the themes that has surfaced was the concept of reflection as notions such as taking notice, being mindful, and resilient were points raised across the various studies that were reviewed, all of which required a degree of reflection. Educational discourse has focussed on reflective and metacognitive processes as a fundamental component to be learnt through challenging leadership contexts (Cardno, 2010, 2012). Robertson (2013) contested that if leaders do not engage in reflective processes then they will default to a single-loop or reactive style of leadership (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Leaders that utilise double-loop learning by questioning the status quo, along with examining personal values, beliefs and assumptions, will affect change and paradigms (Argyris & Schön, 1974). Feminist research, such as that of Burns and Chantler (2011), critically examined assumptions made in relation to inequalities that exist in society, such as gender inequality, in order to provide more equitable outcomes for women. Indeed, as a researcher being reflexive

of one's own assumptions within the research process is critical. However, it is questionable whether first-time female principals engage in reflective thought regarding their wellbeing. Emerging from the wealth of extant literature and raising further debate, is whether a strong mind is the path to enhanced wellbeing. In the mindfulness literature, Lomas et al. (2017) discussed the concept of 'reperceiving' or focus on intention, attention, and attitude in order to shift perspectives. In an education domain perhaps this is similar to Argyris and Schön (1974) double-loop reflective processes. Thus, further insights are required to determine if reflective qualities are enough to enable first-time female principals to take notice and take charge of their wellbeing.

An upsurge in the interest of wellbeing in education has surfaced that has been fuelled by higher levels of anxiety, depression, and other mental health issues in students. The literature on wellbeing interventions that has derived from a branch of positive psychology to positive education, was more compelling for students than for teachers or leaders (Rix & Bernay, 2014). Furthermore, there was robust evidence to suggest that higher levels of wellbeing somewhat protect mental health for the general population (Hone, 2015). Indeed, a focus on the wellbeing of principals must then have repercussions for all in a learning community. Hence, further research on first-time female principals with regard to their wellbeing will add to a body of research for them and perhaps offer greater understanding of their perceptions.

Within the literature that was appraised, debates surfaced in relation to the definition of wellbeing and how it remained unresolved (Carlisle et al., 2009; Hone, 2015). According to Hone (2015), the measurement of wellbeing has been arbitrary and typically a 'Flourishing Scale' has been used to determine the wellbeing status of populations, particularly popular in New Zealand research. It was noteworthy that this instrument was not used in the recent survey of Riley (2017) that measures principals' health and wellbeing. In accordance with issues relating to how wellbeing is defined and measured, ascertaining the conceptualisations of wellbeing for first-time female principals is a critical component. An awareness and caution of this must precede before instigating research on their perceived wellbeing status. The gaps in the literature that was reviewed revealed that in order to delve deeper into the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals, the research must be directly with them to critically examine their perceptions. Furthermore, to discover how wellbeing impacts on their leadership effectiveness and what are the perceived enablers and barriers to wellbeing for first-time female principals direct discussion with them is required.

Conclusion

This chapter reviewed and critiqued a small portion of the plethora of literature available on wellbeing. However, limited research was located in relation to education and wellbeing, particularly for leaders such as first-time female principals. As wellbeing remains a critical issue facing principals and a gap in the literature is identified, particularly for first-time female principals, it is worthy of further investigation. While the term ‘wellbeing’ is subjective and measurement of it can be haphazard within other domains, the themes identified within this review - performativity, relationships, support, and resilience are intertwined within educational leadership research (Ball, 2003; Bush, 2011; Cardno, 2012; Piggot-Irvine, 2012; Rix & Bernay, 2014). The recent rise in the attention to wellbeing in education that is somewhat attributable to onerous working demands provides a motive in order for leaders to take charge of their wellbeing. Further research is required to gauge the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals and how it affects their leadership. Also, to identify the barriers to wellbeing and substantiate ways in which it may be enhanced. Having reviewed the literature on the topic of wellbeing, the next chapter outlines and critically discusses the research design for this study.

Chapter 3 Research design, methods, and methodology

Introduction

The role of a principal is multifaceted, unpredictable, arduous, and stressful. Recent research (Maxwell & Riley, 2017; Riley, 2017) has revealed that principals experience greater emotional demands and burn out compared to the general population but, paradoxically, also score higher in job satisfaction. However, principals' levels of wellbeing are reportedly lower than their non-principal peers. Although such demands have been described in the literature, there appeared to be a paucity of literature that I was able to locate in relation to females and, particularly, first-time female principals in New Zealand. As Riley (2017) and M. White (2017) contended, it was timely and relevant to address the wellbeing of leaders in education. Thus, this study focussed on first-time female principals' perceptions of their own wellbeing, and how they perceived wellbeing to impact on the effectiveness of their leadership. Furthermore, this research explored the perceived enablers of and barriers to wellbeing for these women in order to examine how wellbeing might be enhanced.

The research design of this thesis was underpinned by the subjective and interpretivist positions, a critical feminist lens, and narrative methodology. This chapter outlines this positioning along with descriptions of the research sample and the data collection and analysis processes. The ethical issues relevant to this study are also identified and discussed.

Positioning

Shared views of how the world can be understood are supported by two positions: firstly, ontology – our beliefs about what exists or what is real; and secondly, epistemology – our beliefs about what counts as knowledge, how we know, and our knowing. (Burns & Chantler, 2011; Davidson & Tolich, 2003b; Wellington, 2015; Wood & Smith, 2011). These philosophical questions are fundamental to social science research (Davidson & Tolich, 2003b). Thus, clarifying the ontological and epistemological positions that underpin this research on wellbeing is crucial. As Wood and Smith (2011) noted, an objectivist ontological position supported the idea that what exists in society is external and independent of us. In contrast, a subjectivist ontology involves entering into a particular 'culture' and having an understanding of the shared values and language of that group or organisation. Indeed, Lincoln et al. (2011) suggested that understanding the social reality of a group and interpreting the meanings held by that group is important to the research process, and also

noted that “we construct knowledge through our lived experiences and through our interactions with other members of society” (p. 103). Hence, I adopted a subjectivist ontology, as recognised by Wood and Smith (2011), in regard to this research because I took the position that social reality is constructed by people from their experiences. Burns and Chantler (2011) noted that we have a world view and this can shape what can be known about the world. A qualitative research approach, along with the notion of constructivism or how meaning is constructed, as identified by many authors (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Lincoln et al., 2011; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Wellington, 2015; Wood & Smith, 2011) underpins this wellbeing study. This position involves experiences and perspectives of the participants in order for study to be understood. Hence, the subjectivist ontology is well suited to this study’s investigation of wellbeing in order to discover the perspectives of first-time female principals and how the meaning of their wellbeing is interpreted.

Epistemology is concerned with what is or is not knowledge. For this study on wellbeing, knowledge that is gleaned from the participants’ perceptions, is dependent on them sharing their experiences. Participants are shaped by their lived experiences, which emerge out of the data from them as knowledge (Chase, 2011; Lincoln et al., 2011). People understand their own reality from their perspective. Hence, in this research an interpretivist epistemology is utilised as this adopts the notion that social reality is constructed through experiences and shared language, which are identified by others (Atkins & Wallace, 2012; Lincoln et al., 2011). Davidson and Tolich (2003b) concurred that this view helped to explain and comprehend important social action. Gunter and Ribbins (2003) contended that within the educational field of research, what is proposed may not “lead to immediate action but could lead to a better understanding of the actions that have happened or could happen” (p. 261). Consequently, an interpretivist position suitably aligns to a study of the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals because, as the researcher, I am attempting to understand the lived experiences within the complex roles of principalship and construct meaning from it.

The critical feminist perspective

As a critical feminist perspective is applied to the design of this research, it is crucial to discuss some of the principles and philosophies of feminist research. Alice (2003) suggested that feminist research was concerned with looking closely at power relationships in which

gender, ethnicity, and socio economic status were positioned within individuals or society. Also, Alice (2003) argued, that feminist research can be politically aimed to try and change women's lives by "producing knowledge about social circumstances that will make a difference to how individuals or groups are organised" (p. 62). Burns and Chantler (2011) expressed a similar view and also claimed that feminist research critiques unexamined assumptions about women. As Olesen (2011) noted, many feminist approaches exist such as transnational feminism and standpoint theories, with ongoing feminist trends and issues remaining. However, the work of Harding (1987) identified the epistemological position of feminist standpoint theory and claimed that its early roots came from Marxist theory whereby world views are shaped by the interests and values of the dominant class. Harding (2004) noted that standpoint theorists such as Nancy Hartsock might hold differing views of what standpoint theory is, whereas Burns and Chantler (2011) stated that the epistemological position of standpoint theory shapes "ways of seeing the world and hence our views of knowledge (p. 67). Jaggar (2004) ultimately believed that any theory "should represent the world from the standpoint of women" (p. 56), while Harding (1987) maintained that women have a perspective on social reality because of their 'standpoint', or their own understanding of gendered oppression. Indeed, although Hekman (1997) contended that there is criticism that standpoint theory is at odds with the concept of difference such as race, which is addressed in feminist postmodernism critique, it does raise the question regarding the justification of truth about women being oppressed. In contrast, Burns and Chantler (2011) asserted, feminist standpoint theory focusses on the concerns of women's experiences, it can be transformative for them, and locates "the researcher in the same critical plane as the research" (p. 67). Clearly there are many viewpoints, however my standpoint in this research stems from a critical feminist position that first-time female principals may experience gender inequalities that are reinforced through societal influences and expectations. Furthermore, determining the effect of such inequalities on the wellbeing of this group of women could be explored. However, I must remain judicious as my assumptions about gendered inequalities or power relations that may surface must not make the analysis of the data deterministic of my viewpoint.

It was important to consider my own lens as a researcher during the study. Central to the positions of a subjectivist ontology, interpretivist epistemology, and critical feminist perspective was the consideration of nuanced understandings in regard to one's own beliefs, values and assumptions in order to validate the integrity of the research (Branson, 2007;

Larrivee, 2000). Wellington (2015) argued that being reflective and reflexive was vital to critical thought and the ways in which our own emotions, beliefs, and ideologies were entangled in this process. Davidson and Tolich (2003a) expressed a similar view and explained that being reflexive of oneself as the researcher or reflecting on the researcher effect was paramount. Indeed, feminist theory resonated with the notion of reflexivity, as feminist standpoint theory suggested that there was a need to reject and challenge the idea that the researcher was an 'expert' and potentially risking a hierarchical relationship between the researcher and participants. Hence, acknowledgment of my lens must be considered as assumptions made from my experiences as a Deputy Principal and Acting Principal may influence the research. My perceived views of workload, pressures, demands, striking a work-life balance and, indeed, my own levels of wellbeing were vital to consider through the process. In addition, recognition of my experiences as a woman and my upbringing in a New Zealand Pakeha family will shape my values and beliefs.

It is relevant that a feminist perspective is included to provide a critical lens in relation to perceptions of wellbeing of first-time female principals. Alice (2003) contended that a focus on women did not necessarily denote feminist research as it might focus on men or mixed gender groups. Burns and Chantler (2011) stated that feminist research "aspires to be for women as much as it is about women"(p. 66) As my research concentrated on deeply understanding the experiences of females, it lent itself to a feminist approach. In light of female principals' complex roles within schools and, perhaps, notably the roles they are responsible for in the home, investigation into both areas and their effect on wellbeing is pertinent. Thus, the critical feminist perspective complements a narrative methodology as the similarities between both are evident. Alice (2003) noted that qualitative feminist research methods allowed for female experiences to emerge. Feminist research can assist with social change; it allows for women's 'voices' to be heard that reveal life from their perspectives and acknowledges notions of empowerment and agency (Alice, 2003; Olesen, 2011). Olesen (2011) observed that a dominant theme in feminist qualitative research was the issue of 'knowledge', whose knowledge and for what purpose. This was aligned to the subjectivist ontology and epistemological positions encompassing the notion that knowledge is constructed that I have adopted in my research.

Feminist research was not just defined by women being oppressed, because not all women might view their lives with such a lens. Issues might surface that require a feminist

framework to help navigate identified behaviours and actions, such as relationships between the target cohort in leadership roles and various stakeholders within a school community. Also, gendered expectations that perhaps lie within their role as a female principal. Indeed, the impact of relationships and social capital on perceived levels of wellbeing and the subsequent interplay between expectations, emotions, and stress might emerge in my research (McCallum & O'Connell, 2009). Hence, determining the perceived wellbeing of female principals through a feminist lens is necessary. This might enable a deeper exploration of the power imbalances, gendered and societal expectations, and subsequent gender inequalities that prevail. Furthermore, determining the effects on perceived wellbeing within school and perhaps home life contexts of the four women did surface in this research. The next section describes the type of qualitative research that was employed in this study.

Methodology

Qualitative research

This study utilised a qualitative approach in conjunction with a critical feminist lens to analyse and interpret the data. The main purpose of qualitative research is to provide a deeper understanding of human experiences that might involve descriptions of human phenomena, interaction, and discourse (Lichtman, 2006). In order to gain a deeper level of understanding of the participants' experiences through their personal narratives, it is pertinent in this research to ensure the alignment between the qualitative approach and the principles of a feminist perspective. Paradigms such as positivism, critical theory, and participatory positions exist, and span a continuum of beliefs from hypotheses that become law to collaborative and co-constructed communities of knowledge (Lincoln et al., 2011). A post-positivist paradigm suggests that finding out about the truth is difficult and tends more towards viewing causes and effects in a logical and deductive system (Davidson & Tolich, 2003b; Wood & Smith, 2011). This position lends itself to quantitative research in contrast to the interpretivist view, which endears itself to a more qualitative approach. The following segment focusses on the narrative methodology that was utilised for this research. This section will critically explore the narrative methodology in order to justify its alignment to the research design.

In acknowledgement of the qualitative, subjectivist and interpretivist positions, and the critical feminist perspective that was adopted, a narrative methodology was chosen. O'Toole

and Beckett (2013) stated that “a methodology is a system that is based on a particular common methodical approach” (p. 27). Within this research design a narrative methodology was employed using the critical lens of a feminist perspective when analysing and interpreting the data. Narrative methodology primarily uses stories that people tell. Thus, a narrative acknowledges the subtle nuances of experiences to reveal themselves in a distinct form of discourse (Lewis, 2014). As Chase (2011) noted, narrative could be described as storytelling of a lived experience to grasp certain perceptions, particularly with regard to cultural discourses. Elliot (2012) expressed a similar understanding, explaining that experiences may be different depending on cultural contexts. Some researchers pay attention to ‘narrative reality’ to dig into what does and does not get said (Chase, 2011). Certainly, the notion of storytelling makes for interesting listening, and using the assumptions of a narrative methodology means working closely with participants. Thus, this approach was well suited to this study focussed on the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals, because it is conceivable that the relaying of scenarios might include descriptive perceptions of their experiences. As Chase (2011) asserted, researchers were encouraged to listen carefully and the stories then form the data. Arguably, the narrative approach provided an authentic way to understand the wellbeing perceptions for the participants. Listening and discovering perceptions of their own wellbeing through a narrative approach also might reveal possible answers to some questions.

Investigating how perceived wellbeing impacts upon the leadership of the target group was pertinent to this study. The compelling stories that were shared aided in eliciting and making sense of the principals’ perceptions of the nexus between aspects of wellbeing and its impact on leadership. Using the narrative approach to determine and understand perceptions of wellbeing in relation to stress levels and job satisfaction of this cohort was astute. This qualitative approach might have its critics, including those that might even consider mere ‘storytelling’ as having less rigour. However, perhaps allowing a narrative to communicate a story is enough. In order to disentangle the nexus of stress levels and job satisfaction in relation to the wellbeing of the target group, deeper thought examined through a narrative approach was required. Through a narrative methodology the subsequent co-construction of knowledge and understanding surfaced that might help to deeply understand such wellbeing issues.

Narrative approaches were inclusive of a story that typically has a beginning, middle, and an end (Elliot, 2012). Another key element was temporality, or the complicating action that explained what actually occurred (Elliot, 2012). Atkins and Wallace (2012), like Elliot (2012), noted that the narrative methodology determines salient themes, an interest in ‘the self’, and in change over time. Indeed, the level of depth that a narrative methodology has the potential to achieve was fundamental to the design of this research with the target group. It was possible that the participants might have only actually reflected when presented with an opportunity to narrate. Prompting through questions and being given the opportunity to articulate their feelings and perceptions of the topic in a narrative scenario might have encouraged a metacognitive reflection that they simply had not consciously contemplated before.

Of significance to a narrative methodology was the notion of agency or empowerment over the process resultant in stories told from the narrator (Alice, 2003; Elliot, 2012). Alice (2003) stated that the notion of empowerment in research generally refers to the intention of the researcher to “encourage their participants to analyse their own experiences and in some cases initiate change themselves” (p. 67). However, Alice (2003) argued that the empowerment idea has become contentious and problematic. Certainly, a thorny problem associated with narrative research could be with retelling a participant’s story and inadvertently altering the truth (Riessman, 1993). Thus, the representation of the participants’ voices was a powerful determinant over ownership of their stories. In my efforts to analyse and interpret the narratives, I remained cognisant of how the construction of such stories could be interpreted by others. Feminist authors such as Alice (2003) argued that a narrative methodology enables a diversity of experiences among women to be explored. Consequently, this research project allowed for the female principal voices to be heard, while honouring their personal narrative, and therefore it was hoped that they were agentic in the process. Arguably, it was conceivable that the participants already had agency and researchers provided the opportunity for stories to be told. Using a narrative approach allowed diversity among the participants to surface, and while subsequent wellbeing was explored, it was hoped that the female principals were able to maintain a sense of ownership over the process. The notion of empowerment might be problematic or even a contradiction. Alice (2003) commented “not all feminist research will foreground ‘empowerment’ as its goal, despite intending that its results may improve women’s lives” (p. 67). In an effort for researchers to share power with participants, it might perhaps inadvertently implicate them

within unequal power relations. Within this research, it was anticipated that through empowerment, the meaning of their stories led to co-construction of new knowledge that might promote higher levels of wellbeing.

An outcome of the research project might help to initiate and effect change. Chase (2011) argued that narrative research can make personal and social change a possibility. Feminist research also purported the notion of assisting with social change (Alice, 2003; Allan, 2012; Burns & Chantler, 2011). Thus, the narrative methodology was suitably aligned as not only a way of delving deeply into the perceptions of wellbeing, but realising the potential of how and what to change with the intention of achieving greater levels of wellbeing for the target cohort. The subjectivist and interpretivist positions, supported by a narrative methodology, perhaps allowed for meanings to emerge resulting in a desired change. The research approach was also underpinned by the notion of partnership and respect. Thus, working respectfully 'with' the research participants for mutual benefit was paramount, rather than adopting a 'research on them' paradigm whereby extraction of needed data dominated the approach. Another intention of this study was to recognise factors that contribute to or enable higher levels of wellbeing and in contrast, those that disable it for first-time female principals. The genuine enablers of and barriers to wellbeing emerged through the interview process, and perhaps a level of change might proceed, or at least the identifiable strategies to facilitate greater levels of wellbeing could be employed .

Critique of the narrative methodology has shown that interviewing requires the interviewer to be skilful. Chase (2011) maintained that an interviewer must show emotional maturity, sensitivity, and the patience to encourage the narrators to explore deeper understandings of their experiences. While critique of the empowerment notion that is noted by Elliot (2012), such as that of being over simplistic, could mask the complexities within an interview. Elliot (2012) argued that there could be significant differences in the participants' ability or willingness to elicit a narrative of their experiences. Indeed, diversity among the participants was evident in this research. However, since the narrative methodology allowed for the authentic voices of the participants to be heard, the narration of their stories permitted reflection to occur, and revealed genuine truths. Indeed, an awareness of these conundrums, and in particular the competencies required of myself as researcher, aided in being reflexive and cognisant during the process. However, this narrative approach enabled an honesty to emerge about perceptions of wellbeing for the target group that ultimately might contribute

positively to the field of qualitative research. The next section details the sampling that was defined for this research.

Sampling

First-time female principals are clearly defined as a sample population in the research questions and aims. Tolich and Davidson (2003) noted that the term ‘sample’ is used in qualitative research because people are involved who might demonstrate the thinking or actions of a larger group referred to as the population. Purposive sampling was used for this research project. Davidson and Tolich (2003b) noted that this kind of sampling deliberately sought certain elements and fell into the category of non-probability sampling (some people have more chance of being included in a study than others). Wellington (2015) contended that purposive sampling is conducted with a specific purpose in mind. The choice of sample therefore served the purpose of the investigation and was suited to small scale research as opposed to the harder-to-achieve probability sampling (Davidson & Tolich, 2003a; Wellington, 2015). The most common probability sampling examples included random or systematic paradigms (Wellington, 2015) and were judged as not suitable for this research project. There were many varied approaches within purposive sampling, but Wellington (2015) proposed that whatever was chosen must suit the research. Therefore, criterion case sampling was selected for this research because samples were chosen on the predetermined criteria (Wellington, 2015). When considering other types of purposive sampling, criterion case sampling seemed appropriate for this study due to the narrow focus; that of first-time female principals from primary schools. For the purposes of this project, ‘first-time female’ refers to female principals within the first 3 years of their first tenure, or ‘acting’ in the role for more than one term. These time periods were selected because it was hoped that enough participants that met the criteria could be invited into this study. A longer timeframe was deemed not suitable as ‘first-time’ assumes a more novice level. It was conceivable that the wellbeing of a principal with more years of experience could be perceived differently.

Purposive sampling suited both the subjective and interpretivist positions, including the narrative and feminist methodological approaches. Davidson and Tolich (2003b) suggested that numbers that make up a quantitative research study could be vague, but as qualitative researchers were interested in acquiring a greater depth of information on people, this took time and effort to get. Consequently, due to the nature of this research on perceived

wellbeing that was to be conducted in a reasonably limited timeframe, a small sample size was chosen. Four first-time female principals were sought through my established professional networks and invited into the study. The sampling method enabled me to hone in on this very specific group. I chose the first four female principals that fitted within the criteria who were willing to be part of the research. Conducting research using a purposive criterion sampling method that resulted in four first-time female principals in four different primary schools, was an appropriate tool to increase the validity of this qualitative research. The next section outlines how the data were collected and the subsequent narrative analysis.

Data collection and analysis

The rich source of qualitative data was drawn from the narratives that was elicited by the researcher using face-to-face semi-structured interviews. This method aligned with the assumptions of the positions that I adopted within this research. As noted by Forsey (2012), conducting interviews was an expedient way of capturing rich data and insights at a depth that was rarely achieved through surveys or observation. Thus, interviewing was arguably the most suitable way to collect data in order to critically examine the target groups' perceptions of their wellbeing. O'Toole and Beckett (2013) noted that semi-structured interviews, as opposed to unstructured, gave an opportunity for the interviewer to question further, seek clarification, and pursue expansion of ideas. Two interviews with each participant were conducted of approximately one hour each in duration; a gap of around two weeks between interviews occurred. Two interviews were chosen so that clarification of questions from the first interview could proceed, and to ask further relevant questions if required. During the gap between interviews with each participant, I carefully listened to the transcripts in preparation for the next interview. It was anticipated that the semi-structured interview method would elicit sufficient data to address the three research questions as outlined in the introduction.

This research depended upon the participants sharing their experiences and perceptions of wellbeing. Elliot (2012) proposed that most people enjoyed telling stories and will naturally provide narrative accounts of their experiences. The job of the researcher was to listen carefully to the participants' voices, with little interruption (Elliot, 2012). It has also been noted that some researchers have failed to obtain narratives of experiences even though this was the aim. Indeed, it was vital that researchers build a rapport and trust with their

participants so that a balance of power was developed, and participants felt comfortable to share their stories. My deputy principal experience was important because the target participants had recently been in that role themselves. I therefore had some credibility to be able to articulate and show empathy to their role so that trust could be developed.

Effective questioning must ensue so that there is validity within the data collection. Forsey (2012) argued that interviews could be fickle as they might only reveal what a participant wishes to say. Hence, skilled interviewing was fundamental in this research project, helped by effective questioning that allowed for talk about specific times and situations to emerge. Tolich and Davidson (2003) specified ways to ask the 'right' questions by keeping them simple and short, avoiding ambiguity, asking one question at a time, and being precise. These aspects were considered in this research when developing the questions. Open-ended questions were also used in this research that were framed using everyday language, and to avoid using leading questions (Forsey, 2012). An interview schedule was used (Appendix A) to guide the interview process, and this allowed the stories to unfold in an authentic and conversational way. The semi-structured interview method offered some flexibility to probe deeply to elicit more detail.

For the purposes of this research, the interviews were audio recorded, and then transcribed. Hammersley (2012) discussed who the most suitable person was to transcribe the data. Some suggested that it should be the researcher, but given the amount of data that eventuated, it was prudent that a transcriber was employed for this study. It was my duty to listen to the audio transcripts and check drafts accordingly. Arguably, active listening was essential to the narrative process. However, remaining attentive to nuances such as non-verbal cues, gestures, energy levels, and timekeeping was a fundamental part of the interview process. It was envisaged that a form of notetaking may ensue to capture what might not necessarily be explicit from the audio taping of interviews.

Narrative analysis was utilised so that sense could be made of the participants' descriptions of their perceived wellbeing. Elements of narrative are identified by Elliot (2012) that include the abstract or summary of the narrative; the orientation or the time, place, situation of the participant; the complicating action; the evaluation or meaning and significance of the action; the resolution or what finally happened; and finally the coda or return to the present. In contrast, Braun and Clarke (2013) explain that narrative analysis might use multiple stories

to construct an all-encompassing narrative. This research draws on this example from Braun and Clarke (2013) as comprehensive narratives were created. Watson (2012) described narrative analysis as involving paradigmatic reasoning, resultant in themes and descriptions. However, Riessman (1993) eloquently described narrative analysis as affording systematic research of personal experience and how stories are composed by the participants. Although commonalities arose out of the narratives, this research utilised the rich personal experiences that were expressed by each participant.

There was no exclusive ‘modus operandi’ when assuming narrative analysis. Considerable thought and research was considered in order to resolve the dilemma of how to approach narrative analysis in this study. As Barone (2007) suggested, forming narratives from the stories that are told may be described as an arrangement of text rather than analysis; thus he preferred the term narrative construction. However, Lewis (2014) disputed that narrative inquiry and analysis should not be conflated. Interestingly, Bold (2012) described that the purpose of analysis in qualitative research was to deeply enquire into “the meaning of different situations and different people’s understandings of the world” (p. 120). Blom and Nygren (2010) expressed a similar understanding that within narrative analysis the storytelling created meaning of lived experiences. Hence, after careful contemplation, this study aligned with Blom and Nygren (2010), because in order to elicit the meanings of the experiences and for determining the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals, the stories they presented informed the analysis. My intention was not to gloss over any aspects that the women shared, as this might have undermined the accounts of their stories. As Burns and Chantler (2011) stated, narrative analysis permits “a focus on the stories people tell and draws attention to how the story functions, why they are being told in that way at that particular moment” (p. 70). As some authors suggested, developing key analysis questions helped to guide this process (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Cortazzi & Jin, 2012). Thus, questions such as “What is told in the story and what happens as a result of telling that story?” (Braun & Clarke, 2013, p. 197) were utilised. Bryman (2004) posit that interactional analysis involved its co-construction of meaning by the researcher and participants. Indeed, the critical reading and rereading of transcripts occurred by lingering over the narrative construction so that the flow was not lost, and to avoid possible fragmentation of the stories. Furthermore, Bold (2012) argued that a narrative analysis was effective if you had a clear focus and the interview questions led to providing the information, thus commonalities would naturally emerge from the data. Hence, this suited the type of analysis for this research as the

themes became apparent through the reading of the transcripts. As analysis unfolded, the themes transpired through a rubric created from the transcription. Two extra columns were created on the hardcopy of the transcription; one summarised the stories told into a narrative form while the other highlighted the commonalities that arose. From this, the narrative column formed the story for each participant. The interview questions (Appendix A) were used to navigate the narratives and to devise such headings under which the commonalities that emerged were placed. Recurring ideas or notions that became apparent under each heading were noted. A summary ensued that compared and contrasted the participants ideas that helped to confirm the most common themes. Honouring the narratives by truthful, effective, and transparent representation ensured further trustworthiness, and credibility of findings on the perceived wellbeing of the participants. Ethical considerations underpinned this study and are examined more closely in the ensuing section.

Ethical considerations

Ethical concerns should be at the leading edge of any research that is undertaken because educational research involves the study of people (Wellington, 2015). Ethics can be described as a moral principle or code of conduct that governs what people do (Wellington, 2015; Wiles, 2012). In acknowledging my duty of care and responsibility, the ethical principles of AUTECH (Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee) were followed. These principles are: informed and voluntary consent; minimisation of risk; respect for the rights to privacy and confidentiality; truthfulness; research adequacy; respect for vulnerability of participants; respect for property including that of intellectual property; avoiding conflict of interest; and social and cultural sensitivity, including a commitment to the principles of the Treaty of Waitangi/Tiriti o Waitangi. Care for the participants was critical, including being cognisant of ethical issues and moral dilemmas that might arise throughout the entire research process (Wellington, 2015; Wiles, 2012). An awareness of care and responsibility inclusive of possible unintentional exploitation of power between the researcher and participant prevailed, while reflexivity through the process was maintained (Allan, 2012; Elliot, 2012; Wellington, 2015).

Gaining informed consent from the participants was ethically bound because it was important to be transparent with them about the research project. As Wellington (2015) proposed, transparency to all concerned was critical. Participants for this research were invited using

my existing professional networks. Wellington (2015) argued, that participants should be able to withdraw at any stage of the research process, which would have occurred if it eventuated. However, all of the participants that were invited into the research agreed to be part of this study. Once ethics approval was granted by AUTECH, an initial telephone approach to proposed participants took place outlining who I was, and the purpose of the research was explained in a transparent manner. The intention of the phone call was to set up a meeting and to explain in more detail while answering questions about the research. Thus, the initial contact was vital for avoiding deception by being truthful, and making it very clear the extent of the proposed study. Recognising the demands that two interviews might create for my participants, reasons for doing the research in order to complete a Master's thesis were areas that were discussed. A Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B) that detailed my identity, the purpose of the study, the chosen methodology for data collection, and procedures was emailed to the participants after the initial phone conversation. This allowed a chance for the proposed participant to consider the information and solicit further detail. All participants emailed me to confirm that they wished to be part of the research. Informed consent was given via the Consent Form (Appendix C) just prior to the first interview taking place.

Careful consideration of the research design and its clear goals aided the research adequacy and aimed to minimise any harm or risk by active protection of everyone who was involved. Particular attention to the formulation of questions was given, including the analysis of narrative, and how findings would be disseminated, contributing to minimisation of risk. Furthermore, dignity and respect were of paramount importance and were carefully considered through the process. It was anticipated that some participants might identify as Maori or Pasifika, or other diverse cultural identities. Thus, cultural responsiveness underpinned this research, and where applicable, consultation with appropriate cultural leaders would ensue to ensure that correct protocols were followed before interviews took place. Although this was planned for, it was not needed. Indeed, the notion of *mātauranga* supported responsiveness, whereby the essence of partnership, participation, and protection were considered through the process.

Given the nature of the cohort that was interviewed, respecting privacy was fundamental. Confidentiality was critical so that each participant's identity was protected throughout the research process and this final thesis. All participants were allocated a pseudonym within the

thesis and the identity of their schools was also kept confidential. The use of a transcriber was clearly explained, and participants were made aware that the transcriber was required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement (Appendix D). Meetings were arranged for interviews to take place in a negotiated space. They were all conducted in a private meeting room at the schools in which the participants were employed. Once interview recordings were transcribed, each participant had an opportunity to check their transcript for accuracy and to ensure that they approved of the data within the transcript being used in the research. The data and material have all been deposited in a secure locations, including my personal hard drive and in offices at AUT.

Conclusion

Along with the assumptions of subjectivist and interpretivist positions, the qualities of a narrative methodology with a critical feminist perspective were utilised in this research project. Purposive criterion sampling, semi-structured interview method, and a narrative analysis allowed critical examination of first- time female principals' perceptions of their wellbeing. Subjectivist and interpretivist positions allowed the knowledge and meaning to evolve. This was constructed through the voices of women based on using a narrative methodology with a critical feminist philosophy. The alignment to these positions and methodology was fundamental to this study, including the justification of sampling, data collection, and analysis that were employed. In essence the questions that guided this research ultimately provided the stories for analysis from which the nexus of themes emerged and conclusions were drawn in the findings. Ethical implications were discussed demonstrating my commitment to the ethical concerns that might have arisen during the entire project. Self-awareness and reflexivity were essential to the process, while trustworthiness, validity, and transferability of the research were discussed. It is hoped that this project will add to the body of research for the identified cohort, and may be of significance to greater societal change in the realm of education. If current literature holds true for this target group, then a deeper understanding of their perceived wellbeing may see greater levels of wellbeing. The next chapter introduces the four women participants revealing their compelling stories as first-time female principals and the subsequent effects upon their wellbeing.

Chapter 4: Presentation of findings

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to critically examine the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals. This research focus was chosen in order to contribute to the body of existing knowledge with particular attention for females leaders in education. The intention of this chapter was to present the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals as these were represented through the narratives collected in the semi structured interview method.

This chapter is separated into the four narratives from the lived experiences of the four participants in this research. Three women had been newly appointed as first-time principals and one was in her second year of an Acting Principal role. Based on the narrative methodology and the semi-structured interview questions, this section narrates the stories shared in order to grasp an understanding of the experiences relayed. I have composed the narration of the four women's personal experiences at the school that they are now leading with excerpts and quotes taken directly from the interview transcript. Their stories were constructed to elicit a sense of the person by using their turn of phrase when appropriate. Although Riessman (1993) contended that narrative analysis took the story as its object of investigation, the final section of the chapter interpreted a brief summary of the commonalities across the narratives.

The narratives and the narrators

Narrative analysis influenced the way in which the narrative data were analysed and interpreted. The pseudonyms Ana, Lucy, Fiona, and Penny were selected by the participants and used to help protect the identity of them. These names were also chosen by the participants themselves for further ownership of the process, while providing consistency in identifying each narrator and their story. At the time that the interviews were conducted, Penny and Fiona had been in the Principal role for approximately six months, Ana had been in the position for approximately two and half years, and Lucy was in her second year of Acting Principal. The length of service in the role of the Principal and Acting Principal also provided varying and diverse lived experiences for the women.

During the course of each interview, the participants were asked about their perceptions of what wellbeing meant to them, and how they perceived their current wellbeing status. Additionally, they commented on their perceptions as a female leader in education, how it impacted on their ability to care for their own wellbeing, and any gendered expectations that they had experienced. Barriers to wellbeing and factors that promoted their wellbeing were discussed. Proposed practices or options were considered that might strengthen their ability to maintain higher levels of wellbeing. Finally, the impact of their culture on wellbeing were discussed.

Three of the women described their ethnicity as Pakeha and one as Māori. It was a privilege to have had them offer their stories to almost a complete stranger. Experiences I had in common with all of the participants was that of a Deputy Principal role and knowing the importance of building relationships, it seemed to expedite the facilitation of rapport between us. The stories that are presented are a condensed version of their new journey into principalship and the perceived effects on their wellbeing. The following narratives navigate across a variety of content such as describing the role of a principal and their reflections about their enjoyment of the job and perceived wellbeing status.

Ana's story

Ana has now completed two and half years as a first-time female principal of a decile three school in Auckland. She describes her school with passion. It has a family feel about it and although it is a suburban school, there is a slight country sentiment in that everyone knows everybody. Ana perceives it as open, warm, and friendly. When the school “did the revisioning”, those are the words that resonated. The school has around 380 students presently and is experiencing significant roll growth. As the roll numbers rose towards the end of last year, the school had to enforce a school zone. The demographic of the area is changing and Ana believes that people can afford to buy in the area, “if there is such a thing in Auckland”. As a multicultural school, there are now more European children, but also increasing numbers of Chinese students, particularly in the New Entrants’ classes.

“Challenging” and “all-consuming” are words that Ana uses to describe her role. She loves her job, but feels that it “soaks up a large part of her life”. Ana started at her present school as the Deputy Principal and was unsure if she would have won the principal job had she not

been the Deputy Principal. She had previously applied for one other principal position, but was unsuccessful due to what she believes as “not being quite ready”. She realised that some Masters’ level papers were needed, which she started doing, and then applied for her current role. Ana thinks starting off in a new school as a first-time principal is a far different and much tougher journey than being in a school previously as the Deputy Principal.

When rating the enjoyment of the job, Ana perceives it to change depending on the day; much like a classroom teacher. On the days when everything is going smoothly the staff are learning, the kids are learning, then Ana describes everything as “being fabulous”. However, on a day that presents more challenges such as a student with high behaviour needs acting out, or an Oranga Tamariki (Ministry for Children) referral is made, or an upset staff member claims they cannot do the job anymore, then Ana’s enjoyment levels are somewhat reduced. Ana believes the situations that are beyond her control is a cause of frustration. Some examples of this are her desire to want to give more than she can, such as teachers having less children in their classes, or providing extra support for more challenging students. Ana’s strong sense of empathy exudes when she discusses some “un-lifting” and negative stories regarding children that are involved with outside agencies such as Oranga Tamariki. Ana explains that she strives to give of her best to resolve these kinds of situations and acquire the necessary help.

Ana’s view of wellbeing is thorough and encompasses many facets. She believes that it is about the whole being, or Hauora (Māori philosophy of health). Connecting with friends and support from whanau is critical. It is about having time to herself to do the things that she enjoys. It’s also about enjoying her job and getting job satisfaction. Ana describes wellbeing as being healthy in terms of getting enough sleep and exercise such as going to the gym, and consideration of what she eats and drinks. The notion of wellbeing is complex in Ana’s view because there are so many factors involved, and her wellbeing can feel different on any given day. She believes that what she experiences on the day can change how she is feeling about herself and her outlook. Ana perceives that her own present wellbeing is not taken care of. Although Ana has started attending the gym again, and undertaking a “paleo” lifestyle she has not had a great deal of time. Ana feels the pressure of time because she has one less Deputy Principal who is currently on sabbatical, and has not been replaced due to lower staffing levels. Ana describes how it is report writing time at school, where she reads, signs, and writes a comment on every report. It is a time consuming job, where Ana works from

home at times to do it, but also works during the weekends to get the job done. Ana recognises that this is added pressure.

Another factor that impacts upon Ana's wellbeing is having good intentions to take care of her wellbeing, but then the unexpected happens. Ana shared a story of how she had recently planned to go and watch the school basketball teams play after school, but there was a student who did not get picked up. She struggled to make contact with the parents and she was the one who stayed until they arrived. Consequently, this impacted on her ability to attend the basketball. Another example that Ana shared was when she had an appointment with a physio, which she thought she would be able to commit to. She was adamant that she would definitely be able to go. However, she had a staff member come in to her office who was having a slight personal crisis. Ana felt torn. She could not leave as she felt it would appear that she was more important than the staff member. Of course, she stayed to listen to the staff member but admitted that it was this sort of thing that affected her wellbeing; other people needing her, or her time.

For structured exercise, Ana attends a "boot camp", which she aims to go to twice a week. In the summer she plays social touch rugby. She likes fishing, and walking, but prefers to exercise in a group. It is important for Ana to take the rugby league training at lunch time during school because even if she does not get to the gym she has had 40 minutes of running around on the field, outside, and with the kids. She describes this as:

That's the stuff that is great for my wellbeing ... that's the stuff I enjoy.

When the pressure is on and Ana gets sucked into the "office vortex" she knows that when she is on duty outside with the children she has to do it, and recognises that this is the kind of activity at school that is good for her. Ana expressed that she ensures scheduling in time to spend in classes, which gets her out of the office. An example is going to give the students a birthday card and a little birthday pencil. Ana schedules time to "touch base" with each teacher, know how they are; and how their wellbeing is. These things are what Ana perceives as invigorating for her and that enhance her wellbeing while at school.

Ana expressed that she had far better work/life balance as a Deputy Principal. She claimed that while in this role she did not take "stuff" home. Ana described the stuff as the emotional and mentally challenging situations or events that occur, and now that she is in the Principal

role she “ends up taking home stuff”. For example, if there is a staffing problem, she sees that she is the one that has to solve it. Ana asks for help when she needs it, but the feelings of added pressure are what she tends to take home. Managing the budget, and staffing are jobs that Ana did not have as a Deputy Principal. When things got to the point whereby Ana described them as “being in the too hard basket”, she had the principal to lean on for support. Ana felt that even when she had a stint at Acting Principal it was still different to her current role:

It was like holding the ship on course, but now I am steering the ship. That's the difference.

Ana's wellbeing has been influenced by the other jobs that she has responsibility for such as strategic planning, revisioning, the thinking and thinking ahead, the what next, and reflection on her effectiveness.

Ana shared a story about how the school got broken into over the weekend. In her first year of principalship the school was broken into 16 times in the space of two weeks. Windows were smashed, iPads were stolen, and there was “thousands upon thousands of dollars” worth of damage. With the recent burglary, Ana's wellbeing was compromised because she was notified while out enjoying a dinner with her family. She had to ensure that the school site was secure, work out what was stolen, contact the security firm to ensure extra patrols were set up for the rest of the night, and contact others such as the caretaker, office and teaching staff. She also anticipated that she would have to be at school very early on Monday morning because the clean-up would need to happen.

Ana feels that societal expectations play a big part in gendered expectations. She used an example of young men getting principals' jobs who haven't had much service at each year level. She had a friend who went from a teacher position to a Deputy Principal of a larger school and “is certain that no woman would have made that career jump the way he did”. Ana believes that males with less experience at times win principal positions over females with more experience and are perhaps better suited as this has been experienced by many of her female friends. Ana perceives that males win principal positions over females because people perceive a male differently to a female principal. Ana expressed how society tends to view males differently, particularly in education, because they are “rare and treasured” in primary school settings.

As a female leader in Ana's school, she is unsure of how it would be different than a male. She thinks that people perceive her as:

... a total package. They see a middle-aged, white, Pakeha female who wears glasses and who's short.

She compares this image to a middle aged male in education, who was well groomed and immaculately dressed with excellent grammar, and particularly self-assured. She thinks that parents would approach him differently to her. Once people get to know her they realise that there is more than just what they see. Ana believes that as there are not many males in teaching, they are the ones that are perceived to be good with student discipline in a school.

Recently Ana's family went through a tough time and she did not realise how resilient she was. Ana describes herself as:

Someone who just gets on with things. I am not a crier and in fact my Deputy Principal calls me crusty old dry eyes.

Ana believes she has built up resilience throughout different experiences that she has had. She took time over applying for principalship as she never aspired to be a principal. Over the course of her career, she has spent time in different leadership roles. She has taught at about 14 different schools across a range of deciles, full primaries, intermediates, and secondary schools. She has learnt from each situation:

So, I think I've got a good bag of goodies from people that I can dip into and take from.

Ana is a step mum to two older children and has grandchildren. Ana views looking after her grandchildren is part of having higher levels of wellbeing. Ana has been involved in sport such as ruby league and touch rugby, which has had a positive impact on her wellbeing.

Ana comments that role separation is not necessarily gendered in her home. Ana and her husband both cook and share household roles at home.

My husband said to me once – Can you get your fishing gear out of my kitchen!

Ana perceives that it is the unexpected things that happen that stop her from addressing her own wellbeing. For instance, the school driveway needs new asphalt because of a big sinkhole that has developed. She sees spending time on the unexpected things that soak up money and time, and have little impact on teaching and learning inhibits her ability to address her own wellbeing. The school has recently undertaken a building project, which involved

significant time, including meetings. Ana does not view these things as making any difference to student wellbeing, or learning. The leak in the school swimming pool and the re-wiring for electrical and fire purposes are examples of unseen time and expenditure that Ana finds draining. Ana admits that she knows little about property, and finds it difficult to make decisions based on such knowledge, and subsequently questions her decisions. She expresses great confidence in her property advisor, but feels she wastes many hours in property meetings while not contributing in a meaningful way. These examples create a tension for Ana because she is aware that she is not in classrooms, and not engaging with students or teachers. She is very wary about being “seen as a principal who’s not seen”.

Ana feels that she spends a great deal of time outside of school with meetings. She is part of two Professional Learning Groups (PLG) that meet once or twice a term. This year Ana is involved with The Springboard Trust² as she wanted to engage in professional development for strategic planning. She views the PLG’s and the Springboard Trust as important for her wellbeing, even though it compromises her time in school. The Springboard Trust is a series of six workshops, which are three-hours long. Principals are given a ‘capacity partner’. A strategic model is worked through and the workshops are focussed on refining the school’s vision, to ensure that it is enacted. The purpose is to reduce long strategic plans into a meaningful document that is lived and that everyone is aware of, and working towards the aims that are identified. Ana felt that the Springboard Trust provided her with great support for strategic direction as she met with her capacity partner and ‘nuttied out’ options based on her school context. She discovered that the school had done ‘their values incredibly well and that the kids knew them’. Ana believes that they are empowered and proud students.

The school is part of a Community of Learning – Kahui Ako (CoL) that has also taken up a large chunk of Ana’s time. The CoL was functioning up to the point of deciding on “achievement challenges”. However, the CoL has had its challenges. Once the lead principal was appointed, Ana’s perception was that everyone’s contribution and participation waned. They almost thought “that now he has the job he will do all the work”. Ana explained the struggles in getting professional learning set up, and felt like there was a year of almost wasted time. She barely saw the those that were in ‘across-school’ teacher positions who

² The Springboard Trust is a charitable trust that works with the New Zealand educational sector to enhance strategic leadership capability www.springboardtrust.org.nz

support improvement in student achievement across their CoL, and described the year as frustrating. At some point in time it “all came to a head” but the CoL eventually managed to set up the professional development and establish clearer guidelines around job descriptions and expectations. However, then the lead principal took study leave and it has been responsibility of the CoL to appoint another leader. Ana describes this process as a “nightmare” that has taken considerable hours of meetings, with the “red tape” of the appointing process, as “being ridiculous given that everyone knew who should be appointed”. Another level of frustration is the retention of people in the roles. In Ana’s CoL there are two acting principals and four new principals; the change is significant. Only two people were eligible for the lead principal role because they must meet the criteria of being in a principal role for more than five years. She perceives that logic has played no part because the members of the CoL are bound by the constraints of the rules. Ana has then had to appoint new staff in her school, because one of her finest teachers was appointed as an ‘across school’ teacher. Ana finds these aspects of the CoL as draining her levels of wellbeing.

Staffing struggles have been the biggest challenge and pressure for Ana this year. The school has had to split classes, which Ana knows is not ideal for the students or the rest of the school. She currently has a staff member who has had knee surgery and is not able to come back to work full-time, and can only work half-days. Ana values her staff and regularly thanks them for coping with splitting classes rather than putting a low calibre teacher in a room. Thus, staffing issues appear to have negatively impacted upon Ana’s wellbeing. Ana is aware that her wellbeing does affect her leadership effectiveness. She likes to be healthy, and is aware that when she is not achieving this she is not as productive as she could be. If she is feeling positive about herself, and is happy with her eating and exercising regime, she has more energy. She is aware that when she has more energy she ‘is out there doing stuff’. She finds being a leader is then easier. Getting into a rut and not having enough time to be organised with food, “eating on the fly”, or grabbing a coffee for energy, she knows too well that she does not perform in the way she would like to.

Ana reports that she has effective relationships with parents. She explained that it is a rare occasion that she has “any parent coming in to yell at her”. She mentioned that she had a parent come in recently about an issue, but was positive about it, even though they felt angry. People trust that something will be done if they come and see the Principal. There have been times when parents have wanted Ana’s “head on a plate” and situations that she describes as

“just awful”. She has had times where it keeps her awake at night, but she reflects on her own behaviour, and what she could have done better or differently. Ana knows that it takes a toll when someone has “had a go” at her, particularly if the parent is not privy to the whole situation and, as a principal, she cannot tell them in order to protect the dignity or privacy of others. Staff relationships are positive and effective for Ana. She keeps a purposeful distance as she is friendly but not friends, with staff. She is “honest and upfront” about what she notices in classrooms, but at the same time is discreet. Ana does not have the “need to be liked and is happy to make calls that are not always popular”.

Ana explained some proposed practices or options that could be put into place to maintain higher levels of wellbeing. Firstly, the most significant thing for her wellbeing has been the first-time principals’ course³. A group with similar beliefs continued to meet after that course was finished. Ana admits that life without that group would have been very different. Ana values being able to offload in such a safe environment, with people who are fun to be with, and who can relate to the humorous side of things. As Ana mentioned, they have “all cleaned the toilets” or done unexpected jobs that are relatable to one another. The principals can be at different stages when they congregate together:

Someone can be having a really up time. Someone can be having a down time. But we’ve all had staff issues, we’ve all had student issues. We’ve all had our own personal stuff going on as well. That’s been a really, really affirming group.

In Ana’s area she feels the principals are not receiving the same collegial support from local principal groups and they are not attending the meetings due to time constraints. Ana feels privileged that she does indeed have many connections in her area, as she has met many educators through her husband who is also a principal.

Ana believes that ensuring that all deputy principals are effective is critical to increasing levels of wellbeing for a principal, particularly a first-time principal. She has a very effective Deputy Principal and they work collaboratively as a team. They are all very much aligned, and each has different strengths. Ana has grown leadership with her team by encouraging them to do Masters’ level papers with her.

³ First-time principal courses are run by different organisations such as The University of Auckland’s Centre for Educational Leadership First-time Principals’ Programme <http://old.uacel.ac.nz/courses/first-time-principals-programme>

For Ana, the first-time principals' course was invaluable because there were so many things that she just did not know. Ana believes that every new principal should do the first-time principal course and this could be strengthened to ensure that it happens. As part of this course, Ana was allocated a mentor that was someone she knew. Ana commented on that person as being very confidential and open who had a wealth of knowledge to share. Ana feels well supported by other people in the area, such as a person she has known for a long time at the local intermediate school. Ana describes that person as being solid, sensible and grounded, and who gives good advice.

Ana has not thought much about how her culture may impact upon her wellbeing, but does view it as having a positive influence. Her husband is Māori and another close relation is Samoan and she is often the only Pakeha at home. After living an extended whanau life with people often coming and going, that is now the norm. Family is really important to both Ana and her husband, and she perceives this as impacting positively on her wellbeing. They travel often to catch up with her husband's family. Having dinner every Sunday with Ana's Mum and family, and catching up regularly with friends is a big part of Ana's life and impacts in a positive way on her wellbeing. She has "really good mates" from the team that she plays touch rugby with on a Friday night and has been friends with for years. Enjoyment of life is paramount for Ana and her husband. They have a caravan up north that they visit. She describes being able to get up to the caravan after a stressful week and walking along the beach, or just going for a swim or surf is positive for her wellbeing.

Lucy's story

Lucy is in her second year as Acting Principal of a small decile one school in Auckland. She says that people come into her school and "they say it is like coming home". As it is a small school, everyone knows all of the children. Lucy admits that it has taken some time to get the community involved, but they are now engaging more. Lucy started her teaching career mostly in the junior area of the school in central Auckland many years ago. She shifted to another suburban school for some time and then won a "senior leader job back in the day when there was grading". With over 20 years at the school she has had many different roles during that time. After securing the Associate Principal role in her current school, she then became the Deputy Principal and is now the Acting Principal. Lucy claimed principalship

was not something that she ever aspired to do. She loves the community, and she loves the children, describing them as being “absolutely gorgeous”. Her current principal is on leave for two years, and when Lucy was asked by her principal to undertake the Acting Principal role, she felt she “had to do it”. Lucy explained that she is not doing the role to be a principal, or even for experience, but views it as a kind of “service”. Lucy perceives that the role entails maintaining trust with the community, and keeping things on “an even keel for when the Principal finally returns”.

Lucy describes the principal’s role as being “very administrative”. She finds that the administration takes over from the actual curriculum work. Lucy sees the role as dealing with people:

... but most of all it is about the kids and making sure that we give them the best that we can.

Her students enjoy coming to school and she made special mention that they are learning, despite adversities that they are faced with. Lucy mentioned that no day is a typical day and that every day can present different situations or challenges. She attends many meetings; some weeks she could be in classrooms, or dealing with student behaviours, working with parents, working with the Board of Trustees, or finances. She meets with teachers on a regular basis and ensures that everything is “running smoothly”.

Lucy admitted that she does not enjoy the job as Principal. She finds it frustrating and believes that the source of frustration comes from the lack of support and understanding of the real needs for the children and her community, particularly from the Ministry of Education. The frustrations end up impacting on Lucy’s wellbeing. Lucy shared an example of a child recently who was threatening suicide, and the lack of support from outside agencies such as Oranga Tamariki. She believes the mental health particularly of the children at her school “is shocking”. They rely on their parents who are often struggling themselves. She feels strongly that their school works hard to engage their families, but often it is the children who get let down and then she herself feels disappointed. Their support relies on the goodwill of teachers and some parents to make things work.

Lucy perceives that the word ‘wellbeing’ for children means that they will feel safe and secure; that they love coming to school and that they love learning. Even though Lucy could

describe what wellbeing meant for the children and staff, she was unsure about what the word wellbeing meant for her. She wants parents to be happy that their children are in her school. She feels the same for staff and wants them to enjoy coming to work, particularly as it can be a very stressful environment. Staff feel that school is very busy:

It's like the term starts and its boom! All things are happening.

Lucy is not sure why, but is very conscious of this busyness. Everyone is busy with team meetings and parent meetings. Lucy is aware that the bombardment of emails contributes to the busyness:

In the past when you may have gone and had a conversation with someone, today you flick an email instead.

Lucy mentioned that the 24/7 access to teachers and staff from parents has impacted on how hectic it is too. She has discussed the notion with staff because it came up at one of the principals' meetings that Lucy attended. There is almost an expectation that people should respond immediately. Lucy has discussed with her staff the awareness of this issue and reiterated that they do not have to respond immediately to emails.

Lucy mentioned that her own present wellbeing at the time of the interview was "okay". She tries to "get a laugh" when she can. Lucy perceives that her wellbeing relies heavily on everyone else's wellbeing. Things that were contributing to her present lower levels of wellbeing were school related such as having to get a teacher in the middle of the year, the SENCO leaving, and a teacher who has been absent all year and has just started coming back for half-days because of a serious injury to her toe. Lucy's solution to that problem was putting her Associate Principal into that classroom, which was not ideal because she was trying to train her in the SENCO role. The stresses of having new teachers in the school was evident. Lucy wanted to ensure that people, and particularly the new staff felt supported. Lucy indicated that her wellbeing goes up and down depending on the day:

Some days I think the job is okay. Other days I think it is not okay.

Lucy perceives that she has some stress from outside of school too. When she elaborated she knew that she would find it difficult to manage household roles such as "going home and cooking dinner" when she contemplated taking on the role of Acting Principal. Lucy has demands in her personal life such as caring for an elderly mother. For her to achieve doing the role she did not want her partner working because she felt that it would be too hard to do

both jobs. Lucy was afraid of not managing other roles easily. Since becoming an Acting Principal, Lucy's own wellbeing has been influenced by the stress that she experiences:

Every day there is something from the left curve, and there is always something new that I don't know about. I got to the point last year whereby I said, I'm so sick of not knowing'.

Some examples of "not knowing" for Lucy relate to property. There is building work, and she has the 10YPP (Ten Year Property Plan) to do "as well as new stuff to do with finances". Lucy comments that no-one prepares principals for "any of that stuff". Lucy puts a lot of trust into others that fulfil certain roles such as an excellent Executive Officer and relies heavily on "having the right people in the right places":

It's all about everyone working together and using people's strengths.

As a female leader in the school, Lucy thinks that the relationships are quite respectful, including relationships with male parents. Lucy shared her experiences with contractors and various "Ministry of Education property people". She believes that there is an element of males assuming that the female principal "doesn't know":

Perhaps it is because they realise how much I actually do not know.

Lucy feels that she has no idea about many aspects of certain works, and because of this is unable to challenge things. There have been occasions when comments have been made to Lucy that she was not comfortable with. She feels that the men come into meetings and are working with women who may not have the necessary knowledge. Lucy feels uncertain at times about challenging men in these situations as she feels she "is not very good at come backs". She worries that it could be perceived that she is an easy target, particularly by males that come into the school to deal with property.

Lucy's wellbeing affects her because she gets "tired" and thinks she "is getting old". The things that stress her out the most are challenging behaviour with children and "making sure that everyone is okay". Lucy admitted to getting stressed recently because she could not get a reliever, and she never realised how strained she was until she finally managed to secure a reliever for the day. She felt anxious about being forced to split a class if she could not find a reliever. She said that she goes into "panic mode" at times such as when the teacher who was injured was not able to return to school. Lucy is aware that she is "not too good" when she is experiencing stress. She mentioned that the "good eating goes out the window, the shopping goes out the window" and she is aware that she "needs a lot of downtime". On a Saturday

Lucy tries to ensure that she has “a day off”, but on a Sunday she will often “be thinking about work all the time” and doing school work. On a Saturday, she likes to read or take the dog for a walk, and spend time with family. These things enhance her levels of wellbeing. Lucy also promotes her own wellbeing by taking time out. While Lucy has been Acting Principal she has changed the way she works, because she “used to go home and work all hours of the night”. She stopped doing that and has worked out that when she gets up early in the morning, she is more effective at getting things done. She tries not to do too much at night. Lucy sees herself at times preventing herself from addressing her own wellbeing.

Life is just always busy, and ... I am not that driven.

“Life being busy” is what Lucy perceives as a barrier to achieving higher levels of wellbeing. A day might look clear and free of appointments, but then people just drop in such as a student enrolment visit. Another example that Lucy discussed were resignations and jobs to fill. There are times when it is busier than others such as report reading time whereby she reads all of the reports and adds comments to them.

Lucy questions how a female leader in education experiences gendered expectations that impact upon her wellbeing:

Is it because of personality or is it just the fact that you are a woman in a group of men? Or is it because you are the sort of person that people would ignore. I feel I am invisible in a room with men.

She believes women often get ignored and that property meetings are a good example of this, when she is usually dealing with men. Lucy has witnessed “bullying talk” in property meetings and incidents where she has been “talked down” at. This has affected Lucy’s wellbeing because she was quite shocked by what was said in that forum. A person from an outside agency had visited the school to have a look at the property. At the meeting there were representatives from the Samoan preschool, which is also onsite. A comment was made by one of the property men that suggested with the new housing development, the community will look “a bit different so the school will need to look a lot better than it does now”. Lucy felt extremely embarrassed by the comment, and almost considered it a racist remark, particularly in front of the Samoan women. Lucy did not challenge him because she felt quite shocked, but wondered what the women thought. Since Lucy was new to the role, she felt she regretted not being able to challenge that person. Another factor that contributes to lower levels of wellbeing for Lucy is “not knowing about stuff” such as finances, buildings, alarm systems, and CTV cameras. Making decisions about things that she has little

knowledge about, and often involve “quite a lot of money”. Lucy feels strongly that more money should be invested into schools and classrooms because “children deserve the best”. Lucy thinks that the Board of Trustees could “play a bigger role in some of the property dealings, and the financial side”. She believes that perhaps her workload would be reduced if these things occurred.

Lucy hails from a “town of goldminers” and she has a history of being union-orientated focussed. She looks at things with a political lens, which she sees as affecting the way she thinks about the children and her community. She believes strongly in equity for the children because there is a huge disparity between things such as the houses that they are growing up in. Lucy perceives that she is an advocate for “the kids and their equity”. She “fights” for them. She feels like she is “fighting all of the time, in one way or another”:

If it is not fighting for a nicer environment, it is fighting for money, or fighting to get their needs met.

Lucy provided an example of a simple thing like “the public health nurse not being able to attend the SENCO meetings”. Lucy identifies that the school could benefit from a full time public health nurse and effective social workers in school. Lucy shared an example of how the social worker can no longer run the “Breakfast Club”, which has impacted the children in her school.

Lucy was “sent into a spin” recently because she had been directed by the Ministry of Education to enrol a child:

That just about did my head in, because I thought that we’d done the right thing, but we are not listened to. Some bloke from the Ministry rang me and said that they were directing it.

Lucy felt empathetic because the proposed decision was not in the best interests of the child. The board had discussed the issue in committee, and there were valid reasons for not accepting the enrolment because of trauma from a child that had attended her school last year. She worries about the other children, teacher wellbeing, and the whole school because children with high behaviour needs affect everybody in a school. No support for this particular child had been offered, and Lucy feels that “the school is meant to have all of the answers” when expected to enrol a child with extreme behaviours:

If we take a child who is violent and swears, it only takes one loose cannon and then there is foul language, racist comments, and furniture thrown around.

The child that was going to be directed to enrol ended up going elsewhere because the living arrangements changed for the child. The child could end up still enrolling and Lucy admits that is the sort of thing that “grinds you down” and affects her wellbeing. Lucy would like to see higher levels of support in schools, which she perceives would have a positive impact on everyone’s wellbeing. Pay increases for teachers are absolutely crucial otherwise Lucy believes “we will not keep teachers in the profession” because the work is “too damn hard”.

Lucy has had little support as a first-time principal, partly because she is in an acting role. She has relied heavily on the Principal for support particularly with answering questions. Lucy has found the School Trustees Association (STA) effective when she has phoned for certain advice, which she mentioned did surprise her. There are two principal cluster groups made up of local principals and Lucy has had some support from those groups. Lucy attends the meetings when she can, but often they fall on the day of the SENCO meeting, and therefore she is not able to attend the principal meeting. Lucy has the support of two Associate Principals, and senior leaders. Lucy perceives that her leadership style is collaborative as they make decisions together. Lucy describes her relationships with staff as being “good”. She believes in being fair and acknowledging when people need time. Some of the teachers at her school are heavily involved in the community:

If there is, for example, a bereavement, some of the teachers would have spent the night at the hospital and been quite involved.

Lucy perceives her role as being supportive in that area as paramount for building staff relations. Lucy has experienced some struggles with staff and shared an interesting scenario in her first year as Acting Principal when a new person came into the school. The issue referred to maintaining professional relationships between that person and other staff. Lucy feels strongly about treating everyone with respect, being “upfront”, and will mediate when required. However, she does not necessarily perceive herself as being “very good” at it. Lucy feels that when things “go wrong with staff”, it affects her level of wellbeing quite considerably. Lucy shared an example of receiving what she perceived as a negative email from a staff member at a weekend, which became “all-consuming” for her. She emailed back and asked the staff member to come and see her on the Monday. It “turned out” that Lucy had interpreted the situation differently to what was intended:

I did not say too much at the meeting but felt quite gutted over it.

Lucy sees the importance of face-to-face communication, and when there are problems with staff it can “the straw that can break the camel’s back”. Lucy knows she can do the job when she thinks everyone is with her, and if they are not, then she describes it as being “too hard”.

Lucy perceives that her levels of wellbeing impact upon her leadership effectiveness. Although she thinks it is the sort of job where you have just got to “face up and keep going, even if you feel a bit yucky”. Even if she is not feeling happy, she feels that she has to put on a “happy face” because that is what people expect to see. Lucy perceives that this kind of emotional masking can be a good thing. She sees it as self-perpetuating. If she acts like she is happy, then she starts believing it, which she thinks has a positive impact on her wellbeing. Lucy feels that she is empowered to make changes while in an the Acting Principal role. She has changed the website, made decisions around trees that needed to be chopped down, and organised a new sandpit. Lucy described some positive things that had happened at school recently as uplifting for her wellbeing. The Ministry of Education had approved the fencing for the school because there is a safety issue with a child that tends to run out of school unattended. Some recent events at the school included a wonderful Samoan Language Week, an Art Week, and the whole school was involved in a Pirate Day. These events have a positive effect on Lucy’s wellbeing because she perceives it as being “fun and everyone likes it”.

Lucy is a Pakeha and sees the heart of her culture as firmly entrenched in New Zealand. She is intensely interested in other cultures as she is interested in language and culture. Lucy has attempted learning Te Reo Māori; she is not fluent in the language, but does possess a “good level” of vocabulary and understanding. Lucy is aware that it takes time to develop relationships. Building relationships with the community impacts positively on Lucy’s wellbeing. The families know that they can come and talk, rather than complain. Lucy perceives a cultural trust has been established because of the respectful relationships between parents and teachers, and a responsiveness to cultures. Some of the families in the school community have not had good experiences with school themselves, and perhaps some have not had good experiences with agencies, so it has taken time to build trust:

The quickest way to build trust is for them to see that you actually care about their children, and that you want them to do the best that they can. If you help someone in the community with something, they never forget it.

Lucy believes in looking at the wellbeing of families as a whole, rather than just children in a classroom, which helps to gain trust in the community.

Fiona's story

Fiona is a New Zealand Pakeha and first generation New Zealander as her parents immigrated from England. She grew up with no relatives in New Zealand, lived in West Auckland, and most of her own schooling was in multicultural schools. Fiona's school has a roll of approximately 350 students. She describes her strong group of staff as being very supportive of one another. Many of the staff have been at the school a long time including valuable support staff. There are currently some beginning teachers, which makes a good balance between experienced and new teachers. The school has wonderful facilities for the children and Fiona is proud of an initiative in the school which sees children harvesting the food from the garden and orchard.

Fiona describes her job as "being busy". There are different things that happen each day, which would have been the same when she was a Deputy Principal, "but up a notch because the buck stops" with her. Fiona feels if something does not happen then she cannot look elsewhere and she has to look at herself. Fiona arrives at school about seven-thirty in the morning, she touches base with the two Associate Principals, and tries to make sure that she is in the staffroom area to connect with staff first thing in the morning. Fiona has a Google calendar that she uses prolifically and the office have access to it. Fiona does not spend much time at her desk, and she tries to schedule time in classes each day by checking in on the children with birthdays.

The school has a traditional leadership structure that is made up of the Principal and two Associate Principals who are fully released from classroom teaching. Fiona is creative with staffing in order to keep the Associate Principals released from the classroom. For example when the New Entrant class starts up, one Associate Principal will teach one day a week in that class. Fiona and her team work together collaboratively, and she sees it as being important to be released from teaching in classrooms, to be able to achieve that, which has a positive impact upon her wellbeing. Fiona prefers to work as a team because she thinks if more people know about something, then if she is absent, someone else can pick it up. Fiona schedules regular Monday meetings with the caretaker and financial officer and on a Tuesday

she meets with her personal secretary. She finds that these systems help to get the week organised. Fiona has taken over enrolments for all new families. She finds that it is an effective way to get to know families, and also get more information about any needs that their children might have. Fiona does duty most days outside but when three o'clock arrives, she has a "big mess of stuff to get through". Fiona loves her job as a principal, just as she loved being a teacher. She would like to spend more time with the children in classes, but the "admin stuff takes over", particularly around property and finance. The biggest learning curve for Fiona has been around property and finance and how much time these areas take. Fiona keeps "digging deeper" to find more hours to give, which she does not resent as she views teaching as her vocation.

The leadership style that Fiona describes of herself is "fairly democratic". It changes depending on the situation, because she is aware that sometimes she just has to be decisive. She recognises that the shift from being a Deputy Principal to the role of the Principal has "been interesting". She shares an example of timetabling as she has become capable in that area because of her role as a Deputy Principal, and can problem solve many different scenarios to make timetables effective. She feels at times she needs to "take a step back as she knows she does not need to do that now". Fiona is aware that she just needs to delegate, which then impacts on her workload and resultant wellbeing. Fiona perceives wellbeing as how a person feels about themselves. Knowing herself, and knowing when she is feeling overwhelmed she has the confidence to say "no", and prioritise what is important. Wellbeing includes work/life balance, but she has recently heard of a term called 'work/life satisfaction':

What is a work/life balance for me, could be different to others, or a male principal.

She strongly believes that she cannot tell someone how their work/life balance should be, because it is different for everyone. Everyone needs to recognise it for themselves and what it looks like. Fiona does not believe that you should dictate to people what to do in terms of working hours, for instance, saying someone "is not allowed to go into school at the weekends to work". She sees it as that person's choice as to what they see as their balance. Fiona believes that some people might be better at that than others, knowing when their body needs to rest:

Don't stop; just rest. Because that's often what you just need to do.

Fiona is a big believer in viewing tomorrow as another day. If today is all going to “custard”, then she advocates to “look at tomorrow”.

The word wellbeing for Fiona also means having the necessary support in her role as a new principal. She thinks that new principals are well supported as they are assigned a current principal as a mentor through the beginning principals’ programme. Fiona considers herself lucky because her mentor is someone who she knew previously. The mentor has also come from a high decile to a low decile school and can relate easily to some of the issues that Fiona faces. Fiona finds it refreshing to be able to talk to her mentor about what is happening at her place, and realising that she is not alone. As her mentor is so open and transparent about issues, Fiona finds it almost like a release, because she realises things are not just her problem, but others are experiencing it too.

Fiona describes her present wellbeing as something that “goes up and down in phases”, particularly, if she is faced with deadlines and pressures. Such pressures may include property meetings, or “when behaviour flares up”. Fiona is aware of “keeping the wellbeing right for everyone”. In Fiona’s personal life her partner was about to have a big operation for a type of cancer. As a result, for Fiona wellbeing means balancing what is happening in her personal life with school, which she admits is “not easy”. She rated her current wellbeing at about six or seven out of ten. Fiona thinks that the “female behaviour of always giving of yourself” happens, even though in the back of her mind she is thinking about what meals she should be making for the freezer. She questions how many men would be thinking that. She is concerned with making sure that things are alright for lots of different people.

A story was shared by Fiona about how low level behaviours of children at school were starting to affect her wellbeing. She was hesitant to make any changes in haste, but felt that it needed action because it was becoming “all too consuming and taking over”. Fiona introduced some changes such as consequences such as written reflection when children made poor choices. Since the changes were made a shift had occurred and there was a calmer feeling around the school. The behaviours were not extreme, but “lack of respect” was the main issue and “swearing in the playground”. Teachers were not wanting to do duty because there was a lack of respect towards them. Fiona called a staff meeting outside of their regular meeting schedule. The school affiliated with *Positive Behaviour for Learning* (PB4L), but although this initiative was in place, Fiona was not sure that everyone was

“walking the talk”. The staff brainstormed together what the problems were and how everyone could work together to improve it. Fiona got the PB4L team up and running again, and initiated a lunch time consequence programme whereby children had to write about the incident and consider what needed to occur if they happened to “muck up”. Fiona felt that there was a lack of explicit teaching around respect, attitude, and perseverance aims. Also the free and frequent awards were not being given out:

It was about everything that staff know; positively reinforcing the desired behaviours to eliminate the negative.

The “follow-through” seemed to be effective resultant in higher levels of wellbeing for both Fiona and the staff.

Fiona admitted that she felt more under stress as the Deputy Principal in her previous school, because there was a new principal in the school. It was not until she left that job that she realised she was carrying a lot of extra stress. She has had “a total realisation that being a principal is not great fun at times”, but she feels in control of that for herself. As a result, Fiona thinks she has had a higher level of wellbeing since becoming a principal. She has more control over situations for her own wellbeing. As a female leader Fiona thinks that she can “sense what is going on for others”, although she is reluctant to make a generalisation. She has “more of a radar to detect how others are feeling”, particularly, when it comes to family. An example she shared was about a beginning teacher who has got her own five year old at another school. So as part of her beginning teacher time, Fiona has approved for the teacher to leave ten minutes earlier before the end of the day so that she can pick up her child one day a week. This has meant a great deal to the teacher, even though it is a small gesture on Fiona’s part. Fiona thinks that females are perceptive to the needs of each other. Fiona perceives that females are most likely aware of other people’s wellbeing:

Maybe I can see the signs, and particularly for those who are mothers too.

Fiona is aware from “signs of her own body when she needs to slow down”. Fiona recognises what she needs to do if she notices that her levels of wellbeing are reduced. She will “bake if I need a distraction”. Fiona likes walking and yoga as activities to do to manage her wellbeing. She really notices a difference if she does not make the Saturday morning yoga class that she attends. Fiona thinks as she has got older she has got much better at recognising when she is feeling pressured.

Fiona has a strong need to be there for other people and knows that she needs to look after herself before she can look after others. Maintaining connections with friends ultimately helps with her own wellbeing and she tries to keep in touch with them. Fiona believes that it is very important to stay connected to people because she can easily see how the role can encompass home and school life. Keeping in contact with friends by blocking in dates is a strategy that works for Fiona and has a positive effect on her wellbeing. For instance, Fiona and her best friend subscribe to the Auckland Theatre Company. In January each year they “lock in the dates” that they are going to the theatre. That way they both know that even if they do not see each other for a while, they know that they have a “theatre date”. It is really important for Fiona to keep in touch with the people that matter to her in her life. Fiona recognises that when things have been “down for her in the past”, it has been her friends who have been there to support her. She sees connecting with friends as being good for people’s mental health.

Reading is an activity that Fiona does to promote her own wellbeing, but it is something that does not happen often, apart from perhaps in the summer holidays. Walking definitely helps to clear Fiona’s headspace and she enjoys getting out and about in nature. Fiona has experienced many deaths in the family and she thinks that as she gets older, she “appreciates how precious life is”; even the simple things such as being outside. She enjoys just looking outside of her office and appreciating the view. Things that she might have taken for granted even five or ten years ago she does not now.

Fiona recognises the things that stop her addressing her own wellbeing. They are time pressures, deadlines, and meetings, along with the expectations that Fiona places upon herself. Fiona mentioned that it is a positive move that she has had to set a wellbeing goal as part of her principal appraisal. She has set a goal to arrive later to school on a Thursday morning so that she can get extra work done at home without any distractions. It is a manageable wellbeing goal for Fiona. She contemplated setting one around doing more exercise, of getting seven to eight hours sleep a night, but felt that staying at home on a Thursday morning was achievable, which would help her to manage her week and other tasks. She has only recently started pursuing her wellbeing goal and identifies this as a positive option. At the time of the second interview, Fiona admitted that her wellbeing goal was not “going too well”. Fiona has tried to shift the day to stay later at home when she knows there is a clash. Of course, different things have “cropped up” such as external

meetings and attending a principal hui that have proved to be a barrier. Fiona shared that she learnt at the hui that you can “be under pressure, but stress is your response to it”. So to say that someone is feeling stressed, means that is their reaction to a particular situation. She recognises that when there are more pressured times, there are ways to minimise the stress around it. Fiona has a strong desire to keep up with professional learning, which she perceives she is “good at doing”. She enjoys connecting with Twitter because it is an “easy way to stay up-to-date with the latest and greatest”. There was a research day being held on a Saturday that Fiona wished to attend. She felt the tension because she was aware of the personal “stuff” going on at home. Although she felt the conflict, attending that day would make her “feel really good”.

Fiona believes an option to enhance wellbeing of first-time principals would be around property management. Fiona views that those tasks are the ones that take her away from teaching and learning. Fiona reiterates that teachers did not go to teachers’ college or university to learn to be property or project managers. Fiona believes that through the recent pay negotiations this area that could be addressed, because if property issues were removed from principals’ workloads she believes “it would go a long way”.

Fiona perceives that male principals “can get away with a little more than female principals”. She also thinks that females ‘bring it upon themselves’. For example, if there is a function on, Fiona might check that the tea and coffee is sorted and the food is organised. She questions whether a male principal would necessarily do that, or even give it any thought. Another example that Fiona shared was when the school had a Maths evening recently, she was there helping to tidy up and questioned whether or not that would happen with both genders. Fiona has experienced gendered expectations through the property work that she has been involved in since becoming a principal. When she first arrived, there was a meeting about the swimming pool. It was a Board of Trustees funded project, and a certain amount of money had been put aside for the pool. Two days into the job, she received a quote at an inflated price compared to what was anticipated and budgeted for. Fiona asked to speak to the general manager of the company that the school were dealing with for project management:

I questioned why the estimated works were way over the limit. I told them to cut it back because that was not approved by the Board in the previous year. His first response was, ‘Does your Board know that you are saying this?’

Fiona knew by the way he said it that “he was trying it on with her because she was a female”. She felt a bias even by the way he conducted the entire meeting. She thought the project manager was a woman who could not attend because she was unwell. It turned out that the man she was dealing with was the boss. When Fiona finally got to meet the woman she made it clear that she only wanted to deal with her because she could sense what it was going to be like otherwise.

The school is in a functioning CoL, which has been interesting for Fiona to join. The CoL has been established for a few years. Some principals are retiring and new principals are coming on board therefore, they have considered the importance of induction of new principals that are part of the CoL. There is time taken up with after-school meetings, twice a term. Fiona perceives that there is huge potential around collaboration derived from CoLs. However, time pressures have been a barrier to date.

Fiona perceives that the relationships she has with parents are a strength. She has been deliberate about getting parents into school to work with them. An example shared was with the children who had diagnosed conditions and subsequent behaviour concerns. Fiona shared a story where she had got a parent to come into the school, and followed up on all of the points that were discussed in a subsequent e-mail. Fiona questioned whether the parent would follow-through or not. However, later the next week the parent had set agreed goals with the child and consequences. She recognises that the enrolment process is an enabler to make those crucial connections and touch base. Fiona views that this strength in establishing and maintaining relationships has a positive impact upon her own wellbeing.

Fiona recognises that her wellbeing does impact on her leadership effectiveness. Although she would try hard not to let her true feelings show at times, she would disclose things and offload with the leadership team. Fiona feels that feedback as a principal is important, even if it is early into her principalship. She does wonder about her perception verses what the reality is. The principal appraisal survey had recently been sent out, which would provide further feedback. Fiona believes that the structure enables the Associate Principals to act as “gatekeepers” as staff go to them if there is a concern. Often issues are dealt with at that level and resolved. However, one of the “big stressors” for Fiona has been staffing appointment struggles. There had been a notable lack of applicants for positions that were advertised, and none for a New Entrant position that then had to be re-advertised. Fiona

believes staffing is at crisis point and she is concerned that schools will be accepting people that are not suitable. However, finding relieving teachers has not been a problem so far, because Fiona has noticed that teachers are leaving teaching and going relieving instead. Her school has not had to split classes too often.

Fiona knew that she wanted to “watch and wait”, once she started as a first-time principal. Fiona shared a story about mid-year reporting and a small change she tried to make. As part of the attendance aspect on the report, she said that if there is a less-than satisfactory percentage, then the teacher needed to comment on it in the report. Not everyone did this, even though it was written down and spoken about by Fiona. Fiona has found she does want to change things, but is wary of doing too much too quickly. Fiona’s workplace culture is important to her. She has a motto with children:

Kind hearts say kind words. So be kind. Be brave and be kind.

She believes in having a brave mindset, being kind to each other, and not making assumptions are important. Fiona views that her behaviour and how she treats people is set to embed a positive culture. She is mindful of keeping the fun in things, even when things are really hard. Fiona thinks it is important for people to be able to recognise when times are tough, and know the ways to get out of a tough situation. Fiona made a decision two years ago to learn Te Reo Māori and Tikanga. She perceives it as an important milestone in her life as she continues to learn. Fiona has been an ESOL teacher and is trained in TESOL so she has experience with migrant refugees. When she was at home with her own children, she taught ESOL to adult Afghani women who were on a volunteer scheme. She raised her own awareness about living in a new country with little contact with others, and coming from countries that have little or no rights. These experiences have raised Fiona’s awareness of different ethnicities and how important it is the everyone’s voice is heard, which is positive for Fiona’s wellbeing.

Penny’ story

Penny had been in her new role as a first-time female principal for only 16 weeks at the time of the first interview. It is a medium sized inner city school with a multicultural identity, but with Pakeha students making up the largest majority in the school. She describes the staff as being resilient considering the massive changes that they have had, not only to the physical environment, but also the leadership structure. Penny describes the role as challenging and

being responsive to everyone. Managing things such as lists of tasks and deadlines are important, but “they do not factor when people come through the door”. Children, staff or parents that need her, is an aspect she acknowledges can be challenging. Penny explains that the job is not boring and that she is on a steep learning curve:

The learning part is really exciting, although it can be very scary at the same time. Perhaps knowing that a decision could be the wrong one.

Penny sees it as being important to be responsive to people and not to the task. That has implications later on when there is pressure to meet demands in a shorter time frame. For Penny it is about “having time around people at school”, which she cannot do from home, or remotely if she is at a meeting. While blocking out time to finish a task such as reviewing policies and procedures might help to get that task done, it does not happen often. Penny ranked herself about eight out of ten in terms of enjoyment of the job, which she admits she was surprised by. She explains that by focusing on relationships with people while “everything else has to wait”, is perhaps why her rating is quite high.

Penny views the word wellbeing to mean “balanced”. She explains that she herself is not always balanced and has had “many flat tyres while behind the wheel”. Wellbeing also means enjoyment, happiness, and contentment about her work and life. A balance between Penny’s life, physical fitness, and her mental health. Penny describes her own present wellbeing as being “flat”:

I am in good spirits, but physically spent.

There are too many things “flying through the air” at her with many deadlines to meet. Penny expresses that the only thing “keeping her sane” is trying to be positive and focus on what she can do on the day. Penny believes that her wellbeing has been influenced since becoming a principal. Her family has had to be “super organised” as there were changes with time and demands from the role. Penny has been away at a conference in America, and she is going away again shortly. Penny feels a tension from being away from school, which worries her as she likes to be present and visible at school. Penny thinks that her home life has been a huge driver to make sure that her life is organised so she can manage more easily. The family is “super-prepared with meals” and who is doing what with her own children. Penny and her husband are both principals. They “tag-team” much of the time with their own children and schedule everything. Penny finds that making sure their children are the focus is good for her wellbeing. Penny comes to school late on one morning a week as she chooses to

drop her child off at school. She makes sure that she says this “out loud to staff” to show that family is important. She finds having an extra hour in the morning with her child to talk about the day ahead and prepare them, and just be there for no reason, is very powerful. Penny finds it hard to do, but sees it as a “gift” she gives herself and her daughter.

Penny explains that she has no other time for anything else, other than maybe a walk at the weekend. Even though she knows connecting with other people is important “life has been too crazy to do it”. Penny describes her nutrition as being “good” but is struggling to get enough sleep. She tends to do many things including work at night time. She likes to do it because it is on the only quiet time that she can find the day. Penny prepares e-mail responses at night in preparation to send them first thing in the morning. She feels strongly about not sending e-mails at night time, even though she prepares them then. She is going to make an effort to talk to staff about ways of communicating. The parents think teachers and the Principal are “available 24/7”. She is going to work through this with her staff so they feel that they can set up an automatic reply such as “Thank you for your message, I will get back to you on Monday”. Or not responding after a certain time during the week. The staff need to have some space from school when it is their personal time. Of course, Penny sees that she will lead by example and model that herself, which she admits is sometimes not that easy. The moment that she arrives at work it is busy with “people, talk, and meetings”. She is trying to find “the sync” and is not sure what that looks like at the moment. Her humour exudes through as she asks to check with her in two years as she then might then know the answer. Penny thinks that having a very positive outlook is important to her wellbeing, but “good acting skills” for positivity could be dangerous as she may think she is invincible. Showing vulnerability and empathy towards staff is important to Penny. She explains that although roles are different, everyone is under pressure in varying ways. Another way to enhance a work/life balance is by sharing what people do perhaps at the weekend. This also strengthens relationships between people, but Penny believes it needs to be done regularly and in genuine ways.

As a female leader in education Penny has had experiences of gendered expectations that have impacted upon her own wellbeing:

They think you're superwoman. People think you're super Mum, super this at school, super friend, super partner to your partner.

This inadvertently puts pressure on Penny and places her under a great deal of expectation. Penny has had flippant remarks from male members of the community:

That is a Mum's job, or a I'm just a Dad ...I had one staff member that said: 'My wife does that. I don't have to deal with any of that. You girls can do that'.

Penny was quite surprised how the staff member thought that how things work in his home are how things should work at school. Penny “tucked the information away to work through over time”.

Penny's school is currently undergoing major building work and she has been on a journey with the school to develop the pedagogy of the collaborative spaces that are currently being built. Some of the parents are against the notion of collaborative spaces because there has been little communication in the past about the new learning spaces, and families are used to traditional single cell spaces. Penny shared with the community that the new buildings “will be a gift, but it is still about the teachers and the relationships with the kids in any space that makes a difference”. Penny sees the focus on collaborating, and creating the opportunities for children to do that too, which they may not have necessarily had the chance to do in a single-cell space. For parents and teachers, concerns to do with innovative learning environments include how many children are in the spaces. However, Penny views innovative learning spaces as related to what the teaching and learning looks like within the classrooms, and getting the teachers to look at their practices. The staff looked at planning, systems, and processes for how things worked in the collaborative spaces that they visited. Penny held a reflective session at a staff meeting after the visits and was fascinated to uncover their beliefs and reflections. However, she valued that it was an opportunity to surface their opinions and wonderings.

A parent meeting was held with an outside expert on what future focussed education looked like. The parents that attended the session, appreciated it, even though there were some challenging questions, such as “you'll have to convince me that this is the right thing to do”. Penny is taking parents to some local schools with collaborative spaces, and will get other parents from those contexts with similar concerns to speak to Penny's families. She will reinforce that even though their journey will be different, they will take some effective practice elements from what they have observed in other contexts. The notion of learning from one another is important to Penny. Sharing the challenges, and being transparent are

also important to her. Penny shared a story about one of the parents who is well connected in the medical world and is not convinced that the collaborative space will work for the children with special needs. Discussion is required on what diverse needs look like, and how educationalists cater for them in those environments. Penny wishes to surface these ideas with the parent in a meeting and have her contribute. Penny sees her expertise as relevant because the parent might be able to advise on ideas that the school had not considered. Penny values being open-minded because the realm of education does not necessarily have all of the answers. She knows having the parent involved will perhaps help to cement the acceptance of the space.

Carving out time for Penny when there are certain pressure points is important and she encourages her Deputy Principals to do the same. Penny is trying to be open and transparent about their roles so that others understand it. Leadership understands the role of a teacher, but it is not necessarily reciprocal. Sharing busy times with others is important as Penny feels that the Senior Leadership Team role in the past has “been a bit of a mystery” to some staff. By promoting fun, happiness, humour, and a “bit of crazy” now and then is very good for wellbeing. The notion of wellbeing has already been identified as a focus for next year at Penny’s school. Everyone is aware that they need to do something and Penny knows that they have to model that to staff before they can launch it to the children. She cannot expect children to be still, or silent, to breathe, exercise, or to eat well, or find a group of positive people outside of school if staff are not doing it themselves.

Social opportunities for the staff is another proposed practice or option that Penny believes could be put in place to enhance wellbeing. Penny claims that every gathering is a learning opportunity and part of building a culture; by knowing about each other, just as teachers do with their students. Staff shared “secrets and things” that others did not know and explored this during their Teacher Only Day. Staff were crying, and they were “amazed”. Penny perceives that this kind of activity should occur on a regular basis as it perhaps creates more empathy for each other. Penny believes that some wellbeing practice for the staff is necessary, and highlights what this would look like on a daily basis:

If we value being in charge of individual workloads and workflow, making sure that everyone agrees to reaching deadlines, then as self-regulated grown-up, taller-than-a-metre learners, we can choose how they do that.

Penny believes that what goes on mentally or in a person's head is a valid strategy for wellbeing. She finds planning the week ahead, planning for events coming up, making sure that she has five minutes to herself is important since everything often feels so rushed. Penny sees that this could also happen in a staff meeting, much like a plenary reflective action.

Penny would like to see the matter of wellbeing tabled at principal cluster agendas or the *Auckland Primary Principals Association* (APPA). She is aware of the principals' wellbeing survey and the less than satisfactory results. She perceives that everyone agrees with those results, and that there were no possible solutions or ways to manage offered within it. Penny questions what particular areas of the role newly appointed principals struggle in. She thinks there would be some commonalities that could become a focus. Penny suggests focussing on helping people with wellbeing such as having two workshops to book into around topics that are pertinent. Penny views CoLs as providing the vehicle to look at opportunities to manage wellbeing of staff across schools. Pressures that are experienced can be similar she believes that CoLs could play a part in highlighting ways in which to manage them. Penny questions how "we look after our children" and wants to explore wellbeing practices for children and what that may look like in a school. How does it then translate to families? She does not see this as one programme, but a way of operating in a school that is embedded into the culture:

I have 500 ideas and my tongue is bloody from biting it

Penny is aware it would not be wise to make too many changes at once and recognises that she must be patient. She writes her ideas down so she does not forget them, and that makes her feel happier. Writing her ideas in what she refers to as "the book" is an effective wellbeing aspect. Penny feels strongly that she needs to see "a whole season" before she can judge as it is acknowledging the people and where they have come from, who they are, and what they value. Eventually Penny would like to get others to think about perhaps doing some things differently. She admits:

My knuckles are white, and it is slow moving, but you must take your people with you.

She has experienced situations where a new person has come into a school and felt "bulldozed down" while negative comments were made about the way things were done. She knew that was not helpful for the school culture. Penny feels lucky about her new place and recognises the fabulous things that have occurred before she arrived. Penny remains "happy

and giggly” about most things and is well supported as a first-time principal. There are various leadership advisors and Penny has an “amazing and helpful person” who she meets with regularly. She has a mentor principal, which is her previous principal that she nominated to be the day-to-day contact. This is very useful as she can ring the mentor about little things such as where to find a form. Penny also has an appraiser, who provides her with a huge amount of help. She gets help from all of the people, but in different ways. They give different perspectives, and different types of information. This support brings higher levels of wellbeing to Penny.

Penny perceives that her Māori culture has a significant effect on her wellbeing. It is supportive and helps to make things more “balanced” for her. It has a large part to play in positivity, strength, and support. Penny believes that the school culture still needs some work, even though the team work has come a long way since the start of the year. Penny recognises that it will take time to build, but is very happy with what has been achieved so far. She is “thrilled”, and recognises that there could be some “rocky roads ahead with a few bumps”. However, she remains very positive about her new journey in principalship. Penny describes the role as being “hard work” and she sees it getting harder in the next two terms. One aspect will be around the staff as she recognises that some hard messages will be given that they may not have had previously. Even though Penny knows it will cause some angst, she will be very respectful. Penny is very much in her job for the children. She loves the huge learning curve and finds it very exciting. She needs some time to “push pause” and concentrate on some “stillness and breathing”.

Commonalities across the narrative surfaced from careful consideration and listening of the stories. The following will be critically examined more deeply in the following chapters.

- The women experience bias from males particularly in relation to property dealings.
- Stresses are experienced with property, finance, outside agencies such MOE, CoLs, and staffing struggles.
- All of the women can express what they can do to cater for their wellbeing but are not always able to follow through on what they know is good for them. The women perceive that taking responsibility or action for one’s own wellbeing is important.
- Connection to family and friends is highly valued, but compromised by time pressures and demands of the role.

- Positive relationships are important to social capital but at the expense of putting everyone else first and feelings of being all things to everyone.
- Participants experience greater levels of job satisfaction even though their wellbeing status was compromised.
- The culture that the participant identified with elevated levels of wellbeing.
- Support from professional networks is valuable and notions of continuous learning transpired.

Conclusion

Through the discourse from the narratives of the four participants, a sense of perceived wellbeing emerged for Ana, Lucy, Fiona, and Penny. How it impacted upon their leadership effectiveness and the barriers and enablers to superior levels of wellbeing became apparent. Although diverse experiences and scenarios were shared, some strong commonalities between the experiences of first-time female principals were revealed. These will be critically examined in the following chapter. The openness and willingness of the women to share their experiences and frustrations was compelling. I was humbled and honoured to have encountered their stories and have attempted to relay the narratives through an honest and scrupulous representation.

Chapter 5: Discussion

Is it because of personality or is it just the fact that you are a woman in a group of men? Or is it because you are the sort of person that people would ignore. I feel I am invisible in a room with men. (Lucy p.58)

Introduction

In order to critically examine the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals, this chapter tells a broader story of what it is like for them. It delves more deeply into their stories to provide a richer scrutiny of their perceptions. Throughout the process, a feminist lens is applied given that the gendered expectations, stereotypes and experiences are not only relevant but evident. As Blackmore (2013) contended, a feminist gaze provided fundamental ways to practice leadership. Thus, it is conceivable that this lens would help to advance useful pathways to manage wellbeing for the female leaders. The narratives in this research were extremely insightful and highlighted the ways in which wellbeing was perceived and affected for first-time female principals.

This chapter is divided into a number of sections so that the pertinent themes can be examined more closely. Firstly, the term ‘wellbeing’ is positioned by the participants. Then each section links to the Literature Review in Chapter Two and its alignment to the following areas through the context of the participants’ narratives: stress related to performativity; the importance of relationships, relational trust, social capital, and collaboration; support or support challenges; and building resilience using strategies such as mindfulness – these areas form the headings in this chapter. The commonalities discussed briefly at the end of the previous chapter have been narrowed down to provide a sharper focus on the research questions. Hence, within the following segments discussion focuses on the ensuing areas: the perceived wellbeing status of the participants; the role of a female leader in education; how their perceived wellbeing impacts on leadership effectiveness; and enablers and barriers that contribute to greater levels of wellbeing.

Conjecture in the international research confirms that the broad definition of wellbeing was noted in different research domains such as health and economics (Bourke & Geldens, 2007; Carlisle et al., 2009; Gillet-Swann & Sargeant, 2015). The research of Hone (2015) advocated for greater clarity of a wellbeing literacy to enhance the understanding of conceptualizing wellbeing. In order to position wellbeing and what it meant to the

participants in my research, their definitions of wellbeing were described and some common ideas surfaced. These women identified that wellbeing could fluctuate in phases and, for all of the participants, there was an awareness of other peoples' wellbeing and the need to care for it. Wellbeing was a complex construct that involved connecting with friends and family, doing enjoyable things, having job satisfaction, being healthy, and getting enough sleep. Wellbeing depended on everyone's else's wellbeing, how a person felt about themselves and included work/life balance and work/life satisfaction. Wellbeing was a balance between life, physical fitness, and mental health that included happiness and contentment about work and life. Indeed, as K. White et al. (2013) promoted, 'winning ways to wellbeing' included physical activity as a wellbeing booster. A definition of wellbeing that related to exercise and nutrition was expected to be referred to in my research, perhaps because of the public health messages that are often relayed (Hone, 2015). However, it was apparent that the perceived moderators of wellbeing in my study were more holistic and the social aspects such as the importance of friends and whanau were a greater determinant of wellbeing than just physical activity and diet. The social aspect outcome of wellbeing proved my own assumptions as being incorrect, and what I perceived as 'wellbeing' appeared quite narrow in retrospect. Consideration of the broader perceptions of others has aided in disentangling my own view. Hence, reflexivity as a researcher in regard to the participants' understanding of the term 'wellbeing' challenged my own assumptions and highlighted the importance of gaining clarity of meaning from them. The ensuing section discusses the performative stressors that are highlighted by the four women.

Stress related to performativity

Through use of a more detailed narrative methodology the findings suggested an alignment with previous research in regard to the demands of the role of a principal (Maxwell & Riley, 2017; Ogram & Youngs, 2014; Riley, 2017; Youngs, 2014). Indeed, the participants expressed similar views that the role of a first-time female principal was multifaceted, exhausting, and heavily focused on administrative tasks such as property and finance. This created a tension suffered by the participants as it removed them from the core of the business they were in - that of teaching and learning. This perceived tension resonates with common themes included in the work of Ogram and Youngs (2014) that described such tensions as performativity hindering a principal's ability to focus on teaching and learning. Furthermore, the often unseen and time-consuming administrative tasks of property and finance reduced time spent on teaching and learning and precluded higher levels of wellbeing

for first-time female principals in this study. The performative era in education, discussed by both Codd (2005) and Ball (2003), alluded to pressures from what is produced and measured such as assessment. This study did confirm the pressures that the women experienced, which removed them from the focus teaching and learning. The recent change in government in New Zealand and their prompt abolishment of the formal reporting on National Standards, might have removed the performative focus on assessment. However, it is conceivable that as there was no indication from the participants that this change increased wellbeing for the women, the uncertainty of what its replacement might entail may have concealed another subtle pressure. Moreover, conjecture might surface that the role of an educational leader is obsessively examined in performative ways. With all of the women noting deadlines as a pressure, performativity has become a set norm unquestioned by the women in this study. Furthermore, principals are measured according to their success in areas of finance management and, given that minimal training is provided around this area, this undoubtedly causes stress for the first-time female principals. Indeed, they might have received marginal training, and their lack of perceived knowledge might present itself as a lack of confidence and also anxiety that ‘something might go wrong’ - this increased their stress levels and negatively affected their wellbeing. However, success of the women was partly measured on their ability to manage large financial budgets and they remained accountable to Boards of Trustees, many of whom are men.

For the women in this research, there were notable stressors from the demands of the role where they perceived themselves as having less experience and knowledge in not only finance, but also property. Consequently, these women felt challenged by males when dealing with property issues. This challenge was perceived as a bias due to a lack of knowledge around property matters and feelings of disempowerment through not being able to make meaningful contribution to property discussions or meetings. Examples of exploitation, bullying, impressions of being unnoticed, marginalised, and undermined in various property meetings were noted. As women, they were strangers in an unfamiliar world of property that was often dominated by men. The work of Blackmore and Sachs (2007) reiterates this unfortunate common occurrence for female leaders. My research confirmed that women today continued to be discriminated against in some settings because they were women. Hence, this discrimination for the group was confronting and negatively affects their levels of wellbeing. Indeed, as Blackmore (2013) posit, those feelings of powerlessness cause a level of stress. A critical feminist pedagogy would eschew property

work as political because of the unequal power and knowledge relationships that are embedded within the system. Gunter and Ahad (2017) claimed that women continued to be discriminated against in other parts of the world because of gender, which is entrenched in many cultural and political traditions. Unfortunately, issues of discrimination based on gender was resonated in this research too. Thus, a core finding was that these women in substantial leadership roles continued to face situations where there is a gender difference. Indeed, they might have less property knowledge than men or perceive themselves to have less, but also it would appear that men expect them to have less property knowledge. It is possible that women go into these situations feeling inadequate and the knowledge that they do have is not valued or sought out by men. Hence, women are faced with a double-bind as they are not perceived as having this 'male' knowledge and, even if they did possess such knowledge, they may still be actively excluded on the basis of these perceptions. As a result, these women were not 'accepted' into this male domain, even though their knowledge on education was just as important and relevant. In addition, this view of women as not 'knowing' about the male domain extends into matters such as their ability to discipline male students and manage staff management and conflict. Consequently, the systemic nature of how property systems in schools had been managed to help to reinforce structures of gender inequality. Indeed, society has moved further forward in terms of closing the gap with gender equality to a degree. However, I was surprised by the revelation made by the women in this research regarding the bias that they had experienced because of my own assumptions that perhaps there was less gender bias in schools, than other areas of society.

Even though the participants describe stressors such as property and finance, job satisfaction is notably high among the participants. The findings from Riley (2017) suggested that principals had higher levels of job satisfaction than the general population, and this was consistent with other findings (Prendergast et al., 2015; K. White et al., 2013). My findings concurred, with participants reporting high levels of job satisfaction, even though at times wellbeing fluctuated. 'Wellbeing' was dependent on the day; something that fluctuated in phases. Even though wellbeing ranged from being reduced to average, most of the women in this study thoroughly relished their job, with one admission from a participant in an Acting Principal role of not enjoying it. A notable difference compared to the women in principal positions was that of the support offered and sought in an Acting Principal role. It is possible that women in Acting Principal roles require more support than they currently receive, and this factor, may impact upon lower levels of job satisfaction and wellbeing. A commonality

described by the participants and also noted in the research of Sachs and Blackmore (1998), indicated that the pleasure of the job arose from desires to do the very best for children and thus make a difference to them. Furthermore, in contrast to the previous research of Riley (2017), a compelling finding was that the women in this study were not consistently stressed, and their wellbeing was not completely compromised. Hence, this research identified the nexus between job satisfaction and wellbeing of first-time female principals. Although these women quite clearly work in a performative environment, they also suffer gendered discrimination in aspects of their role to do with outside agencies such as property personnel. While they discussed stressors that they find frustrating, they also gave the impression of remaining in control in such an environment. It was conceivable that the limited time that these women had spent in their new role is similar to a 'honeymoon' period, whereby their positive experiences outweighed the negative ones. When female principals spent more time in the demanding role and under high levels of performativity, it might be possible that their job satisfaction would be reduced along with diminishing levels of wellbeing.

Within a performative environment, a principal is expected to lead change (Cardno, 2010). In my research the women were reluctant to make hasty changes upon taking over as newly appointed principals. Changes were made when considered to be urgent or important, such as addressing negative behaviours of children that impacted the morale of staff or strengthening the strategic visioning of the school. The women enacted strategies to cope with their impatience knowing that having the support of staff through times of change, although it could be challenging, was essential for a 'change agent' to be successful. A 'change agent' has been described as the person or team that initiated, led, or took charge of change (Wallace, O'Reilly, Morris, & Deem, 2011). The elaborate change story based on the pedagogy of collaborative spaces was an undeniably compelling narrative that was shared in my study. Clearly, patience was required because the women were aware that embarking on implementing too many changes too soon might fracture relationships. Leading change was also recognised as promoting effective leadership and often expected in a principal's work (Cardno, 2010; Robinson et al., 2009). Indeed, Wallace et al. (2011) posit that leadership is full of metaphors and leaders were naturally concomitant with the notion of change, a connector that is also substantiated within the narratives of my research.

The toll on the participants from the emotional labour of negotiating changes with stakeholders was evident. In the work of Sachs and Blackmore (1998), it was argued that

emotional labour can be complex and, as noted by some of the women, they were bound by the emotional rules that surrounded leadership self-regulation. Indeed, the changes that the female principals contemplated caused some stress for them. Nonetheless, as they were aware of the benefits to their leadership effectiveness of leading change, this paradoxically perhaps outweighed the stress of the change itself. Thus, the effect on wellbeing might be viewed as limited and even speculation of increased levels could eventuate once the change was embedded. Indeed, the women in this study had broken through the ‘glass ceiling’ as described by Glass and Cook (2016), and been appointed to the principal role. Although their schools were not failing, and they were not necessarily at risk of facing the ‘glass cliff’ that might jeopardise their careers, the effective change management skills of these women were ‘on-hold’, until a more suitable time because of their strong leadership capability in recognising that they needed to wait before making changes. The following section leads into a discussion of the importance of investing in social capital and relationships in order to enhance wellbeing.

The importance of relationships, relational trust, social capital, and collaboration

This research was interested in discovering connections between leadership effectiveness and wellbeing for the participants. Although all of the women had the children in their schools as their primary focus, this study demonstrated that the women’s collaboration with others and the importance of relationships led to greater leadership effectiveness. This in turn enabled improved levels of wellbeing. The paradigms of social capital and relational trust that are entrenched in educational literature are also evidenced through this study (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003; McCallum & O’Connell, 2009; Tamati, 2011; Tschannen-Moran, 2009). Investing in social capital, and indeed a cultural trust, aided in increased wellbeing for all of the participants. Piggot-Irvine (2012) argued that collaboration was fraught with difficulties such as being time-consuming, which was confirmed with the participants’ experiences of CoLs and property dealings in this research. However, collaboration with others in their schools helped with the women’s workload. Thus, increased levels of wellbeing were experienced when collaboration between teachers and, in particular, senior leadership occurred. Paradoxically, it was reduced when participants discussed their involvement with CoLs. These were described by most of the participants as being time consuming and not necessarily as ‘functioning’. This refutes the notion of collaboration on which CoLs are

premised. Although certain styles of leadership, such as distributive leadership (Youngs, 2009), denoted a respect for collaboration that improved the participants' workloads and subsequent wellbeing within schools, involvement in CoLs proved to be a factor that drained levels of wellbeing. However, participants valued the potential of CoLs, suggesting that they could be used to support wellbeing across schools. Raelin (2011) introduced the Leadership-As-Practice (L-A-P) notion that was collaborative in nature and focussed on the everyday aspects of leadership including the emotional and relational aspects. Indeed, this style of leadership presented itself among the participants as, although final accountability formally resides with them as a principal, they are very much team-orientated. When viewing this through a feminist lens there was a sense of equality from the women and their relationships with staff or the community. Furthermore, the investment in relationships, relational trust, and collaboration supports better perceived levels of wellbeing resulting in the leaders believing that they were more effective in their leadership.

As the participants endeavoured to foster relationships with all stakeholders in the community, an awareness of the investment into social capital was essential to effective leadership (Cardno, 2010, 2012; McCallum & O'Connell, 2009). Moreover, building relationships surfaced as an important enabler of wellbeing for the participants. Despite the research of Riley (2017) and Wylie (2017) indicating that relationships with principals' own families could be fractured, this was not substantiated through this research for first-time female principals. Indeed, deliberate strategies were put in place by the participants to ensure connections were regularly maintained with family and it was perceived to enhance wellbeing. Connections with others was regarded as a 'winning way to wellbeing' and this notion albeit with staff, friends, or whanau was reiterated by all of the participants in my study (K. White et al., 2013). Undeniably, when relationships with staff were strained, the emotional toil that was experienced resulted in a negative impact upon wellbeing. However, this study suggests that the participants value positive connections with staff that promote leadership effectiveness and subsequent increased levels of wellbeing. Connections with friends or professional networks quite possibly could be the first to go by the wayside when time were scarce or when stress levels were increased. Moreover, this cohort might need to enact due diligence to ensure that highly valued connections continued, with both whanau and friends, particularly as they became more entrenched in their roles over time.

Building social capital such as interpersonal relationships, as Beatty (2007) contends, could be more challenging for principals because it encouraged a level of ‘emotional masking’ potentially robbing the ability to connect genuinely with others. According to Blackmore (2013), emotions were central to leadership. Leadership was not only about showing sensitivity to the emotions of others, but an awareness and reflexivity on one’s own reactions and the perception of these held by others (Blackmore, 2013). Indeed, leadership effectiveness was based on this premise and that of a sense of wellbeing and trust (Blackmore, 2013). As Goleman (1995) stated, managing feelings and articulating them appropriately supported people to work together to achieve common goals. Appropriately managing emotions as described by Goleman (2006) has been labelled as ‘emotional intelligence’. My study suggests that the women are hiding or masking emotions. However, the perception that positivity, even if what was felt inwardly was more negative, impacted more optimistically on wellbeing. Insight into the participants’ perceptions were valuable, as there was a firm belief that positivity and connecting genuinely was the key to sustaining effective levels of wellbeing. Although Sachs and Blackmore (1998) argued that emotions could be highly gendered, this debate was refutable as males also have empathetic and interpersonal dispositions. However, it must be remembered that this study did confirm that gender inequality existed within the women’s schools, particularly when dealing with males on property matters. Just as leaders regulate emotions regardless of gender, these women found that managing wellbeing through the use of mental strategies such as positivity served as a proposed practice that might increase levels of wellbeing.

In examining the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals, the role of a female leader has been a central focus. Remarkably, there were some discoveries about gender inequality as evidenced in the quote at the start of this chapter. When questions were posed to the participants that related to the female leader, they were met with some surprise as they had not necessarily reflected on their role as a female leader prior to the questions being asked. Clearly, being relatable to other females was prevalent among the participants with an empathy and awareness of others’ wellbeing apparent. A commonality among the women was how they questioned their decision making and hoped that their decisions were the right ones. When viewing this through a feminist lens it was plausible that the women were disempowered through harbouring self-doubt about limited knowledge on aspects such as property. It was possible that the female principals’ perceived lack of confidence, then made them a more vulnerable target to males who assumed they were the ones who held

more knowledge. Hence, inadvertent gender bias and inequality was reinforced through the imbalance of knowledge power. As Alice (2003) commented, 'power' was a commodity that was imposed by others, whereas there was a knowledge 'choice' involved in the notion of empowerment. It was not my intention to disempower the research participants through the use of such concepts, but to point out that gender discrimination was prevalent in those schools of the female participants in this research. Indeed, these women had pushed through the 'glass ceiling' and won the leadership role but now face another barrier that could be possibly described as the gender 'glass cliff' (Glass & Cook, 2016). Thus, relationships between female principals and men that were responsible for reinforcing a gender bias whether it was intended and overt, or just unconscious attitudes, caused a tension that had a negative impact upon the participants' wellbeing. It was also conceivable that when these women were faced with overt discrimination, they did not necessarily openly challenge it, but masked their true emotions.

All of the participants thought that there were differences in thinking between males and females. Many examples were provided in the findings such as male staff members voicing gender stereotypes and societal perceptions of males, particularly in relation to how it was perceived that males could deal with children's behavior issues more effectively than females in schools. Also, that males tend to win principal jobs over more experienced females. Most feminist perspectives avoid reducing differences between males and females. However, this gendering of leadership could be explained when situated within gender inequality and manifested in perpetuating ways that are reinforced by societal expectations (Blackmore, 2013; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). Without risk of generalising, and as Eagly and Carli (2018) contested, it was possible that men were more self-assured to take on roles that they were not fully ready for, whereas women might inherently harbour more self-doubt when considering such roles. The impact upon wellbeing with regard to gendering of leadership was harder to determine possibly because of the participants' absence of reflection around it.

Another commonality among the women in this study was the notion that there was a tendency to put everyone else first. Blackmore (2013) suggested that this was common for women in general as they were traditionally the people who looked after everyone including children and elderly parents. Indeed, it was perceived in this study that there was an unspoken expectation that women tended to be all things to everyone. Thus, the 'sacrifice' of the women's wellbeing in order to care for others was apparent. Doucet et al. (2010)

believed that stressors for women included caring for children and elderly parents while working in full time positions, which might impact on their mental health. Role separation in the home such as childcare or eldercare was not necessarily gendered in my research with other male family members supporting these women with such roles. Further, strong organisational skills of the women were apparent in order for them to manage their roles in and out of school. The importance of family and whanau connections that were strongly valued in this research contributed to higher levels of wellbeing for the female principals. It was possible that the women might not consider gendered roles as being acceptable and gender equality in the home must exist. However, Eagly and Carli (2018) argued that although men increasingly share housework and child rearing, it was still the female that dealt with most of the domestic roles. Regardless of role division, clearly managing home and school life could be challenging for first-time female principals and remained a balancing act. Consequently, wellbeing for this group was enhanced when the home front was organised and support mechanisms from family were in place to help. The research of Kalysh et al. (2016) discussed work-life practices for women and the support given in some organisations to help with women caring for children or elderly parents. Although primary schools as organisations may typically be more empathetic to women who work and who also care for other family members, I would argue that more external support from agencies such as the Ministry of Education was needed for first-time female principals in respect to managing the multi-faceted roles of women in leadership positions. The ensuing section debates notions of support that overwhelming aid wellbeing for the participants in this study.

Support or support challenges

Support and support networks experienced by first-time female principals were of paramount importance to uphold higher levels of wellbeing and, indeed, this was a core finding of this research. As Ng and Szeto (2016) posit, networking with peers and mentors was useful; this also resonated through the narratives of the participants. Valuable support was received for the new female principals and first-time principal professional development was enthusiastically discussed. Wellbeing goals as part of principal appraisal occurred, and even though achievable goals might be set, struggles with committing to it were apparent. It remained questionable if all new principals should be required to set a wellbeing goal as these goals might also add additional stress. However, setting a wellbeing goal might benefit women in these roles in order to help address their own wellbeing. The importance of the role of a mentor was reiterated by the women in this research and effective support from their

Deputy or Associate Principals was not only crucial to reducing their workloads but enabled increased levels of wellbeing. There was an awareness that the new female principals were still learning the art of delegation in order to maximise support. Undoubtedly, the support that was received from the various professional learning groups, first-time principal courses, mentors etc., aided wellbeing for the women in this study. However, the research of Riley (2017) indicated that principals need more support. A double-bind exists as although these women received adequate levels of support, at times their wellbeing was compromised due to other demands of the role, demands in their personal life, and the inequalities that existed. Further, it was feasible to consider that some support mechanisms needed reviewing, particularly for those in long-term Acting Principal roles in order to enhance greater levels of wellbeing for those in such roles. Moreover, further attention is needed on how first-time female principals could be supported to enable them to take charge and care for their own wellbeing. Another support network highlighted for first-time female principals was that of their partners. This finding concurred with the research of Gunter and Ahad (2017) who noted that support from principals' husbands was critical to the success of the women in their study. Although support from partners enhanced wellbeing for the participants in this study, it also raised debate for women who are in newly appointed principal positions without the support of a partner. Some judiciousness must prevail when making assumptions that all women have some form of non-collegial support.

All of the participants in this research experienced continuous learning as a first-time principal, some describing it as a steep learning curve, while others felt exhilarated by it. Indeed, Macpherson (2010) discussed the experiential learning that occurred for principals. Finance was notably an area where this experiential learning was greater for the participants. As K. White et al. (2013) concluded, continuous learning was a factor that enhances wellbeing. This steep level of learning might impact negatively on wellbeing for some, while for others wellbeing might be increased because of the satisfaction from new learning. The notion of continuous learning might help explain why higher levels of job satisfaction were reported. In the next section the enablers and barriers to wellbeing are examined and the notion of resilience as a coping mechanism for diverse and difficult situations is discussed.

Building resilience - strategies such as mindfulness

Perceived enablers and barriers to wellbeing were of particular interest in this research. Each participant was able to clearly define what enabled their wellbeing and what proved to be a barrier. The ability to cope was noted in previous research (Bourke & Geldens, 2007; Clarke et al., 2007; Gilbert et al., 2008; Gillet-Swann & Sargeant, 2015; K. White et al., 2013). This study supported this idea. Reflection, mental strategy, positivity, the ability to deal with difficult situations, and being resilient were essential to improved wellbeing for the participants. The research of Lomas et al. (2017) indicated that strategies to cope, such as mindfulness, were an effective intervention. Despite the word 'mindfulness' apparent emergence within education currently, it was not a term that was used by the women in this research. However, they alluded to it through comments such as having an awareness to slow down, breathe, or being reflective. Taking note and being mindful and reflexive of wellbeing were highlighted in this study, reflecting the research of K. White et al. (2013) that associated these aspects with increased wellbeing. Central to the findings of this study was taking responsibility for one's own wellbeing or taking some form of action to enhance one own's wellbeing. The participants in my study expressed similar views to those presented in the literature of Gilbert et al. (2008) who noted the need to strike the right balance between work and home life. Although the women in this study were not necessarily achieving an even balance, they knew what strategies worked for them. Barriers such as the demands on time and being 'present' for others meant that the women did not always care for their wellbeing in the way that they intended, even though they could all describe ways that enhance their own wellbeing. Hence, simply being a female might interrupt their desire to cater for their own wellbeing as they felt the need to be caring for others in their professional and personal lives.

Other enablers and barriers to wellbeing

This study identified that an awareness of strategies for the participants was important in order to achieve improved wellbeing. Many activities were identified that enabled higher levels of wellbeing inside and outside of school. A diverse range of enablers of wellbeing were revealed from how to respond to stress, or using humour, doing some baking, to physical activities such as yoga, walking, or surfing. School based enablers of wellbeing ranged from being highly visible within school, for example on duty or in classrooms, to putting boundaries on the working hours. When paying attention to the discourse of the

participants through a feminist lens regarding enablers to greater wellbeing some transformation for these women might surface. Indeed, standpoint theorists argued that social science research can be transformative for women (Burns & Chantler, 2011). By reflecting on their own wellbeing status and knowing what action they needed to take to enhance it, even though the participants sometimes struggled to achieve it, they knew that they had a certain responsibility to take charge of their wellbeing on a more regular basis.

The participants also clearly identified the barriers that inhibited their wellbeing. Overwhelmingly, this study suggested that the demands of the job, such as time pressures, deadlines, and meetings were reported by all of the participants as hindering wellbeing. The demands of the role and time pressures were evident in other studies (Riley, 2017; Sachs & Blackmore, 1998). However, another significant factor that caused stress for the women in this study was the struggle to appoint staff. This problem resonated from most of the participants as lowering levels of wellbeing. In addition, when relievers were scarce and resultant splitting of classes was required, this caused an element of stress for the Principals. The calibre of teachers available for relieving was also an issue. Further stress was caused by frustrations with agencies such as ACC in relation to injured teachers returning to work for half days, which proved difficult to staff those particular scenarios. Indeed, staffing retention issues had surfaced with recent union negotiations, which has since resulted in strike action among teachers and principals in New Zealand at the current time. Clearly, this research supported the current emphasis of teacher unions that staffing issues needed immediate action from the Government so that wellbeing could be enhanced for not just principals, but all educators. However, it was also plausible that staffing appointment struggles were more stressful for the first-time female principals because of their need to care for others. If these struggles impact upon other staff members, then perhaps it was more worrying to these women.

Another palpable stressor that emerges in this research was the time spent dealing with child behaviour concerns or issues, which contributed to lower levels of wellbeing for a first-time female principal. Some compelling stories were shared with regard to behaviour that not only reduced the wellbeing of the new principals, but that of other staff members and students. Whether due to a lack of resourcing from outside agencies or to the tiresome effect of investigating issues to ensure efficacy for all, this factor was draining on the women. Further, dealing with time-consuming behaviour issues that were at times stressful might

reduce the women's motivation to pay attention to their wellbeing. Hence, it might be difficult for the women to 'leave' the issues at school before they go home. While at home they might continue to be concerned when it was a time to connect with others or take time out for themselves.

Using a cultural lens to ascertain perceptions of wellbeing was not only diverse among the female leaders but showed it was a central enabler of wellbeing. Cultural aspects and responsiveness were fundamental to levels of wellbeing for the women in this research. Learning te reo Māori and tikanga boosted the participants ability to connect with cultural aspects of school life and the responsiveness for the women. Experiences from Māori and Samoan whanau impacted positively on wellbeing. The influence of Māori culture as providing strength, positivity, and support while maintaining a sense of 'balance' was evident in my study. Cultural traditions were discussed by Gunter and Ahad (2017) as interconnected with complex societal gender inequalities. However, for the women in this research their identity through culture contributed to enhanced levels of wellbeing.

Conclusion

This discussion has closely examined the women's stories and reported in the findings chapter. By juxtaposing information that sought to describe, explain and theorise action within real life brought an understanding of the impact on wellbeing for the women in this research (Gunter & Ribbins, 2003). Furthermore, by applying a feminist standpoint to the discussion, assumptions made regarding gender expectations and inequality of women could be achieved while pushing further for improved equality and wellbeing for women. The next section draws the research project together by outlining the important conclusions and implications of the findings.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and implications

Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusions from this research on the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals. The conclusions are stated and recommendations follow. The limitations of this research are discussed and opportunities for further research proposed. Finally, the closing comments draw the project to an end.

Summary of the research findings

The aim of this research was to critically examine first-time female principals' perceptions of their wellbeing. The guiding research questions sat at the forefront of this research. Firstly, that of the perceived wellbeing status of first time female principals. Secondly, the impact upon leadership effectiveness and wellbeing. Thereafter, the barriers that enforce decreased levels of wellbeing and finally, the proposals in order to create enhanced levels of wellbeing. Indeed, the participants in this study perceived their wellbeing to range from reduced to medium levels. However, the findings from my research eschewed arbitrary notions that all principals are overworked, and demonstrated that the female principals in this study were not constantly overloaded and stressed. Although this study highlighted what causes the stress for the women, it also highlighted factors that contributed to improved levels of wellbeing. The critical feminist lens applied to this study demonstrated that first-time female principals are exposed to gender inequalities through perceptions that are reinforced by systemic and bureaucratic structures such as how property matters are dealt with in schools. Although this study did not show that roles for the participants in the home were gendered, it was evident that gender inequalities surfaced when the women experienced property meetings. Indeed, achieving satisfactory work/life balances for the group of women that were interviewed was somewhat challenging, but an awareness of how to address a suitable balance was evident. A definitive factor was that levels of wellbeing were perceived to affect leadership effectiveness. Participants reported that when their wellbeing levels were compromised, so was their effectiveness as leaders. If the participants had control over the factors that influenced greater levels of wellbeing, such as connections with friends and whanau, exercise, nutrition or the amount of sleep that they acquired, then leadership effectiveness was perceived to increase. Clear barriers to wellbeing were identified as that involved issues surrounding dealing with males in property matters, behaviour concerns, staffing, and the

function of CoLs. These aspects of their role resulted in time consuming demands on first-time female principals. A diverse range of enablers of wellbeing that was identified by the participants such as engaging in physical activity and leisure activities.

The following conclusions emerged from this research:

- Gender inequality still exists in our schools. Issues surrounding property are central to stressors that reduce levels of wellbeing for first-time female principals. Three participants felt disempowered due to a lack of knowledge in the area. Despite reliance on others' strengths in the area, such as caretakers and property advisors, first-time female principals often felt undermined and challenged by males in property matters. Whether or not the bias that was experienced by the participants derived from overt discrimination or unconscious attitudes, the dealings with males in property matters served to reinforce gender inequality.
- Knowing what to do to enhance one's own level of wellbeing and taking responsibility or action to cater for the wellbeing of oneself was a fundamental outcome of this study. Whether it was doing yoga or spending time with family, the activity could be different for each person. Indeed, the first-time female principals in this study were not completely stressed and overworked, and their levels of wellbeing fluctuated depending on various circumstances. The challenge with taking responsibility for their wellbeing was because of the time demands within the job. Even though the participants knew what strategies worked for them to achieve higher levels of wellbeing, they could not always focus on this. However, as one participant noted, it could be just five minutes of breathing space to reflect. Thus, prioritising an activity to support higher levels of wellbeing is imperative.
- All of the participants valued connection with friends and whanau as a way to enhance their own wellbeing. Although time demands often limited their ability to maintain these relationships, the participants made deliberate efforts to remain connected to both whanau and friends. This social aspect of wellbeing is an important finding because it challenges the more traditional public health messages regarding wellbeing.
- Professional support networks were imperative to improve the wellbeing levels of first-time female principals. The collegial support offered came from a variety of networks such as first-time principal groups or principal cluster groups, mentors, and deputy and associate principals. Non-collegial support from the participants' partners

was also noted as enhancing wellbeing. Less support for the participant in an Acting Principal role was evident.

- Positive relationships and an investment in social capital with all stakeholders in a school community was uplifting for wellbeing. All of the participants noted that successful interactions and relationships with staff and parents upheld higher levels of wellbeing for the first-time female principals. However, as the effort expended in building social capital was at the expense of putting others first and a sense of obligation to all in their learning community.
- New and continuous learning was also identified as being important for improved levels of wellbeing and consequently increased job satisfaction for the participants. Although the participants expressed steep learning curves, the experiences were positive on their wellbeing.
- Job satisfaction is an important element to wellbeing. All of the participants acknowledged that the children in their school were the ultimate focus. When the principals felt they were catering to the social, emotional, and learning needs of students, this fashioned a level of job satisfaction and subsequently a heightened amount of wellbeing for first-time female principals.
- The nomenclature of ‘culture’ as an enabler to elevate levels of wellbeing was identified in this study. Whether it pertained to school culture or the participant’s own cultural identity, its contribution to wellbeing was worthy. A positive school culture correlated with more affirmative levels of wellbeing for the cohort. However, developing cultural responsiveness and trust through learning language and Tikanga Māori both empowered first-time principals to connect with the Māori community in their school. Consequently, this impacted on elevated degrees of wellbeing.

Recommendations

In order to foster the wellbeing of first-time female principals the following recommendations are made.

Recommendation 1: That the Ministry of Education critically examines the ways in which national bodies on first-time female principals reinforce gendered inequalities and expectations

Rules and regulations set by national bodies such as the Ministry of Education serve to reinforce notions of gender inequality and expectation, which impact upon the wellbeing of

first-time female principals. The issues that arose out of this research was that of property, behaviour, staffing challenges and CoLs. These barriers to wellbeing were also viewed by the participants as hindering their ability to focus on the leadership of teaching and learning. The Ministry of Education needs to address these matters, and discuss pathways forward, particularly for first-time female principals. This research indicates that there is a lack of perceived knowledge and self-doubt to do with property matters. The confronting issue facing the group in this research was the imbalance of power relations that surfaced when they were dealing with property matters involving men from outside agencies such as property companies and the Ministry of Education. This imbalance of power, combined with their perceived lack of knowledge, serves to reinforce assumptions made about gendered expectations and subsequently perpetuate gender inequality for this cohort. Whether it is overt discrimination or through unconscious attitudes remains questionable. However, this group of female educators appeared to be capable leaders and it is concerning that they are undermined by males that come into their schools. Women have the right to feel safe to challenge and experience an equity of power when dealing with any male, outside agency, or issue. Indeed, surfacing debate around the assumptions made about women and the inequality that was experienced might pave a way forward to close the gender gap further so that gender equality is within reach. This would positively impact on the participants wellbeing.

Behaviour concerns was highlighted as a stressor for most of the participants in this study. Difficulties stem from the lack of support from outside agencies and the time often invested in solving issues for the safety and efficacy of everyone involved. Indeed, this aspect is a major contributor to the recent strikes of teachers and principals, even though media coverage conveyed a different message that strongly focused on pay increases. Even though women should strive to close the residual gender pay gap that currently exists and not undermine the importance of increased pay, it is an opportune time for the behaviour issue to be taken seriously around the negotiation table with the national body. Currently schools do not receive extra funding to support a Special Needs Co-ordinator, and many senior leaders take on this role within schools. Principals, like teachers are trained in teaching, and are not trained social workers or public health nurses. Regardless of decile, all schools face a conundrum of often messy behaviour issues, and it is not just a problem in lower decile schools. However, if schools are provided with the professional support they require such as

social workers that are available in schools on a daily basis, then this may pave a way to improve wellbeing for not only first-time female principals, but all educators.

Staffing retention issues have surfaced within this research as another barrier to achieving increased levels of wellbeing and is currently a wider problem in education. It is timely to address this at a national level because it is in part why principals have taken to recent striking. It is fortuitous that negotiations between NZEI and the Government are transpiring, and it provides a real opportunity to address the issue and devise solutions. Through national forums, there is an opportunity to regain control of retention issues by possibly endorsing pathways of change, which subsequently may foster higher levels of wellbeing for first-time female principals.

Another influential barrier to the wellbeing of first-time female principals was their involvement CoLs. Nevertheless, this group can appreciate the potential that CoLs may offer. There is a need for national bodies to surface the bureaucratic issues associated with CoLs and address them in order for wellbeing to improve for first-time female principals. The next section looks more closely at the finding that first-time female principals could manage their own wellbeing and examines ways in which this could be achieved.

Recommendation 2: That Boards of Trustees ensure that first-time female principals manage their own wellbeing

This research has shown that there is a personal responsibility to manage one's own wellbeing, although it is not always achievable. An important area identified through this study is knowing what works for oneself in terms of catering to personal wellbeing. The activities ranged in diversity among the participants, but an awareness of the kind of activity that helps to enhance wellbeing for the individual is crucial. Taking responsibility to ensure the sustenance of friendships and relations is overwhelmingly a positive indicator on wellbeing. Boards of Trustees need to put systems in place to ensure that there were opportunities for first-time females principals to cater to their own wellbeing so that stress levels could be reduced. Despite this research showing that first-time female principals were not in a constant state of stress, the research highlighted the need for a change to occur so that the wellbeing of this group can be enhanced. Strategies to facilitate taking responsibility for personal wellbeing includes managing the demands on time and prioritising what was important. Boards of Trustees could ensure governance of this through the Principal

appraisal systems including the setting of a worthwhile and achievable wellbeing goal, such as engaging mental strategies to sustain positivity in more stressful times, or taking regular breaks in order to assist in managing greater levels of wellbeing.

In order for first-time female principals to take responsibility for their wellbeing, the support through national bodies to foster equity for all is vital. This research shows that support for first-time female principals, particularly that of a mentor, was highly valued and available. The steep learning curve that first-time female principals experienced fostered exhilaration and stimulation while aiding in building resilience and strength of character. Based on this research more support was required for females in an Acting Principal role for equitable outcomes. There are opportunities for more formalised groups to allow for regular tabling of wellbeing on agendas to help combat similar issues for first-time female principals. A possible transference of this information to other principals and senior leaders may also occur. Thus, it is imperative for Boards of Trustees to sustain support and resourcing to ensure the professional support of this niche group of principals continues in order to help them to sustain higher levels of wellbeing. The following segment discusses another finding in more detail; that of the benefits of investing in social capital.

Recommendation 3: That Boards of Trustees ensure that systems are created so that first-time female principals invest in their social capital to improve leadership effectiveness and levels of wellbeing

Cultural aspects was a notable finding that impacts upon first-time female principals' wellbeing. In this study the way in which culture was interpreted was diverse among the participants. However, the knowledge gained from their own culture or cultural experiences and responsiveness contributed to greater wellbeing levels. In addition, fostering school culture through investment in social capital for the participants improved their perceived leadership effectiveness. The cultural aspect and impact upon wellbeing requires further research, however it is an important component for Boards of Trustees to consider. They need to be aware of cultural aspects when devising systems to ensure that first-time female principals are investing in social capital. .

A notable finding in this study was that relationships and its concomitance to social capital and relational trust was important to foster greater levels of wellbeing. Positive relationships with all stakeholders in a school community was crucial, particularly in times when change

management was occurring. Although I assumed more power imbalances to surface between first-time female principals and staff, that assumption was not correct. A sense of respect and trust was compelling from all of the participants in this research as they work with their staff in collaborative ways to ensure relationships were valued and fostered. The investment into social capital that is made by the women resulted in higher job satisfaction and consequential improved levels of wellbeing for them. The noteworthy influence of these factors contributed to greater leadership effectiveness for this group. Undeniably, when first-time female principals' wellbeing is catered for, relationships are fostered and subsequently their leadership effectiveness is greater. It is recommended that Boards of Trustees ensure systems are shaped so that first-time female principals can invest in building and developing social capital. Having time available to invest in social capital as a principal is vital to fostering relationships and improve the future direction of their schools. The ensuing section discusses the limitations that are presented within this research project.

Limitations of this research

An acknowledged limitation of the qualitative research was the possibility of accumulating an abundance of data. Trawling through it indeed afforded a richness of information but, as Forsey (2012) asserts, coping with the amount of material might have presented a challenge, and must be considered. Concerns of a narrative inquiry highlight the possibility of a blurred understanding, thus questions could be raised regarding the true representation of stories and events (Barone, 2007). In my study, distinction of actual events and relevant accounts were constantly honoured. Upholding truthful representations of the stories from careful listening of transcripts served to somewhat address this limitation. Although the participants' stories were relayed with integrity and honesty, subjectivity might have arose from the reader and their own interpretation might present further findings that could be identified. I must not assume that the way in which the narratives are constructed will necessarily be interpreted as such. A question remains that I risk surfacing about whether or not participants revealed their truthful perceptions. Perhaps they masked their true emotions and only disclosed what they thought I wanted to hear in order to uphold another societal expectation that successful women are in control. Recognition that I am a novice researcher, and the limitations in knowledge and process is a factor to be considered.

The intended sample size of four was an acknowledged limitation. Certainly, there was a limit on those that were first-time female principals within the set parameters of this study. The next section outlines further possible research that may be relevant for future studies.

Further research

This study has started to uncover a sizeable challenge facing our current first-time female principals; that of maintaining their wellbeing. In particular, it has culminated in deepening the understanding of the perceptions of wellbeing for this group. The narrative methodology surfaced the participants perceptions, beliefs, and motives regarding their wellbeing. The critical feminist lens provided a provocative standpoint in order to position and deeply understand the barriers and challenges that the women faced early into their principalship. As I narrowed the focus to attend to the guiding research questions, many other questions surfaced throughout the project. The combination of these factors have opened up further possible pathways for future research. The suggestions below perhaps require continued investigation:

- An interesting finding that surfaced from the research was the cultural impact upon improving levels of wellbeing for the cohort. This area could be explored further and differences and similarities between various cultural identities in regard to wellbeing could be examined.
- This study was interested in discovering how levels of wellbeing affected leadership effectiveness. However, it brushed the surface of change management and its subsequent effect on wellbeing. This is an area worthy of further research that focuses on disentangling the effect of change management on leadership effectiveness and its relationship to wellbeing.
- As previously indicated the low number of participants might be viewed as a limitation to this research. Therefore, undertaking another qualitative study with a greater number of participants could be informative. Consequently, a greater number of participants might surface further perceptions regarding wellbeing as well as other ideas to improve wellbeing for first-time female principals. By broadening the criteria for a larger scale study, comparisons across a more diverse range of ethnicities may surface. In addition, including a broader range of first-time females principals in schools outside of the Auckland context may be worthy of scrutiny.

- With a critical feminist gaze throughout the process I often questioned if the experiences shared would be similar for that of first-time male principals. The question remains if women leaders are positioned differently to their male counterparts. An insight into male experiences and perceptions could be worthwhile through further investigation using a similar methodology in order to provide a more detailed gender comparison.
- As previously mentioned, the logical next step in my own career development was that of seeking principalship. Indeed, an important issue was raised during the research; that of a bias towards males winning principal roles over females. Reasons for this still remain unclear and warrant further investigation into an area that subtly reinforces gender expectations and inequality. Disentangling appointment processes that lead to female leaders being overlooked for principal roles in favour of males could be worthwhile. The consequential impact upon female leaders future willingness to apply for further roles, and the impact upon their wellbeing is of interest. Another area where self-doubt of females perhaps serves to reinforce gender inequality.
- It might be valuable to consider a longitudinal study of first-time female principals to gauge their perceptions over time and what changes occur in relation to their wellbeing.
- Many of the participants discussed situations regarding their previous Deputy Principal roles. Further research on the challenges faced by Deputy Principals who move to a Principal role could be insightful.

Closing comments

It was not my intention through this research to position the education system as a cause to reducing levels of wellbeing. Furthermore, this study does not lead to that conclusion. What is highlighted is that not all principals are in a constant state of ‘burnout’, that levels of wellbeing fluctuate, and that there is a certain responsibility for one’s own wellbeing. In addition, the majority of first-time female principals in this project displayed high levels of job satisfaction even though their wellbeing fluctuated depending on different situations. However, certain contexts within the education system prove problematic for first-time female principals such as property matters, gendered expectations, power imbalances, and gender inequalities. The narrative methodology enabled my goal of empowering four women to share their lived experiences through their own voices. It led to a co-construction of

strategies to combat existing barriers to wellbeing such as staying connected with others, taking note of their own wellbeing, uncovering what enhances personal wellbeing, and that it may indeed be different for each person. A feminist lens promoted a critical examination of perceived wellbeing for the cohort and, in particular, it provided a framework to disentangle the nexus between gendered expectations and power imbalances that reinforced gender inequality. The feminist standpoint also outlines a concerning fact; that even though society has slowly shifted more towards gender equality, women leaders in education remain discriminated against purely because they are women.

I am extremely humbled by the willingness of the participants to share their stories for the greater good of females in education, in particular, that of women who face their first principalship. Although each narrative was diverse, similar commonalities appeared among the stories. The time invested into the process of this research has provided an opportunity of reflexive thought into my own personal wellbeing and highlighted the need to take responsibility of it more than just ensuring physical activity, decent levels of fitness, and proper nutrition. It is essential that more work is done to enhance the wellbeing of the niche group in this study as my research has only scratched the surface of a much larger puzzle. Through participant reflection and co-construction of the narratives, strategies were identified from the collective findings that might be implemented. It is not known if significant social change can be achieved through this study, but in essence, if change can be made to the actual participants themselves, then in part it will be worthwhile. This research may act as a trigger for future research concerned with first-time female leaders in education. Putting my own biases aside, findings that have surfaced may help me in a future principal role. Indeed, this research has motivated a personal change for me as I return to work when the privileged study leave award ends. I will endeavour to place much firmer boundaries to enhance my own wellbeing, in particular, in relation to sustaining healthy connections with friends and whanau. It is hoped that this research may pave a way to greater social change for not only first-time female principals, but other educators.

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Appendix A – Interview Questions

Semi structured interview questions (First time female principals)

1. Let's start with your job as principal. How would you describe this?
2. How would you rate your enjoyment of your job as a principal? Why do you describe your level of enjoyment in that way?
3. Let's move on to the word 'wellbeing'. What does the word 'wellbeing' mean to you?
4. How would you describe your own present wellbeing? Why do you describe it that way?
5. Since becoming a principal, how has your own wellbeing been influenced?
6. How does your wellbeing affect you as a female leader in your school? Why do you describe it in that way?
7. How does your wellbeing affect you as a person?
8. How does your role as a female in your personal or professional life impact on your ability to care for your own wellbeing?
9. As a female leader in education, can you describe any experiences of gendered expectations that may impact on your own wellbeing?
10. How would you describe the things that you do to promote your own wellbeing? Why are these things effective?
11. What are the things that you see that stops you from addressing your own wellbeing?
12. What do you see as proposed practices or options that could be put in place to strengthen your ability to maintain higher levels of wellbeing?
13. How do you see your culture impacting on your wellbeing? Why do you see it that way?
14. Is there anything else that you can tell me about this matter regarding wellbeing?

Examples of follow up questions to probe participants further:

Could you expand on that idea of ...?

Can you explain what you mean by?

Are you able to give me more information on the notion of ...?

Can you explain why ...?

Can you remember a time when ...?

Appendix B – Participant Information Sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

29 March 2018

Project Title

First time female principals: Perceptions of wellbeing

An Invitation

Kia Ora

My name is Susan Delaney and I am currently undertaking a Master of Educational Leadership degree with AUT. As part of the qualification I am completing a thesis to fulfil the requirements of the degree. I am also currently on study leave from my Deputy Principal role at Red Beach School to complete the qualification.

I would like to invite you to be a participant in the research on perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals.

What is the purpose of this research?

The aim of this research is to critically examine first time female principals' perceptions of their own wellbeing. The term 'wellbeing' has become a topical subject and recently it has been acknowledged in the realm of education. Given the demanding and complex roles of a principal, this study will seek to explore the perceptions of wellbeing for first-time female principals. It will interpret their perceptions of how wellbeing impacts on their leadership. Furthermore, the research will explore the perceived enablers and barriers to wellbeing for this group in order to identify how wellbeing might be enhanced.

The research will be guided by the following questions:

- What are first time female principals' perceptions of their own wellbeing?
- In what ways do first time female principals perceive that wellbeing impacts on leadership effectiveness?
- What are the perceived enablers and barriers to wellbeing for first time female principals?

As a participant you will be able to share your stories about your own wellbeing with me in an interview context.

When the thesis has been finished, you will be able to access it in the AUT library, and I will also send you a summary of my findings. It is possible that some publications may eventuate from the study and presentations at conferences may occur. A presentation of the research to my current Board of Trustees will happen once I return to school.

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

You are being invited into this research project as a first-time female principal from my already established professional networks. I have accessed your school website to get contact details for you. For the purposes of this project, 'first-time female' refers to female principals within the first 3 years of their first principal's role or acting in the role for more than one term. To avoid any conflicts of interest, I have ensured that my research will only involve people who are not known to me in a personal capacity.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

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 are 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.

If you agree to participate you will be required to complete a Consent Form that is attached to this information sheet.

What will happen in this research?

I hope to involve four participants in my research. If you agree to participate in this research, two interviews will take place of approximately one hour in duration; a gap of around two weeks between interviews will occur. During the gap between interviews I will carefully listen to the recordings of the first interviews in preparation for

Appendix C - Consent Form

AUT

TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Consent Form - Interviews

Project title: **First time female principals: Perceptions of wellbeing**

Project Supervisor: **Alison Smith**

Researcher: **Susan Delaney**

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 29 March 2018.
- ☐ 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 14 May 2018 AUTEK Reference number 18/175

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix D- Transcriber Confidentiality Agreement



Confidentiality Agreement - Transcriber

Project title: **First time female principals: Perceptions of wellbeing**

Project Supervisor: **Susan Delaney**

Researcher: **Alison Smith**

- ☐ 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:

Transcriber's name:

Transcriber's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....
.....
.....
.....

Date:

Project Supervisor's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....Alison Smith.....

.....alsmith@aut.ac.nz 09 921-999 ext 7363

.....
.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 14 May 2018 AUTEK Reference number 18/175

Note: The Transcriber should retain a copy of this form.