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A Leadership Challenge:

**The Role of School Leaders in Establishing Home/School
Relationships that Support the Achievement of High School
Students.**

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

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my Mum, Viola Robson, who instilled in me what it truly means to care, and who is my guide when I forget.

Abstract

Teachers and caregivers are the people who are the most invested in a child's success. Creating a working relationship between the two where they can collaborate together to align expectations, information, aspirations, and goals can provide constructive support for the child. The purpose of the study is to identify how school leaders can achieve this relationship dynamic between each student's caregiver and teachers. Two schools who have had success in achieving teacher/ caregiver relationships provided the setting for this study. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews. One school leader, one teacher and one caregiver from each school who had engaged with the teacher/ caregiver relationships were interviewed. The participants were asked to share their experiences and perceptions of teacher-caregiver relationships, barriers and enablers and the role of the leadership. Four themes emerged from the data. Culture of care was the overriding theme and was embedded in the other three themes. The second and third theme: building relationships and communication, provided the foundation of evidence that enabled the fourth theme: collaboration, to be achieved. The themes that emerged from the data will be useful for understanding how school leaders can develop effective working relationships between teachers and caregivers in their schools.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person 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.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'K' followed by a series of loops and a final horizontal stroke.

Karina Robson

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Introduction

1.1 Context Background

Chapter Caregivers and teachers are the most invested people in a child's academic achievement aside from the child themselves. The logical conclusion, therefore is for them to work together to guide and support the child. Many researchers agree that this union of support and knowledge between the teachers and the caregivers improves the child's academic outcomes (Clinton & Hattie, 2013; Froiland & Davison, 2014; McNeal, 2015; Ministry of Education (MoE), 2012). In relation to values and beliefs, parents have the biggest influence over their child and so if education is valued within the family then the child is much more likely to value education themselves. Caregivers' support and input into their child's education is more prominent during primary and intermediate school years. Sadly, the research shows that caregivers' engagement declines during the adolescent years (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Hauser-Cram & Selcuk, 2003; McNeal, 2015; Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). This could be because relationships between teachers and caregivers become more complicated to achieve and maintain in high school. The number of teachers a child has increases substantially in high school, so having a relationship with each one becomes a challenge. The same issue can be identified for high school teachers. The number of students a high school teacher has is markedly higher as they teach more classes than a primary teacher. Furthermore, adolescents seek more autonomy and can dissuade caregivers' interest in their lives during puberty, although Eccles and Harold (1993) argue that teenagers still need and want their parents' support and advice. Further complications include lack of energy, work commitments, feeling out-of-depth and having little trust in the education system. Byrd-Blake, et al. (2010) extended the complications further through their study, revealing that assumptions made by teachers, school leaders and caregivers can lead to poor understanding and dysfunctional barriers to building relationships. The number and nature of these potential barriers can only be overcome through the whole school working together to eliminate them.

Schools that have low engagement from their community should look to the research to understand how to make advances in improving their home/school relationships. Identifying the barriers to a specific community's engagement needs the school to consult and plan with their community. It also needs engagement and modelling by the principal. Whole school practices are more successfully accomplished if supported and led by the school's leadership (Mutch & Collins, 2012). For school leaders to be effective with implementing innovative ideas, they will need skills in building relationships of trust, be involved in the how-to, and provide support for staff (Robinson, Hohepa, & Lloyd, 2009). Relationships that foster trust should be established with teachers and caregivers alike. Building trust for this cause is achieved through having honest and transparent conversations that demonstrate school-wide care in each child's achievement (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Pomerantz, Moorman, & Litwack, 2007). If students are supported by their teacher and caregiver and their high expectations, they are far more likely to be successful in their goals (Clinton & Hattie, 2013; Education Review Office (ERO), 2015; Froiland & Davison, 2014; Hall, Hornby, & McFarlane, 2015; McNeal, 2015; Peterson et al., 2011; Rubie-Davies, Peterson, Irving, Widdowson, & Dixon, 2010). The teachers and caregivers must align their expectations and support between themselves and the child, so the child can fully reap the benefits of this action. Bempechat & Shernoff (2012) and Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) explain that students become more self-motivated when supported in this way. Through successfully achieving an assignment the student's self belief in their own ability will improve and this encourages their effort in future endeavours. Research and government documents revealed that few school leaders saw developing teacher/caregiver relationships as their role (Jeynes, 2018; MoE, 2012; Robinson et al., 2009). The literature is inconclusive over how this concept can be achieved and what the most effective ways of building and maintaining these types of relationship are.

1.2 Topic motivation

My interest in this topic has evolved from my experience as a teacher and a parent. I have been a teacher for 17 years and have taught in two schools, one in Great Britain and one in New Zealand, both of which are urban schools in low socio-economic areas. Caregiver engagement with teacher/ caregiver meetings about their child's academic

progress in these schools have been low. Achievement results in these particular schools have been lower than the national average for schools in similar socio-economic, and cultural contexts. Understanding why caregivers do not or cannot attend these meetings to discuss their child's achievement is crucial to this investigation. Their failure to attend resulted in many teachers making imprudent assumptions. Furthermore, my experiences of attending teacher/ caregiver meetings for my daughter, were also disappointing as I found some teachers to be vague, disconnected, even rude and could easily see how caregivers could derive their own negative assumptions from such encounters. My daughter attended a school in a higher socio-economic area. I mention this to merely disassociate the socio-economic status of a community from the assumption caregivers can make of their child's teachers. Peterson et al. (2011) report that these damaging assumptions are a common occurrence with dysfunctional relationships between teachers and caregivers, an outcome also recognised by the ERO (Educationally powerful connections with parents and whānau, 2015). I feel it is important to build working relationships between the teacher and the caregiver. Both caregivers and teachers hold valuable and differing insight into the child's personality, aspirations, interests, and talents; insights that if shared could benefit each adult's understanding of how to better support the child's progress and align expectations to meet the child's goals. Much of the literature, as seen in Table 1, agrees that having interactive relationships between caregivers and teachers improves a student's progress and academic achievement. Achieving relationships like these that work and benefit the child are the key. Engaging the teachers and the caregivers in the idea from a whole school is far more complicated.

1.3 Dissertation structure

The focus of this research project is to identify what role school leaders need to play to establish working relationships between caregivers and teachers to improve student achievement. To find out I needed to be able to talk to those who had experienced difficulties and had taken measures to overcome them. I sought three types of participants: school leaders, teachers, and caregivers. I thought it was important to find schools that could provide each of these participant types and to source schools who had demonstrated success in improving their caregiver engagement with their child's

teachers. I wanted to understand how the schools had achieved better engagement with their families and I wanted to be able to compare the perceptions, beliefs and opinions of the participants to each other and the schools to each other. I started this dissertation with a literature review. I identified three main themes from prior research that through investigation could tell me what was already known, and where any research gaps might be. I researched and discussed commentaries around my three main themes for this study: teacher and caregiver relationships, barriers and enablers to these relationships and a leadership's role in developing and maintaining these relationships. I also gauged the interest and values that are placed on whether this should be a leadership challenge. Most of the literature acknowledges the benefits of teacher and caregiver relationships for improving academic achievement but also concedes that the practice is not used consistently through the high school sector due to teacher and caregiver resistance to each other and school leadership not owning the concept. The literature agrees that teacher/ caregiver relationships benefit academic achievement and it agrees that when high expectations are shared amongst the teacher, caregiver and the students, then the students' progress is far better.

Following the review, I explained the methodology with which I approached this research. I positioned myself within an interpretive paradigm, favouring face to face interviews, using semi-structured questions with all my participants and structuring the inquiry with a phenomenological approach. Due to the relationship foundation of this inquiry, it was important to focus on each participant's exclusive thoughts and opinions. I worked on the assumption that to understand someone's perception, one must understand their social, political and sociological, cultural and historical stance. Through this research, I aimed to learn and understand the perceptions and experiences of school leaders, teachers and caregivers on how their school developed successful relationships between the teacher and caregiver with a focus on improving academic achievement. I used the following questions to guide my research journey:

1. What are high school leaders doing to encourage home/school working relationships to support student achievement? What do they think they should be doing?

2. What barriers and enablers have been identified in the development of home/school working relationships?
3. How does this compare with the literature on good relationships for supporting high school students' academic achievement? What might school leaders be doing?

To identify two schools for this research, I asked for recommendations from professional development representatives who worked with high schools on raising Māori achievement. Part of this initiative involved making links with disengaged members of the community. They recommended two schools who had made good progress connecting with the disengaged members of their community. The largest disengaged groups had been the Māori community, who were a challenge to engage with due to recent and historical dissociation and negative schooling experiences. Both schools had made marked improvement with connecting with their Māori community and I thought finding out how they had achieved this would offer insight into how any school could improve their community engagement. I ran pilot studies to test and evaluate my questions and my interview technique before conducting individual interviews of each of my six participants. Organising the data was complex even with the help of NVivo software. Due to the nature of the interviews, many of the answers covered several questions and so the data had to be filtered by hand before they could be organised into their codes and categories. The findings chapter shared the stories, perceptions and experiences of all the participants. Four main themes emerged from the findings which were culture of care, communication, building relationships, and collaboration. Observations made of the school and the interviews were included here in the culture of care section. Chapter 5 focused on analysing and discussing the data, identifying the phenomenological 'essence' and comparing the findings to recent literature. The final chapter, the conclusion, outlined the important elements of the inquiry, drawing all the threads together and explaining how the research aims had been achieved.

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Chapter 2

This chapter identifies the literature that investigates the subject of home/school relationships focusing on the nuances of teacher/caregiver relationships, barriers and enablers to forming these relationships and a school leader's role in establishing them for the purpose of supporting academic achievement. I will look at literature that explores concepts of families and schools working together to improve academic outcomes of mainstream schools that include student populations with diverse socio-economic status, ethnicity and gender. I will exclude the issues of extreme challenges of behaviour, mental health, disability and specific learning difficulties as these deserve a more individualised and focused approach to achieve a detailed understanding. More specifically, this review will include literature that investigates the following: the reasons for teachers and caregivers working together, the effects of high expectations, the types of relationships that improve achievement, the day to day challenges that create barriers for caregivers, the significance of caregiver, teacher and school attitudes towards each other, and the types of caregiver involvement that are beneficial and the leadership's role in home-school relationships. These will be categorised under the three main themes of home/ school working relationships, barriers and enablers and the leadership's role. The term caregiver is used within this study to represent adults who are the students' legal guardians. To provide clarity for the reader I will define the key terms of student achievement and home/ school working relationships.

Student achievement

Student achievement has many different guises and can be defined by measurable means or through more subjective ones. Student achievement is one of the two interconnecting threads that runs throughout this review. Defining the term is therefore critical. The common understanding of student achievement within a Eurocentric society is a measure of a student's learning, the cognitive level at which a child is working and the qualifications they earn (Christenson & Reschly, 2012). The term's definition has evolved and broadened over time to include numerous options from

standardised testing to anecdotal data. Schools frequently combine varieties of data to create a more definitive and rounded result. With Western society becoming more diverse and multicultural a need for adjustments to be made in recognising what student achievement means to different ethnic groups has been generated. Boyask (2010) recognised that although New Zealand's MoE had responded to the challenge of making education more inclusive for diverse learners, international Euro-centred forms of assessing achievement through literacy and numeracy testing still prevail and ignore the "cultural specificity of knowledge" (p. 23). Students whose families do not share the cultural capital of a middle-class European family (Bourdieu & Passerson, 1990) have the added burden of having to learn the literacy and numeracy expectations needed to achieve in a Eurocentric curriculum as well as the content of their lessons. Many indigenous cultures, such as those found in the Pacific Islands, pass down their histories through the generations and transfer knowledge with storytelling. If a student can excel in being orally literate, why can this not be used as a vehicle for testing in traditionally written subject areas? Boyask argues that educational policy should not only recognise the challenges that arise from the practice of assessing achievement through literacy and numeracy and adapt accordingly but their "conceptual tools" should also be reflected in legislation and wider national policies. The MoE's initiatives such as Ka Hikitia (2013) and the Pasifika Education Plan (2013) are challenging education establishments to be more inclusive of these peoples' cultural capital in their delivery of the curriculum, however, many teachers rely on traditional Eurocentric methods. Furthermore, both the National Curriculum and the New Zealand Qualification Authority (NZQA) offer options of using and testing literacy in visual and oral forms, but the majority of testing focuses on the written. It is important for each person involved in a young person's education to be able to identify and recognise their goals for their education and their future. For the purpose of this review and study, I shall be looking at student achievement being academic attainment as measured by NZQA.

Home/ school working relationships

The home/ school working relationship I want to focus on is the one between the teacher and the caregiver, although it is important to note, to improve a school's reputation amongst its community, the relationship qualities described presently should

be mirrored throughout all communications with the home. The focus of the relationship is on monitoring and improving a student's academic achievement. Researchers have used a multitude of terms to describe a parent's input to their child's academic achievement, such as, "home-school partnerships" (Bull, Brooking, & Campbell, 2008), "parental involvement" (Boonk, Hieronymus, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018), "family-school-community partnerships" (Epstein & Sheldon, 2002), "productive partnerships" (Ka Hikitia, 2013) and "parental engagement" and "educationally powerful connections with parents and whānau" (ERO, 2015). The terms engagement and involvement suggest more traditional behaviours of parents contributing to schools through purposeful actions; such as helping in the classroom or with homework, fundraising or becoming a member of the Parent Teacher Association or Board of Governors (Froiland & Davison, 2014). Engagement and involvement do not suggest that discussions are being held between the home and the school regarding the child's academic achievement. 'Partnership' and 'connections' are better terms that suggest more caregiver and teacher input, however I feel they still do not clearly describe the dialogic nature and purpose of the relationship. I have decided to use the term working relationships as it suggests that the relationship between the teacher and the caregiver needs to be worked at, that the relationship should be ongoing and fluid and needs to be revisited and reviewed as students' needs and goals change. I would define a working relationship as being a relationship that is interdependent between the people involved, who are open to a level of cooperation sufficient to learn from each other and identify what needs to be done to achieve common goals.

Three Themes and their sub-issues

Themes that are central to this study are home/ school relationships, the barriers and enablers in developing and maintaining these relationships and the leader's role in establishing this practice. One of these themes was identified through a literature review that I completed last year in preparation for designing this research project. The theme was barriers and enablers, a common but essential theme for understanding the reasons for an idea working or not working. The other two themes were drawn directly from my research question, a school leader's role in establishing home/ school relationships and the ideas surrounding home/ school relationships. My research

question had evolved from my experiences as a teacher working in a school that has a very low engagement of caregivers with regards to their child's academic achievement. Negative assumptions, such as the parents not caring, or the teachers not caring have developed, and a blame culture has ensued amongst some of the adults. Certain types of home/ school relationships, within the literature, have been deemed as being beneficial to raising student academic achievement, such as parents who have a voice that is heard by the teachers regarding their child's achievement. Unfortunately, much of the literature does not discuss how these relationships were established. Through my teaching service I have seen how new goals and ideas for a school are only established if they are driven by a leader and revisited regularly. School leader, teacher, and caregiver buy-in is essential to reach this goal, so how this is achieved successfully amongst a resistant school community is the challenge.

Each theme will be divided into the following sub-themes. The first will look at the reasons for and benefits of developing teacher/ caregiver relationships and the type of relationships that are the most beneficial to student achievement. The second will look at the types of barriers and enablers that affect caregiver involvement. Key issues that have been discovered are those that come with day to day life, the characteristics and attitude of the school and its staff, and the types of caregiver involvement. The third theme will investigate the school leader's role in developing, improving, and maintaining teacher-caregiver relationships.

Literature Search

I searched for literature using the databases on the Auckland University of Technology's (AUT) library web page that were linked to my area of study, educational leadership and education. I found SCOPUS to be the most user friendly and intuitive database and the fastest functioning search engine. I used the key terms from this research project's title, home, school, relationships, leadership, and high-school which yielded a few relevant results. I then broadened the terms used to include: parent, teacher, caregiver, adolescent, teenager, family, school leader, senior leader, principal, education, secondary, involvement, communication, interaction, participation, engagement, connection, academic and achievement. I also sought relevant literature from past assignments, especially those that explored types of leadership and relationships.

Checking the references of my selected literature provided more valuable examples. Current literature reviews around this topic by Boonk et al. (2018) and Jeynes (2018) also provided relevant sources for my own literature review. Boonk et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis examines the literature on the relationship between parents' involvement and achievement and discusses the effect the different types of involvement have on the caregiver/child relationship and their academic success. Jeynes' research presents a model, constructed from findings of his previous reviews, to guide school leaders in developing caregiver engagement and involvement.

I have organised the core literature into three tables to illustrate the key scholars whose research provided insight into the themes studied in the Literature review in Chapter two. The tables highlight the numerous sources available over the past twenty years, except for one category in table three, barriers and enablers. The column titled 'what is the right kind of caregiver involvement' has relatively few references of the literature sought indicating areas that warrant further research.

Table 1: Literature that discusses the three themes

The benefits of teacher/ caregiver relationship on academic achievement	Barriers and Enablers	The role of leadership in developing teacher/caregiver relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boonk, et al., 2018 • Bull, et al., 2008 • Cabus & Aries, 2017 • Christenson & Reschly, 2012 • Clinton & Hattie, 2013 • Deforges & Abouchaar, 2003 • Eccles & Harold, 1993 • Eccles J. S., 1999 • ERO, 2015 • Froiland & Davison, 2014 • Jeynes, 2018 • McNeal, 2015 • Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992 • Mutch & Collins, 2012 • Peterson, et al., 2011 • Pomerantz, et al., 2007 • Rubie-Davies et al., 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boonk, et al., 2018 • Cabus & Aries, 2017 • Christenson & Reschly, 2012 • Mutch & Collins, 2012 • Moll, et al., 1992 • Pomerantz, et al., 2007 • Rubie-Davies, et al., 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auerbach, 2012 • Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012 • Boonk, et al., 2018 • Bull, et al., 2008 • Jeynes, 2018 • Mutch & Collins, 2012 • Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom 2004 • Robinson, et al., 2009

Table 2: Breakdown of authors that discuss home/school relationships

Support relationships between teacher/ caregiver and student	Benefit student's motivation	Caregiver and teacher high expectations	Type of relationship that benefits the student
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boonk, et al., 2018 • Eccles & Harold, 1993 • Epstein & Sheldon, 2002 • Jeynes, 2018 • Peterson et al., 2011 • Jeynes, 2018 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabus & Aries, 2017 • Froiland and Davison's, 2014 • Moll, et al., 1992 • Mutch & Collins, 2012 • Pomerantz, et al., 2007 • Rubie-Davies, et al., 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cabus & Aries, 2017 • Clinton & Hattie, 2013 • ERO, 2015 • Fan and Chen, 2001 • MoE, 2012 • Moll et al., 1992 • Mutch & Collins, 2012 • Pomerantz et al., 2007 • Rubie-Davies et al., 2010 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Boonk, et al., 2018 • Eccles J. S., 1999 • Froiland & Davison, 2014 • Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, & Karnik, 2011 • Rubie-Davies, et al., 2010

Table 3: Literature that discusses the enablers and barriers to making teacher/caregiver relationships

Decline in caregiver involvement	Characteristics of the teacher/ school	What is the right kind of caregiver involvement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bull et al., 2008 • Christenson & Reschly, 2012 • Clinton & Hattie, 2013 • Eccles & Harold, 1993 • ERO, 2015 • Epstein and Sheldon 2002 • Hauser-Cram & Selcuk, 2003 • Moll et al., 1992 • MoE, 2012 • MoE, Ka Hikitia, 2013 • Mutch & Collins, 2012 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auerbach, 2012 • Eccles & Harold, 1993 • Jeynes, 2018 • Deforges & Abouchaar, 2003 • Froiland & Davison, 2014 • MoE, Funds of Knowledge, 2018 • Moll et al., 1992 • Peterson, et al., 2011 • Pomerantz, et al., 2007 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012 • Boonk, Hieronymus, Ritzen, & Brand-Gruwel, 2018 • Eccles J. S., 1999 • Froiland & Davison, 2014

2.2.1

2.2 Teacher/ caregiver relationships

The significance of teachers and caregivers working together

Teachers and caregivers hold key information that can support and improve a child's academic achievement. Researchers agree that the teacher and the caregiver are the

two parties who are the most invested in a student's academic achievement, except for the student themselves (Boonk et al., 2018; Eccles & Harold, 1993; Peterson et al., 2011). It therefore makes sense that if all three people are interested in the child's achievement then all three people should work together to achieve this goal. This idea is supported by Epstein's (1995) "overlapping spheres of influence" model (p. 702), that symbolise the partnership of the school, family and community and their influence on the child, and Jeyne's (2018) dual navigation approach, which depicts the school based and home-based engagement and involvement of the caregiver and provide evidence that teachers and caregivers working together is not a new idea. Teacher's expertise lies in their curriculum subject, their pedagogical practice, and on the students' performance in class; the caregiver can share historical information, personality traits, family characteristics, interests, commitments outside of school and aspirations. Working together and sharing this knowledge can help both parties to formulate strategies to support the student's learning. Several lines of evidence suggest this to be beneficial to student's motivation and engagement as well (Cabus & Aries, 2017; Moll et al., 1992; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Froiland and Davison's (2014) research revealed that if a child feels their achievement is important and well supported, then their engagement and motivation will not only improve but they will develop more independence in their learning.

2.2.2

Adults' high expectations of student potential are key to academic improvement

Other research highlights another key element, high expectations, that should be used alongside knowledge sharing and support. High expectations of a student's ability are an established and accepted element of successful teaching and raising achievement amongst researchers and MoE policy writers alike (Cabus & Aries, 2017; ERO, 2015; MoE, 2012; Moll et al., 1992; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Pomerantz et al., 2007; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). However, teacher expectations alone are not the sole magic ingredient for a student's success. Two other ideas need to be considered; parent expectations and whether these differ from the teacher. Fan and Chen (2001) claim that parental expectations and aspirations have the strongest links with a child's academic achievement. Similarly, Clinton and Hattie (2013) found that caregivers who share their expectations with their children influence the child's academic achievement. Rubie-

Davies et al. (2010) point out that the benefits of caregivers having high expectations is bettering students' motivation and engagement, further supporting academic achievement. However, a detailed examination of teachers', parents', and students' expectations of student achievement by Rubie- Davies et al. (2010) showed their expectations can be very different and aligning understanding of the differing expectations would improve student goal-setting. This promotes my claim of the need for teachers and parents to work together, to help align expectations, aspirations and support. This can help raise the expectations and aspirations for parents and teachers who have had lower expectations. It can also help identify unrealistic expectations that can potentially be quite damaging for a students' self-esteem and self-belief.

Teacher/ caregiver relationships that benefit student achievement

- 2.2.3 Children's first role models are their caregivers who they try to emulate and please, however, this relationship changes as the child grows and the balance of the relationship can become unsteady. Eccles (1999) rationalises that with puberty, children strive for more autonomy and independence and with this comes distancing and resistance to their caregivers. Even so, teenagers still need and crave support and guidance even though some may not be able to articulate this. Froiland and Davidson (2013) acknowledge that parents need to give a different type of support to their children in high school compared to earlier years and this can be dependent on a child's individual needs. Drawing on an extensive range of sources, Boonk et al. (2018) collated the most widely recognised beneficial types of parental involvement: expectations and aspirations, valuing academic achievement, positive academic support and encouragement, and positive parent/child discussions and goal setting. These types of involvement are much less hands-on and offer the child the freedom to explore their autonomy. Academic achievement is therefore achievable providing the child recognises that their parents are supportive of them reaching their academic potential through demonstrating the latterly mentioned types of positive parental involvement.. Rubie-Davies et al. (2010) draws our attention to an anomaly from a small group of caregivers within their study who believed they had no influence over their children's motivation at all. Tudge, Mokrova, Hatfield, and Karnik's (2009) theory recognised this anomaly, through noting individual characteristics are a powerful factor in an individuals' decision making. Eccles (1999) provides an alternative solution in such a

situation, explaining that adolescents still need positive role models and mentors to help guide their choices. These role models do not need to be caregivers specifically, they could be other adults in the child's life, that the child is drawn too. Care needs to be taken here too so as not to leave the caregiver out of the equation. These feelings of alienation could cause damaging interactions between the caregivers, the child and other adult mentors. Froiland and Davidson (2013) surmise that good relationships that are built on trust between caregivers and teachers lead to better student academic achievement. This finding must be transferable to other adults involved with the child, and their relationship with the caregiver. If caregivers feel heard, included and respected then the understanding that surrounds the child's needs becomes more holistic and stable.

2.3 Barriers and enablers to home/school relationships

2.3.1 Decline in caregiver involvement

Caregiver involvement and input into their children's education declines significantly once they start secondary school. Eccles and Harold (1993) explain the many reasons for this include lack of time, energy and finances, lack of knowledge and feelings of incompetence or distrust. All parents will identify with at least one of these factors. Furthermore, some researchers, Hauser-Cram and Selcuk, (2003) and Moll et al., (1992) emphasise that the challenges associated with work, commitments, solo parenting, negative school experiences and limited income particularly discourage caregivers' involvement in their child's secondary education. This is understandable and offers evidence of what a school needs to do to target ways to overcome these barriers. If a caregiver withdraws or lessens their involvement with their adolescent children's education, it is generally for one of these aforementioned reasons; time, energy, financial hardship, contempt, or insecurities. Researchers who have investigated strategies for overcoming these barriers are abundant and the majority have identified the same solution. The solution of improving parent engagement lies in talking and listening to the caregivers and together identifying what and how barriers can be overcome (Bull et al., 2008; Christenson & Reschly, 2012; Clinton & Hattie, 2013; Eccles & Harold, 1993; ERO, 2015; Epstein and Sheldon 2002; MoE, Funds of Knowledge, 2012;

MoE, Ka Hikitia: Accelerating success, 2013; Moll et al., 1992; Mutch & Collins, 2012). However, this practice is not universally followed.

Teacher and school characteristics

2.3.2 Achieving functional relationships between schools and home is not straight-forward and issues that create barriers need to be considered and addressed before a working relationship can be developed. Jaynes (2018) identified that teachers have been the biggest barrier for the last 3 decades through resisting caregiver input. One of Deforges and Abouchaar's (2003) main findings in their executive summary was that the literature consistently showed some parents felt belittled by their child's secondary teachers. This was indeed the case but on further reading this was from caregivers with working class backgrounds alone. They perceived teachers as being "distant and superior" (p.43) and only talking from their point of view. This is most likely due to misunderstandings from both parties based on their social backgrounds. Froiland and Davison (2013) surmise that when parents feel welcomed in the school and have trust in their child's teachers then this results in better student academic achievement. Schools with poor engagement from their community may want to assess how they are perceived by the community and how teachers and staff perceive their community. Epstein (1995) proffers that how schools perceive their students reflects how they perceive the caregivers. This view could be perceived by the caregivers if they do not feel valued by the school and could build barriers to their engagement. Furthermore, this perception could lead to caregivers withdrawing their children from the school, either moving them to another school, or just keeping them home and away from an institution that they feel does not show care. Peterson et al. (2011) learnt that both teachers and parents tended to make assumptions about one another based on their own experiences. These assumptions reflected the positive or negative nature of those experiences. Auerbach (2012) states that it is a school's role to educate all of its students despite the challenges faced by distrusting and low engaged communities. Winning the trust and engaging these caregivers will be challenging but not impossible. Froiland and Davidson's (2013) research revealed relational trust, created from relationships based on open and honest conversations between parents and teachers, must be acquired, and that to overcome poor engagement a school must offer a welcoming environment and make parents believe it cares about their child. Jaynes

(2018) supports this statement claiming that school leaders and teachers must embrace caregiver engagement to achieve success. A subsequent barrier they identified was that parents had less trust of their child's high school teachers than of their primary school teachers. This was due to the testing and assessments that students are often reported against to their parents in high school, portraying a cold, uncaring perspective. Parents misinterpreted the teachers reporting of their child's achievement level as a negative behaviour. Moll et al., (1992) identified that through developing "funds of knowledge", where knowledge belonging to families is used in the school's curriculum, allows the school to gain a richer understanding of its community. The NZ Curriculum define funds of knowledge as "the bodies of knowledge that underlie the activities in households" (MoE, 2012). Understanding a community's context is a vital foundation to building positive relationships with it. Once the school has a better understanding of its community then more meaningful relationships can begin to be developed between teachers and caregivers (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Pomerantz et al., 2007). Whole school engagement will support the teachers and the caregivers achieving positive relationships and will improve a school's reputation within its community.

2.3.3

What is the right kind of caregiver involvement?

Evidence of the types of caregiver involvement in their child's education are quite diverse, ranging from being quite passive to being cossetting and controlling. The type of involvement can be either detrimental or beneficial to a student's engagement in school (Boonk et al., 2018; Froiland & Davison, 2014). As children grow, their needs change and the support they receive should respond to those needs. Eccles (1999) rationalises that along with puberty comes a need for autonomy and space to explore their selves and their interests. This is indeed an insightful observation. Young people do need to be able to explore, experience and make mistakes within a safe environment to help develop common sense and life skills. Talking about the child's interests and what they might want to study or work as in the future, encouragement of aiming for that and advising on different possible avenues, instil belief in the child's ability. Bempechat and Shernoff (2012) argue that caregivers whose involvement with school activities is frequent have higher achieving children. This suggests that being involved regularly with school life and having a familiarity with the staff and the school calendar have a latent affect on the child's academic progress. Depending on the caregivers'

characteristics, this could translate into being supportive or controlling. Froiland and Davidson (2014) explain that teenagers need to be able to develop their own motivation to learn through support and encouragement, and monitoring should be avoided. Some children may reject their parent's involvement and support and it is important to accept that many adolescents do have these reactions and caregiver attention may be detrimental to a child's progress. Eccles (1999) maintains that other adults can be an alternative strategy for supporting students as students do benefit from adult wisdom. Out of school programs can offer this alternative as can teachers. This does not mean that caregiver involvement is not needed, they should still be involved in a manner appropriate to the child's needs at the time. Boonk et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis reveals different studies that have identified caregiver involvement can be beneficial, detrimental or have no effect on academic achievement at all. This inconsistency on the value of caregiver involvement towards academic achievement is due to a number of different types of caregiver involvement. Identifying the right type of caregiving involvement is complex and is subjective to the individual child and their families.

2.4 Leadership relevance

2.4.1

Relational trust and engagement focus

The New Zealand Education Council Report, Successful Home School Partnerships (Bull et al., 2008) recognises that school leaders must make home/ school relationships a focus to promote their importance and to ensure that they happen. Robinson et al., (2009) adds that school leaders should not only be goal focused, but they also need to include and engage staff in understanding the reasons for the goal and developing solutions to achieve the goal. Jeynes (2018) argues that school leaders are not keeping up with current research on the benefits of parental involvement and engagement both at home and school and are missing valuable opportunities to inspire and encourage their teachers' involvement with caregivers. Auerbach (2012) and Boonk et al. (2018) explain that understanding what the right or beneficial type of caregiver involvement looks like is still limited amongst school leaders and schools. If a school has a low engagement from its families then it needs to find out why. Understanding the community and identifying any barriers will be the first step of the journey. Hall, Hornby, and Macfarlane, (2015) state that school leadership plays a fundamental role in

breaking down barriers. Implementing a whole school initiative successfully takes time, research and planning before it can be developed and introduced to a school. Understanding how to do this is crucial. Leaders who include staff in the research and findings stage show respect for the teachers and encourage engagement and understanding. Bull et al. (2008) explain “you need to listen to staff but also bring staff along with you” (p. 63). Talking to caregivers and community groups will begin to identify some of the barriers. Ideas for overcoming these barriers should be sought from both the caregivers, community groups and the teachers. This will acknowledge two benefits; firstly, possible solutions and secondly, engagement and interest from those involved. Bempechat and Shernoff, (2012) explain that “strong leadership and buy-in from teachers and other members of the school community can serve to launch and sustain strong home-school partnerships” (p.335). A school leader needs to not only implement but model new ideas to encourage buy-in by the staff. This does not happen automatically. Bempechat and Shernoff (2012) identified that when teachers are committed to the idea, then “parental involvement appears to blossom” (p. 38). Involving teachers in the design of developing home/ school relationships will encourage commitment and provide opportunities to share good practice. Robinson et al. (2009) claim that creating relational trust between teachers and caregivers will lead to a “better-quality co-operation” and “mutual obligation” (p.21). Having the principal lead the initiative opens opportunities for exploration and collation of ideas and professional development that explores the best types of teacher/ caregiver relationships and involvement.

2.5 Summary

The literature shows that teachers and caregivers are integral to student achievement and should align their knowledge, ideas, goals and high expectations with each other. Expectations between the child, the teacher and the caregiver can be different therefore having relationships will enable them to be aligned. Academic research reports that the best support caregivers can offer their adolescent children is positive affirmations that value education and show belief in their ability. Support and guidance are important for teenagers and should be modelled on their individual needs. This can improve a student’s motivation and self confidence in their learning ability. The

literature in this review spans the past twenty-six years showing that the idea is reputable.

The literature acknowledges that caregiver engagement declines in high school and is attributed to challenges that make involvement difficult or disagreeable. One prominent barrier is that teachers appear distant and uncaring. Regardless of the reasons, this perception needs to change before caregivers can be engaged. Some teachers have revealed that they lack confidence in communicating with caregivers. The literature shows that the key to overcoming barriers is finding out what they are by asking the relevant individuals. This evidence suggests that barriers can be personal and should be taken seriously. A third prominent finding exposed by the literature review was through making a school feel more welcoming, caregivers' perceptions can improve.

Further, lesser, findings that I feel are important to consider are that some caregivers feel teachers do not care for their child in the same way as primary school teachers because the main communication they have with the teachers centres on assessment. Some research studies state that making links with the community's knowledge shows one way of caring for the child. Developing teacher/ caregiver relationships will help to change these perceptions.

The literature shows school leaders are integral to developing working relationships between teachers and caregivers and that they need to be conscious of the benefits of caregiver involvement. Leaders engagement with talking and listening to caregivers and teachers about their challenges is an important part of developing the relationships as it will breed understanding and identify what needs to change. However, changing so many peoples' perspectives will take time and patience. Involving teachers and caregiver in the process every step of the way will improve their buy-in and will help to overcome the barriers that have previously stood in the way. Having the school leader at the front, illustrates the value and belief they have for teacher and caregiver relationships.

2.6 Conclusion

Current authors have revealed that home/school engagement practices, in the main still travel in a one-way direction, from the school to the home. Furthermore, the most recent research has also determined that there is no conclusive data that identifies connections between parental involvement and academic achievement despite “policy makers and researchers” agreeing “that parental involvement is a critical ingredient for success” (Boonk et al., 2018, p. 10)., This is largely to do with the differing perceptions within the literature of what home/ school relationships should look like and what practices were beneficial to student achievement. Researchers identified a wide range of strategies that school’s had trialled for improving caregiver’s engagement suggesting that there is no one set way of engaging caregivers (Moll et al., 1992; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Changing caregivers’ response to engaging with schools means understanding their individual reasons for keeping away. Each school would need to have conversations with their caregivers and identify how to achieve better engagement and leadership may need to consider some radical changes to enable the school to engage with its community.

Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3

In this chapter, I begin with clarifying and justifying my research design and the use of a qualitative approach. Following this, I will explain my choice of data collection and sampling in relation to my philosophical assumptions and methodology. The remaining part of this chapter will describe the data analysis that will be conducted and will conclude with the ethical considerations.

My worldview

3.1.1

Peoples ontological experiences shape their epistemological belief and I believe that I cannot fully understand another's reality without considering their historical, social, political, and cultural positions. Bronfenbrenner's (1979) ecological systems theory model demonstrates the interrelated connections between each individual's microsystems: family, church, and school; and exosystems: culture, politics, media. The positive or negative experience of these systems can influence an individual accordingly. Having systems that promote the value of education especially through the direct connections of family and school, can positively influence and motivate the individual. To clarify, people experience different realities based on the different influences of their individualised contexts and knowing these brings a better understanding of an individual's reality. For this reason, I have chosen to position myself within an interpretive paradigm. The individualised contexts we find ourselves in are divided into two main bodies of influence: the external structural social context describes the influences of the society, culture, and community in which we live and the autonomous agency which describes the influence of the internal qualities of personality and beliefs that affect our response to experiences. Learning about several individuals' interpretations of a shared experience can build a better understanding of the subjective meaning of that experience. Creswell (2014) explains that subjective meaning is gained through the interpretations of the sources. I have taken the stance that to learn about and understand an event or an experience, we cannot rely solely on a single experience of that phenomenon, as this will offer too narrow a perspective. Denzin and

Lincoln (2018) explain we must learn from others' perceptions of the same experience within the same context and co-create shared understanding of that experience. Through their combined knowledge, a deeper understanding can be gained. Collecting "participants' meanings" of their experiences and developing a "holistic account" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 38) of the issues related to the experience are key characteristics of qualitative research. Understanding the many perceptions of the community, the similarities, differences and the reasons for these exposes the complexities involved in delivering what communities need.

This idea of learning about a community's values and beliefs to understand their perspective and learn what has influenced them involves coming from a position of care. Noddings (2013) describes caring as a feminine ethical response, one that comes from compassion and feeling rather than the masculine ethical qualities of justice and logic. She illustrates the idea, explaining that when a woman is given a problem she assumes its identity and feels personally responsible for resolving it; where a man would look at it logically and identify the fairest solution. She impresses that she does not mean that these qualities are specifically tied to being a woman or man, and merely uses the terms feminine and masculine to illustrate generally female and male characteristics. Noddings (2013) uses the term receptivity to describe the process of empathising with another's feelings about an experience without analysing or projecting opinions, just feeling their emotion to provide insight into their being. She explains it succinctly: "I do not project. I receive the other into myself and I see and feel with the other. I become a duality" (p. 49). She uses the term "engrossment" (p. 50) to describe the state of being when practicing this process. The feelings are observed with a rational objectivity. Using this idea of receptivity in a school could help the school recognise potential problems. For example, caregivers not attending a parent/teacher conference indicates the school needs to investigate and identify the reason through drawing solutions from the community. Making assumptions of why caregivers are not engaging with the parent/teacher conference would be projecting our ideas onto the caregivers and allowing our emotions to distract from the real issues of the disengaged caregiver.

Phenomenology

I have used a phenomenological methodology for this research study as I believe that everybody's experiences are dependent on the context in which they find themselves, their familiarity with that context and their individual personalities and characteristics.

- 3.1.2 Moustakas (1994) believes that knowledge's key source is from people's perceptions, that reality is what individuals experience and what is real to each individual at the time of that experience. Different individuals may indeed have different perceptions and realities of the same experience, but this is nevertheless their reality and is valid because of their influences. Learning about these perceptions and influences will enable comprehension of each reality and afford ways of changing future experiences where necessary to provide more positive outcomes. My sample of six participants suited a phenomenological approach and the shared, lived experience of several individuals who have experienced the same phenomenon, in this case the teacher/ caregiver working relationship. This leads to the idea that to understand why things work or do not work is reliant on an individual's experience and formulated belief from that experience. Crotty (1998) states phenomenology is about rejecting what society predicts we should believe. Phenomenology is about learning about the individual through being conscious of their idiosyncrasies. Learning about the participants' phenomena through animated dialogue can help challenge our assumptions and interpretations and allow new information to emerge. "The phenomenal experience becomes increasingly clarified and expanded in meaning as the phenomenon is considered and reconsidered in reflective processes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 8). As the researcher, I need to be reflective throughout the study, from the observations and experiences of the initial contact made with the schools, to the interviews, the categorising and analysis and the final discussions. An added bonus of phenomenology according to Creswell (2007) is that it offers a structured approach for novice researchers for collecting and analysing data, one that aligns similarly to that of a traditional research project as seen in the table below.

Table 4: Adapted from Creswell's procedures for conducting phenomenological research (2007, p.61-62)

Traditional research study format	Main procedures in the phenomenon process
Research question	Identify the research problem
Abstract/ Introduction/ Literature review	Identify central phenomenon
Methodology/ research design	Recognise the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology
Data collection	Data collection through in-depth interviews and open ended-questions Several participants interviewed to gain range of perspectives and data rigour
Results	Data analysis focusing on statements that show understanding of how the participants experienced the phenomenon.
Discussion	Textural description used to describe what the participants experienced including a description of the context that influenced how the participants experience the phenomenon
Findings	Researcher writes a composite description that captures the essence of the phenomenon

3.2 Research Design

My worldview determined I needed to collect and collate the experiences and perceptions of multiple voices from one school. My research questions directed me to choosing a school leader, a teacher, and a caregiver from whom to collect the data. My literature review suggested that I needed to repeat this study with at least one other school so that I could compare the findings from both sets of participants in my analysis and note whether experiences of the topic were the same or different. As the researcher, I had the responsibility of interpreting the information provided by my participants to reveal the complexities of the leadership challenge and clarify the information that emerged. My epistemological view assumes that I can only understand another's viewpoint through interacting with that person, and interpreting their experience based on their reality through an ethics of care perspective. I was also aware that the participants I interviewed would only reveal to me what they felt comfortable

with sharing so building a relationship of trust was achieved through a “one-caring” approach (Noddings, 2013). Noddings explains that this is an approach where the one caring demonstrates care towards the other, in this instance, the participant. I listened to their queries and concerns and worked with them to resolve them. During the interviews: I listened, I observed their use of vocabulary, their emotional responses and their body language. This process contributed to my feeling their perspective and the emotions they felt about the stories they shared. In return I felt that the participants felt that they were being heard and understood and encouraged them to share further stories. This use of “receptivity” helped me interpret the data from the participants’ perceptions.

As the researcher, I was acutely aware of my own experiential knowledge as both a teacher and parent and the potential of how these experiences could both hinder and help my interpretation and without self-awareness could implicate ethical issues. Being objective and open-minded in my observation and interpretation was crucial to maintaining each participant’s meaning through understanding the colloquialisms, humour, and inferences made through their use of language. By listening to the participant’s responses without interruptions except to clarify words and more ambiguous statements suppressed my potential influence on their responses. Noting the participants’ emotional response in the delivery of their answer enhanced my interpretation further. Davidson and Tolich explain that “no problem can be understood or solved in isolation from its greater environment” (2003, p. 28). So much of each participants’ personality, emotion, and description through tone of voice and gestures that were experienced during the interview were lost in the transcription. This limitation could lead to misinterpretation of the participant’s meaning. Preserving these observations through writing memos was essential to support the accuracy of each interview. I saw my role as being the facilitator of a multi-voice reconstruction of the school’s culture. I wanted the information to reveal any special features relevant specifically to the school’s phenomena.

My research data was gathered through semi-structured interviews and responses to open questions. I learnt about each participants’ experiences and knowledge through their perspectives, constructing their reality through corroborating my understanding

with them at the time of the interviews. More questions emerged during the interview as participants shared their stories. Careful transcribing of the interview recordings conserved its' accuracy. I attained data validity through providing each participant with a copy of their interview transcript (Brooks, Te Riele, & Maguire, 2014). I took care to maintain the use of language of each participant to establish accuracy and afford readers a window into each participant's interview. Any comments that I or the participants considered could be misinterpreted were excluded from being used as direct quotes in the findings chapter and instead were entered as a textural description. Observations of the participants' emotional responses during the interviews also revealed data that evoked passion, frustration, loss and acceptance adding to the understanding and my interpretation of their responses. It was essential to maintain the "essence" of each participant's experience. Husserl (1931) uses the term "essence" to describe the main body of the learning from the participant. I noted these observations after the interview as part of my reflections. The participants' data was then organised into codes and categories from which the themes emerged. Sensitivity was needed to ascertain the similarities and differences between the responses in the themes to maintain accuracy and dignity to each participant's feelings of the experience.

3.2.1

Pilot Studies

I minimised mistakes during the real interviews through running pilot studies with three pilot study participants. I tested the questions for the school leader, teacher and the caregiver. The interviews, which I recorded lasted 20-30 minutes, after which I asked my pilot study participants how they felt the interview went, whether they felt comfortable and whether they felt they could give honest and full answers. I also asked if they felt restricted in any way and whether the questions were appropriate. I was able to refine my questions based on my and the test subjects' reflections. All the pilot study participants felt comfortable with my interview techniques, commenting that I was friendly and felt that they would feel the same if I was not known to them. Two of the pilot study participants explained that some of the questions felt repetitive. My own reflections realised that although asking open-ended questions allowed the interviewees to answer freely, their answers could become off topic or questions could be misconstrued. This prompted me to realise that further questions might need to be asked. I also observed that the dialogue naturally provided scope for new questions to

emerge to pull out more details that the participants might overlook. On the second and third pilot interviews my technique improved and I felt more confident with the process.

Interviews

I decided to collect the data through individual interviews, to ensure participants had an unhindered opportunity to speak freely without influence and restriction that could have resulted from a focus group interview. Individual interviews also supported the phenomenological need to collect multiple perceptions and give the evidence rigour. Creswell (2007) states that rigour is attained through the multiple levels of data analysis and through validating the accuracy of the evidence using validation techniques. Validation in phenomenological research requires the data to be collected from several individuals and to be recorded accurately and in detail. Evidence of “intersubjective agreement” where a teacher and a caregiver shared their perceptions of the same experiences offered further “rigour and validity” (Denzel & Lincoln, 2018, p.122). I audio recorded all the interviews and then transcribed them. I asked the participant to check their interview transcriptions to ensure accuracy. I also made memos on my impressions of each interview and their responses to further appreciate their feelings towards what they were saying and to aid my interpretation (Noddings 2013). Furthermore, finding a common understanding from all the data illustrated a phenomenological approach to this study (Cresswell, 2007). The interview questions were designed to reveal each participant’s perceptions of their experience of teacher/ caregiver working relationships. See [Appendix B](#). Husserl (1931) explains that the multiple perceptions of people will add insight into a context’s reality and that this reality can evolve as each person’s context changes. This leads me to ask whether the more perceptions of the individual realities that are revealed and understood, the more indepth the understanding of the teacher/ caregiver relationship phenomenon. Moustakas (1994) illustrates this well:

...the whole process takes on the character of wonder as new moments of perception bring to consciousness fresh perspectives, as knowledge is born that unites past, present, and future and that increasingly expands and deepens what something is and means (p.11).

This suggests that using a much wider range of participants' experiences and perceptions and adding to these recurrently will reveal a much richer tapestry of context related information. This is not possible for this study due to restrictions of study time and the length of the research.

The interviews were held in a setting that was familiar and acceptable to the participant, this was the school for the teachers and school leaders or in the cases of the caregivers, their places of work. This was to help the participants feel comfortable and relaxed. The two selected schools had shown success in achieving working relationships between teachers and caregivers resulting in the improved academic achievement of the students. The purpose of these interviews was to collect each participants' perceptions and experiences in response to the research questions.

The interviews were semi-structured, and I used an interview guide sheet to refer to if needed. I used appropriate language and questions to suit each participant based on their role. In further preparation for the interviews, I "bracketed" all my assumptions and prior knowledge of the research (Husserl, 1931, p. 111). Bracketing is a term Husserl developed to explain the process of the researcher identifying and recognising all their own assumptions and prior knowledge of their research study before engaging in an interview. This process is associated with a phenomenological approach, acting as a solution to researcher subjectivity through disconnecting from what they think they know, so they can focus on what they do not yet know (van Manen, 1997). I kept an open-mind and asked unbiased questions and comments which were difficult initially but did improve with practice. I asked open-ended questions to allow the participant to fill in their understanding and meaning of the experience and I practiced "receptivity" and emerged myself in their story (Noddings, 2013). Van Manen (1997) describes the two different functions of the interview; one, to collect anecdotal evidence of lived experiences and two, to provide dialogic opportunities where both the interviewer and the interviewee formed a shared understanding of the experience. The interviews developed into 'hermeneutic interviews' and provided interpretation validity at the time of the event. I had to be careful about sharing any personal knowledge during these discussions to not disrupt the bracketing or contaminate the data with my own perceptions (Creswell, 2007).

Interviews were recorded for two main reasons; firstly, to ensure that all the information was documented accurately and secondly, to allow me, the researcher, to concentrate on the conversation and interact with the participant. Creswell (2007) emphasises the need for skill and patience when allowing the participants to vocalise and interpret their experiences. The interviews started with an introduction of who I am, and my relevant experiences followed by some warm up questions to help relax the participant and also gain a little background information. This helped to start building a relationship with trust. Cardno (2012) explains that “trust and distrust are attitudes that affect the way we think and feel” (p.57) and could potentially change the participants’ responses to the questions. The questions asked focused on the themes of my literature review. It was important to allow the participants to answer their questions without any direction or leading from the researcher which encouraged more detailed understanding of the participants’ experiences (Creswell, 2007). However, it was also important to have a strategy for prompting more in-depth details when a participant was less conversational, had misinterpreted the question or had gone off on an unrelated tangent. Bryman (2012) advises on using two question types. Start with the open-ended questions that allow the participant to speak unhindered, then move into the intermediate questions that draw out their reflections on their feelings, opinions and consequential details. This also supported the participant in making them feel valued and appreciated.

3.2.3

Sample selection

This study investigated how schools achieved successful teacher/caregiver working relationships through interviewing relevant participants and identifying the contributing factors that led to this success. I used purposive sampling to identify two schools who had shown a marked improvement in student achievement and in home/school relationships. A former teaching colleague who now works with schools nationwide as an advisor of initiatives aimed at raising Māori achievement had knowledge of schools that had successfully addressed improving relationships with their students’ homes. Although this study does not focus on the achievement of Māori per se, the advisor was able to suggest schools that I could approach that were appropriate to my needs. To keep the two schools’ identities anonymous, I have named them simply as the northern school and the southern school and the participants have been named accordingly:

northern school leader, northern teacher and northern caregiver and this name pattern has been repeated for the southern school participants. For the two schools I selected, the ERO had commented on the efforts both schools made in connecting and collaborating with their communities. To keep the schools' identities confidential, I have not labelled which school is the northern or the southern school nor given the date of the review.

'Strong community collaboration and partnerships are becoming more focused on supporting children's learning. This is creating a shift towards collective responsibility for the raising of student achievement' (ERO Report).

'At the beginning of each year, staff spend a day at one of the local marae where they learn more about the local community and its history. This learning helps staff to make connections with students and their whānau' (ERO report).

An information sheet was sent to the principals of the two schools that requested the following (See Figure 1 below)**Error! Reference source not found..** This information sheet can be found under the heading Appendix C: Participant information sheets, in [Appendix C](#).

For this research, I am looking to collect the experiences and ideas of three people from your school. The first being a senior leader who has had a critical involvement in developing staff engagement in building working relationships with their students' caregivers and in providing opportunities for caregivers to engage positively and proactively with the school, (this could be you or another member of your team). I would also like to interview a teacher and a caregiver who have had success in building positive and proactive working relationships.

Figure 1: Excerpt from the principal Information sheet (April 2018)

Purposive sampling was also necessary for selecting the participants I interviewed so that they could "purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Cresswell, 2007, p. 125). Keeping with a phenomenological approach, all participants had to have personal experience of building successful working relationships. I used two school leaders, two teachers and two caregivers for the interviews. The school leaders who volunteered to participate, organised the teacher and caregiver participants. The reason for this was time restrictions and they both had already explained that they had found difficulties with finding volunteers. As this selection process was in conflict with my original planning of

maintaining anonymity for each of the participants, I checked with both teacher and caregiver participants that they were happy to proceed knowing that the school leader involved knew their identities. As the schools used were viewed as being successful in achieving teacher/caregiver relationships, it was assumed that their perceptions and experiences would be authentic and uninfluenced by the school leaders. This change in the planning was not viewed as being detrimental, nevertheless, all participants were still asked to approve their transcripts and make any changes to them before I started the analysis.

Data analysis and synthesis

3.2.4 The interviews produced a huge amount of qualitative data that needed to be organised into an accessible form for analysis and synthesis. Understanding the complexity and exhaustive work involved in analysing and synthesising qualitative data, I decided to follow Creswell's (2007) advice on following a systematic process of firstly, reading and memoing; secondly, describing, classifying and interpreting; and thirdly, representing and analysing. After the interviews were transcribed from the audio recording it was necessary to sift through the information to find the data relevant to the research study. Selecting the data and quotes for analysis needed ethical consideration. Brooks et al. (2014) warn of the ease of misrepresentation through partisanship, or through the poor handling of large amounts of qualitative information. Demonstrating integrity was needed in the selection process to capture all the relevant information that emerged: the ideas where the participants were in agreement as well as those that were in conflict with the researcher and each other. Recognising these ethical issues retained the honesty of the participants' data. Much of the colloquial data was redundant in relation to providing evidence for the research questions, although it was valuable in understanding each participants' personal characteristics and social contexts. Creswell (2013) states that it is essential to "collect and present the voices of the participant and the reflexivity of the researcher" (p.44) as this is essential to adding validity to the evidence. I made memos of my observations after each of the interviews to remind me what I had experienced and to help in my analysis of the findings. I used NVivo to organise the data into initial codes. The amount of data and the number of codes that emerged proved to be extensive. Saldana (2013) explains coding is vehicle for discovery without formulae or algorithms but nevertheless can be influenced by the researcher's

observations at the time of the data collection. In this instance it is important to note that this is relevant to a phenomenological approach. Capturing the data through an inductive process, through observing the feeling, the tone of voice and any gestural actions helped interpret the participants' perspective. Grouping the coded data into categories indicated more clearly how I was interpreting the data. From the categories four clear themes emerged. One over-arching theme, culture of care, was represented within the other three themes, communication, building relationships and collaborations and represented the 'essence' of the learning from this study (Husserl, 1931). This over-arching theme was drawn from the body of data and described what was used to make the decisions that supported the students' well-being and learning through the variety of experiences described by the participants. I wrote a textural description of each theme, combining the descriptions of what the participants had experienced in relation to teacher/caregiver relationships. Moustakas (1994) explains that a textural description should include examples of thoughts and feelings that embody the experience. Crotty (1998) explains that the phenomenological method of collating and analysing data from people must not "prejudice their subjective character" (p.83). Quotes from the participants were used to illustrate and give weight to the interpretation and to the textural description. The quotes used were tidied up to remove disfluencies and to make them easier to read and understand. This was deemed to not change the meaning but to help clarify it. On reading their transcripts, the participants noted that these disfluencies interrupted and clouded their responses, supporting their removal. My structural description included my reflections of the setting and the context in which the phenomenon occurred. They also included my own observations that I had shared with the participants during the interviews for verification. Embedding these reflective practices into the phenomenological approach corresponds with Moustakas's (1994) thinking of how to combine process with theory. Finally, the textural and the structural descriptions were synthesised into a discussion from which the essence of the experiences emerged (Husserl, 1931).

3.2.5

Ethical considerations

Using a qualitative approach to this research study endorsed flexibility in the research design and supported the adaptation of the design to better suit and accommodate the participants. This research relied on the interpretation of the participants' experiences

and perceptions and so building relationships that were based on transparency and honesty, I felt, were crucial to their openness and willingness to share their stories.

Maintaining an ethics of care overview throughout the research through:

communications with the participants, reporting on the findings, identifying what data to discuss and how to discuss them was important to reflect this relationship of trust (Noddings, 2013). The Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee's (AUTEC) principles advised and guided this research study to ensure that the participants' privacy and safety, any social sensitivities and their welfare was adequately protected. Approval was granted on the 22nd March 2018 can be seen in Appendix A: Ethics Approval

Before beginning the field work, all participants were required to sign a consent form to confirm that they had read and agreed with the research information sheet. The information sheet started with introducing who I am and what my interest is in this research. This began the transparent and honest nature of my intended relationship with the school and the participant volunteers. Relationships of trust and care are the premise of this research study and developing trust and demonstrating care in a relationship were achieved through approaching each participant openly, ensuring they understood their position and rights within the research and confirming that they were comfortable to continue. I then outlined the purpose of the study and how their school had been identified as a possible participant, clarifying my intentions. The rest of the information sheet explained how I intended to protect their privacy, safety, and welfare; what the project required from them and their ethical rights as guided by AUTEC. An AUTEC advisor suggested that to solve the dilemma of achieving confidentiality of the teachers and caregivers and I should ask the schools to give the participant information to a pool of teachers and caregivers and request potential participants to volunteer themselves directly to me. This would mean that only I would know their identity. However, as explained in the limitation section of the final chapter, this part of the protocol proved too time consuming to achieve in the time available for this study. Being aware of ethical dilemmas as they arose was crucial to maintain the credibility of the relationship and the research. Being transparent with the decisions I made through sharing them with the participants or my supervisor helped to alleviate concerns and ensure that dilemmas were resolved with ethical consideration.

Participation was still voluntary, and consent was only achieved after the information sheets were discussed and that each participant was made aware of this change to the original protocol. All of the participants were satisfied that others' knowledge of their participation was not a concern.

The interviews brought further ethical considerations and as they were the foundation for my research, it was critical to consider my approach and use of questions. My experience as a teacher of seventeen years, a parent of twenty-one years and a head of department for fourteen years, although to a lesser degree, afforded me correlating experiences with the participants' positions. Ethical principles differ between countries and it is essential to recognise principles that are significant to their cultural contexts. New Zealand is a bi-cultural community and one of the ethical considerations, as outlined by AUTECH are those laid out by the Treaty of Waitangi. Working in a school endorses understanding of its principles: partnership, participation, and protection, in an educational context; working in a school where half the students and many of the staff are Māori has given me a deeper understanding of Māori beliefs and values. This prior knowledge supported by learning from the Master of Educational Leadership degree to date gave me the research adequacy for this study. Nonetheless, I needed to be aware of my motivations for this research and not let them muddy my interpretation of the participants' experiences and stories or my analysis of the findings. Using a phenomenological approach placed the focus of the interpretations on understanding the participants' experiences and views and creating a reality based on their combined interpretations. The complexities of ethics can hinder and enable qualitative research outcomes so sound ethical judgements needed to be practiced before continuing. I maintained the transparency with the participants I gave them a copy of their transcriptions to confirm whether they were happy for me to use what they had shared. After reading their transcripts, Brooks et al. (2014) explain that participants can become concerned about their contributions, about what they shared and fear that they might be misinterpreted. Boonk et al. (2018) argue that allowing participants to withdraw information could potentially hide part of the evidence and distort the truth, leading to ethical issues for the researcher of misreporting the evidence. Noddings (1996) explains that participants' responses to the data collection and validation stage need to be considered; accepting these concerns and responding to them accordingly is part of

what it means to care, again supporting the relationship of trust. For this study, with its positioning centred on relationships of trust, it was important to adhere to Noddings' (2013) advice of considering ethical dilemmas from a practical perspective. Offering participants the opportunity to withdraw any information they were uncomfortable with, showed recognition of trusting the participant and me, the researcher, being trustworthy. A couple of the participants made some requests for some changes; however, these did not alter the meaning of the findings, they merely protected the participants concerns. Nevertheless, awareness of how to project the "essence" (Husserl, 1931) of the findings ethically was complicated. The richness of the animated descriptions and language did not translate through using participants quotations alone and so textural descriptions were used to collate the feelings I interpreted with the descriptions to portray the overall understanding of the data.

Educational research's value and legitimacy relies on the ethical approach the researcher takes and how the ethical dilemmas are considered. Cohen, Manion and Morrison explain that "methodological and ethical issues" are "inextricably woven" throughout an interpretive and qualitative research study (2011, p. 69). The flexibility that a qualitative approach offers, exposes the possibility of unforeseen ethical dilemmas. Maintaining a position of relational trust and caring approach (Noddings, 1996) through the project was reflected in the ethical positioning. Ethics are integral to any research study, particularly during data collection and the organisation, interpretation analysis and synthesis of the data. Through respecting individual differences in the participants' stories, the various perceptions and experiences are recognised rather than categorising individuals into groups based on generalisation. Participants are the true owners of the information collected and adhering to ethical practices shows researchers recognise their own subjective lens, minimising the power relationships between the researcher and the participant.

Findings

Chapter 4 This chapter presents the findings that have emerged from the impressions and observations of both schools, and the interview data of the six participants. For the purpose of this study I have named the schools, the northern and the southern school. Four themes have emerged from these interviews with the six participants: Culture of Care, Communication, Collaboration and Building Relationships. The information in the participants' interviews was coded based on content, both literal and what was inferred. Related codes were then grouped into categories. Below is a table that lists the four themes and their relative categories. See [Appendix G](#) for more detailed categorized information including nodes and sub-nodes.

Table 5: Themes and their categories

Culture of Care	Communication	Building relationships	Collaboration
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy • High expectations • Leadership support • Making opportunities • Perceptions • Connecting with the community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Channels of communication • Connection challenges • Improving teacher to caregiver communication • Informing caregivers • Leadership communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engagement obstacles • Solution focused • Caregivers positioning • Teachers positioning • Whānau classes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectful relationships • Staff Teamwork • Whānau teacher/caregiver/teacher • Support and connect

4.1.1

4.1 Culture of Care

First impressions

My impressions and observations of both schools showed they demonstrated a strong culture of care. This impression of friendliness and welcome was clearly apparent when I visited the southern school. Before I made it to the receptionist, a member of staff greeted me warmly. Shortly after speaking to the receptionist, a second member of staff saw me and made a humorous comment about the weather. The principal's personal assistant approached me shortly after arriving apologising and explaining she

could not find the principal and that as it was lunchtime and he could be anywhere, as he liked to go out to talk to the students and staff during this time and he had probably been held up as a result. She showed me to staffroom and offered a drink whilst I waited. Around the walls were quotes relating to care and written waiata (Māori songs), inferring that care towards others and care towards the local Māori population is a school focus. When the school leader appeared, he was apologetic and friendly and walked me down to his office. All the doors to the offices that we passed were open regardless of whether they were empty or not. The whole impression of this experience was that the staff and students were happy, relaxed and there was a sense of trust, respect, and care for each other. At the northern school, I unfortunately became lost as I had missed the sign for visitors parking and the main reception sign. I asked a senior student and he directed me to a place I could park within the school. I asked a junior student where I could find the offices and he walked me to them. I was impressed by the helpfulness of both students towards me. The school leader I was meeting welcomed me and took me to a quiet, warm room in the library for the interview. Staff from both schools were warm, friendly, and engaging, making me feel welcome and comfortable.

When talking about teachers, caregivers, students, and school leaders during the interviews, many of the participant responses were empathetic to each other's situations. The largest proportion of these responses were directed towards the students, followed by those directed towards the teachers, caregivers, and school leaders. The comments for the school leaders were offered unprompted from researcher questions or the care was inferred through the recognition of the positive changes that had been put into place by the leadership's actions. What was also noticeable was the school leaders' acknowledgement of their staffs' workload, and how to ensure they supported them appropriately.

"For our staff all we could do is support them in what they do and make sure they've got the right tools, so they can have that working relationship with parents..." (Southern school leader)

The northern caregiver also acknowledged the workload experienced by teachers:

“... I’m probably maybe coming from the fact that my husbands a teacher, I’ve got a lot more compassion for teachers... They do hard work, you know, and I think what they’re doing is, you’re doing well, you know...” (Northern caregiver)

Both caregivers had an insider’s knowledge of a teacher’s role and workload due to having teachers in their families.

Interviews

4.1.2 I targeted both schools for this research on the suggestion of two external professional development educators. They recognised the schools as having made concerted and successful efforts to improve their students’ academic achievement, improve their relationships with their communities and finding the causes for underachievement. Both school’s academic achievement has progressively improved. The northern school leader explains the changes made in his school were due to a change in leadership and the new principal’s approach to supporting students’ needs.

“So, we’re now in much more of an empathetic mode and working with students to overcome the challenges they’ve got...” (Northern school leader)

The northern caregiver has experienced both leadership styles, the more traditional one before the new principal and the current one, and their approaches to education and comments that the community’s perceptions are varied. She explains that the older generation favours the traditional leadership style indicating younger caregivers favour the modern style.

“I think originally the perception over the years, I think it’s varied, um with the leadership changing... yes, we’re from old school we like this way, it’s changed to a way, where it’s not lax at all, it’s a different perspective... I’ve been impressed, I’ve seen both of them, I think its mixed feelings from the community. There’s part of the community that’s very old, they love to cook (laughs)...” (Northern caregiver)

The Northern school leader explains how his school has developed a robust approach to support their students’ physical, psychological, and medical needs in recent years, in the guise of providing a Hospital, Anxiety and Depression Scale assessment (HADS) for all students and through providing a Student Welfare Centre, Te Awhitea, a team of onsite

councillors and nurses for the students. The caregiver explains the school appreciates that aiding student achievement involves a more holistic approach.

“... but I like the idea that it’s happening, ‘cause I think they are really trying to pick up their achievement, I think they are really trying to focus on that and look beyond the academic, like “why is this happening in the academics, is there another reason?” (Northern caregiver)

This is particularly telling if a student’s achievement declines and signals that mental, physical or emotional health are contributing factors of a student’s ability to achieve their potential.

One of the challenges the southern school leader faced was that some of his school’s caregiver’s own schooling experiences had not been positive or enjoyable and that the challenges he had and still faces were to create a more welcoming and approachable impression of the school through communicating the school’s ethos and values for its students and the community.

“... with our parents... what we can communicate to them is what we’re about and what these events we are doing are about, so they know and feel comfortable about coming in um, because a lot of secondary schools are scary for a lot of parents so make them comfortable about coming in and being involved with their kids’ education even though their kids might not want them to come...” (Southern school leader)

The perceptions of the southern school by the local community were discussed by the school leader and the caregiver and were seen to be mainly positive. The reasoning was put down to the effort the school puts into engaging the community and the students’ achievement results. However, the area is facing a new challenge as a community that is changing due to many new residents from the local city taking advantage of affordable property developments in the area.

“yea I think the community perceives the school as... certainly a good platform... um and I would say the school is pretty active within the community... um the only challenge I see in this community is with a lot of people now working in the city, that their kids are now schooling in the city...” (Southern caregiver)

In further discussion, the southern caregiver believed that the newer residents saw the city school as being better for their children than the local school.

Teachers and school leaders acknowledged the busyness of caregivers' lives and the impracticalities of finding appropriate times and energy for working caregivers to attend school events.

"... it's par for the course it's during the day people have got to work. And I think that's one for the big factors is that parents are working and are working long hours and having time to come into the school to deal with... not issues but deal with, to come and meet us, makes it very hard". (Southern school leader)

The northern caregiver shares this view:

"... but 'cause I'm so busy, I've got to think, I've got to use my days wisely, "that Tuesday, that's clashing with one of my bible study nights, if only it was on the Wednesday", they tried to cater for all of us, and I'm wondering if the busyness of our lifestyles, I think they're trying, I think they'd love us to get more involved..." (Northern caregiver)

Further to this she explains that although the school should continue to offer all the opportunities it does to engage caregivers, caregivers will only attend the events that interest them specifically. Making opportunities for caregivers to engage in activities were varied and many in both schools. Activities ranged from the traditional: competitive sports, school performances, celebration assemblies to the more innovative: attending university days with junior students, professional development with the teachers in the local Marae, offering free computer skills classes for caregivers, Anzac celebrations for past students or a 'dragons' den' challenge where resulting products are sold to students, caregivers, or members of the community.

The care expressed towards students was split between their academic achievement, emotional and physical well-being and supporting their progress and future aspirations. The textural descriptions below illustrate a shared experience between the teacher and a caregiver of how concern for the cause of a students' behaviour can be linked to achievement or future aspirations.

"I actually went over there last night because I had a strange behaviour with a student, and it was nothing to do with academic, but we got to the bottom of it, and we said well this is quite unusual, what's happening? So, I sat down with one of the caregivers over there and we had a little talk and hopefully put his mind at rest over something that's troubling him, yea so... there is a lot of contact that's non-academic, because I think it does tend to impact on the academic..." (Northern teacher)

"... I was impressed with the teacher yesterday when he came in, so he said, "it's unusual for you to respond like that", and he said "what's wrong? "And he told him, that he's concerned about leaving school next year, and it was good because he was able to say what would you like to do, and gave him some ideas on um 'maybe you can try the gateway program or maybe you can come back and do that, at the moment you don't see what you want to do" and I think that's where he was coming from..." (Northern caregiver/ hostel matron)

The northern school holds some professional development sessions in one of their local Maraes and the caregiver explained that two significant opportunities have occurred as a result. One is that the school invited caregivers to attend, of which a few did and the second one was the Technology teachers noticed "oh they don't have enough stools" so he used that as a project for the students, to make stools, to gift them to the Marae and to further build relationships with them.

4.2 Communication

Communication is a central vehicle for sharing information between schools and their communities, the school's leadership and staff, and the teachers and caregivers. Both schools embrace the wide range available digitally: email, texts, social media, website, school portals, mobile app as well as the conventional letters, notice boards, telephone calls and face to face conversations. The communication audiences vary from whole community and whole school, to groups and to individuals. The caregivers each acknowledge the strengths, weaknesses, or frustrations with the schools' communication.

"Yea, there's a lot that's been happening to get behind the teachers and to support them where they can, you know the process has started I've noticed the difference, but the communication is happening... you see that sort of thing more often, not with all the teachers of course, it's not perfect, but I like the idea that it's happening..." (Northern caregiver)

"I think the communication vehicles are sooo diverse now. In the old days it used to be a letter home right with the kids, ahhh - so now, there's so many channels of communications, that gets quite confusing as a parent". (Southern caregiver)

The four most talked about and used means of communication were letters, emails, phone calls and Facebook. The participants saw that posted letters have the advantage of reaching most caregivers and were most useful to caregivers without phones and internet. The drawbacks were, they did not reach caregivers with out-of-date addresses and their delivery is costlier and slow compared to the more immediately accessible email, mobile app, social media, and phone calls. The northern school leader clarifies the benefits of the posted letter:

"The town's been on fibre/ broadband, we were one of the first cities to go on fibre, everyone was really happy about that... you get out into the countryside and you're back onto copper (old phone lines), slow you know... so you still have to remember there's a percentage, so we post things home, so we saturate those things. So, it's a cost, but we didn't do that one year, and we noticed the difference so..." (Northern school leader)

All participants talked about email and its ease of communication uses from whole community information such as newsletters, to class information from a teacher, to individual communication between a teacher and a caregiver. The teacher and caregiver participants also noted that email was a time-saving communication, especially when they need to contact several caregivers as outlined in the following example:

"... the feedback from parents was brilliant, we know Bob's got a test on Friday, they can sit Bob down and do the homework... if you empower the parents, a fair number of them will be involved, but at least they had the choice and if they haven't got the information up, they haven't got the choice..." (Northern school leader)

Nevertheless, the written word has the weakness of being misconstrued if worded poorly or if misinterpreted.

"... you can't always get a mood across in an email or a text, you can say something in many, many different ways, but just with a different tone, and so you can't ever duplicate that with an email or written message, so I find that can be difficult..." (Northern teacher)

For more personalised information both schools offer a portal where caregivers can view their child's information such as attendance and their academic results as well as newsletters and the school's events calendar. The southern teacher explains that her school has also got an app that provides similar information to that found on the school's caregiver portal with the proviso that it will make certain information more easily accessible for caregivers and students alike:

"We've made an app and put all of our information there and that's one way they can keep track of letters and ahhh... download our college's app on their phone. Everyone has cell phones, smart phones, these days and they can check everything there, their child's attendance, their child's results..." (Southern teacher)

Both school leaders have opened a school Facebook page and are happy with its interactive capabilities; offering opportunities for showing activities and events that students are involved in as well as offering the community the choice of giving feedback, opening discussions, and sharing the school's stories daily. The school and the caregivers commented on the positive impact this social media site has for the school.

"Facebook is the best way now, website is a bit static now, because Facebook is now, well Facebook, everything goes on Facebook every day practically and is one way of inviting the parents to be part of the school... through social media sites that we run. So, Facebook for us has been a huge benefit, um, when something bad comes on there, it shut down quickly, but we don't shut it down, our parents are shutting it down, so that's a real positive thing for us". (Southern school leader)

The northern teacher's preferred method of caregiver contact was by phone as he found it more personal and easier to discuss and explain the reason for calling and he found caregivers appreciated the contact and the interest taken in their child.

"So, whenever I contact parents... "thank you very much for contacting me, you've let me know, that's great"... They certainly welcome the amount of contact that's coming, um, I've heard anecdotally, just this morning actually, a colleague was talking to a parent on the phone, and they said it was really nice that they phoned instead of just emailing". (Northern teacher)

Individual phone calls, although accepted to be more personable by the participants, and to provide opportunity to raise further queries, prove to be a time challenge if

several individual caregivers need to be contacted. The teacher participants explain below:

“Well, there’s email conversations, will often go on, parents, um, because trying to contact teachers by phone is quite a challenge, um obviously with teaching and things it’s not appropriate to be answering your phone all the time, um, and so the phone calls, trying to match up it can be quite a challenge...” (Northern teacher)

“... when else is there time to contact your parents? It’s your home time... so parents are home we know they’ll answer the phone and we know that’s our best opportunity there, but how many people (teachers) are you going to convince? Are you gonna say “Yea its compulsory”? Some people will do it out of the goodness of their heart, some people will say, “no why should I?” Parents will call me if they want me...” (Southern teacher)

The school leaders acknowledge that this individualised telephone communication is time consuming and although it is highly commended by the school leaders, it is not formally encouraged due to not wanting to add to the recognised workload already put on teachers. There are two exceptions. Whānau teachers of year 9 students, who are actively encouraged and supported in calling home during the first term to introduce themselves and give caregivers a face and a contact person within the school. The idea is to offer a single contact for the caregivers who, with intermediate and primary schools, were used to dealing directly with one teacher. One teacher explains:

“... now they’re dealing with a number... of different teachers for their child rather than just one main teacher on who to contact, so they don’t know who to phone and they can be passed around from A to B to C to D to try and get the person that they need to talk to...” (Northern teacher)

The second is for whānau teachers to contact caregivers to encourage them to attend three-way conferences during the first term and to explain to all new students, how they can make an appointment through an online booking system. The school leader’s aim is to have as many caregivers engage as possible. Both teachers acknowledged that talking with caregivers was an area that was weak for some teachers due to confidence, inexperience, or refusal, especially when dealing with challenging concerns or issues. The teacher from the northern school reflects on past experiences:

“... and that’s the concern about contacting parents. It is a real skill to develop, it maybe something, I don’t ever remember receiving any particular PD (professional development) on making phone calls... I’ve had negative reactions in the past, um from parents, I’ve had other colleagues who’ve had negative reactions, and it certainly makes me personally less confident...” (Northern teacher)

Both school’s offer professional training and support in how to run positive-focused three-way conferences. The three-way conference is a meeting between the whānau teacher, caregiver, and the student to discuss the student’s school progress report and is employed in both schools. The school leader from the northern school revealed the nervousness and reluctance held by some staff and demonstrated a supportive response of coaching these teachers through role play. The role plays were conducted in small groups, in whānau teams, which were supported and led by a school leader to help give practice, advice and alleviate concerns. Participants from the southern school agree that teachers could receive help from training in communicating with caregivers within scenarios outside of these conferences, such as approaches to phone calls, communicating with the right tone through email or how to deflate anger or challenging issues.

4.3 Building relationships

The third theme has the largest number of codes and sub-codes derived from the interviews revealing the complexities of contributing factors of this theme, building relationships between a school and its community. The codes were organised into the following three main categories that show the schools’ approach to engagement, the people whom need to be considered and one targeted initiative. These are respectively,

- 4.3.1 solution focused ideas, understanding the caregiver’s and the teacher’s position and whānau classes.

Solution focused

Both school leaders demonstrated that their school’s leadership sought solutions towards improving relationships between teachers and caregivers as well as improving academic achievement and student aspirations. An effective example ran by the northern senior leader with the school’s Māori parent group, Kotuku Kitorangi, was to

take a group of year ten students to visit universities to help them see and understand that was a pathway open to them.

“... and the thing is these students (year tens) don’t know what’s out there, and if you don’t see what’s out there you don’t see there’s a potentiality that I can be there and can relate to that inspiration and aspire to it...” (Northern school leader)

The caregiver from the northern school reported on the positive effect this experience had on the students’ aspirations, enabling more informed planning of their educational pathway through the senior school. The initiative has grown, and the senior leader is aiming to take the entire year ten cohort to the university next year. The northern caregiver suggested that sharing future possibilities for academic achievement with the caregivers of year ten students would help them to encourage and advise their children better.

“So, it might be we need to get out there and help parents to think and make them change their way of thinking...” (Northern caregiver)

This caregiver was deeply passionate over this initiative due to her own experiences. She had grown up in a loving and caring family but on finishing school was encouraged to enter the work force and was not aware of any alternative choices. A second initiative that was influenced by Kotuku Kitorangi, the Māori parent group, was to create a NCEA level one Te Reo Māori class for the junior students who had strong grasp of the language, having previously attended a bi-lingual school.

Changes in school culture have been attributed to improving caregiver engagement and academic improvement. Both schools have made changes to their value system. The southern leader describes how for many years now his school has “*embraced cultural values*” which has improved engagement and the perceptions from their bi-cultural community. The northern leader explains how his school:

“... re-did the school charter and the values with the community, parents and the students and they have now become living values in the school...” (Northern school leader)

The northern school has aligned its curriculum and introduced new subject options amongst other ideas to connect with their new value system. The traditional “bus-stop”

caregiver-teacher meetings were swapped for the three-way conferences resulting with a much higher caregiver turn-out.

*“... that was a huge culture shift that took us probably 2 years to get used to and up and running and of course we didn’t look back, because we’ve gone from 6% to 80% of the parents are having an academic conversation with someone about their kid’s progress and that’s good.”
(Northern school leader)*

Both school leaders fully support adopting a value system that engages the Māori community. The northern leader explains why:

“Because you develop that relationship and that’s nurtured and that’s foremost (about) people... Māori people in particular, having a meaningful relationship with our school actually matters. It’s a basic human level thing... and some of those things are good, nice for most people but they are clearly, from research, are critical for Māori. That’s a cultural view of the world of how they operate. So, it’s a really nice way for everyone else as well. There’s not a conflict, it’s a nice sweet spot for New Zealand to be in really... Cool (laughs)” (Northern school leader)

Inquiring how to improve caregiver engagement further to the conferences is ongoing and practiced in both participant schools. Caregiver opinions have been looked for through various channels including survey, parent groups, conversation, and visiting caregiver’s homes. Each school has revealed differences in the caregiver wishes. The northern school caregivers indicated that the old bus-stop style parent-teacher meetings were uncomfortable and too public.

*“... they said they didn’t like the bus-stop thing because they are getting chanted at by the teacher because he wasn’t doing well, and they were getting that 5 or 6 times or more and were probably struggling with the boy and because of the proximity it wasn’t the most private conversation and because people weren’t really listening, but they could have been, so you’re talking about things that are dysfunctional.”
(Northern senior leader)*

The school introduced the three-way conference, a twenty-minute meeting between the caregiver, whānau teacher and the student and the teacher discussed the student’s performance in all his subjects. This allowed the whānau teacher, student, and caregiver to see an overview of the progress and find any areas that might need attention. Some

caregivers were resistant initially, preferring to speak to the subject teachers, but the turnout to the event is now high at 80%. The southern school leader introduced the same initiative, but caregivers had a different response preferring the subject teacher conferences:

"... three years ago, we only saw the whānau teacher both times, but the parents demanded in the review that they wanted to see some subject teachers, so we made one and one, so we did listen to them..."
(Southern school leader)

Reviewing the performance and progress of initiatives has become regular practice in the participant schools. Tracking and monitoring statistics such as caregiver turn-out to parent-teacher conferences or achievement data confirms successes, guides a school's decision making and assures school leaders and teachers whether their effort in new initiatives are worthwhile.

"Monitoring and tracking, a part of that is seeing our achievement has improved a hell of a lot and I think monitoring and tracking is a part of it, having good positive relationships with our parents helps". (South school leader)

"It's easy to sell to the staff, who enjoy sitting there looking and listening to those results, 'cause we certainly didn't enjoy listening five years ago and we've got to keep it up and we do a lot of other stuff like data, really tight tracking and stuff like that and how we achieve that..."
(Northern school leader)

Maintaining the progress made can be problematic with staff turnover. The northern school leader explained that their school can have ten to fifteen new members of staff in a year, all of whom have missed the initial training and journey the school has made to achieve its successes. He explains:

"if you don't maintain the culture, by giving them time to get into it, it slips very quickly and so... if they don't understand deeply why it matters, why it works, you don't get that. But now it's an easier sell, because our results have gone up, so it doesn't matter whether your Māori or Pakeha, Level 1, 2 and 3 we're better than the national average." (Northern school leader)

The northern leader explains how the culture change within the school and the focus on inquiry and solution finding has developed the staff's engagement and contributions into solving issues within their own practice and the school's practice.

Caregiver positioning - teacher positioning

Engaging with the community is a requirement of the Teacher's Registration Criteria and is one of the components that are reviewed during appraisals. The northern

4.3.2 teacher expands on the relevance of community engagement:

"It's one part of a massive, massive job and I think as long as it's kept as a priority in terms of engaging which it is in terms of our teacher performance criteria... when we look at our appraisal and we look at the things we have to show for our teacher registration, engagement with the community has become a massive part of it"

Reviewing engagement issues from a teacher's or caregiver's point of view improved understanding of the obstacles in their way. Participant responses implied that more individualised consideration needs to be given to caregivers and teachers when recognising barriers or searching for solutions. Each participant's experiences and beliefs contributed to naming the following codes for each category. See figure 4.

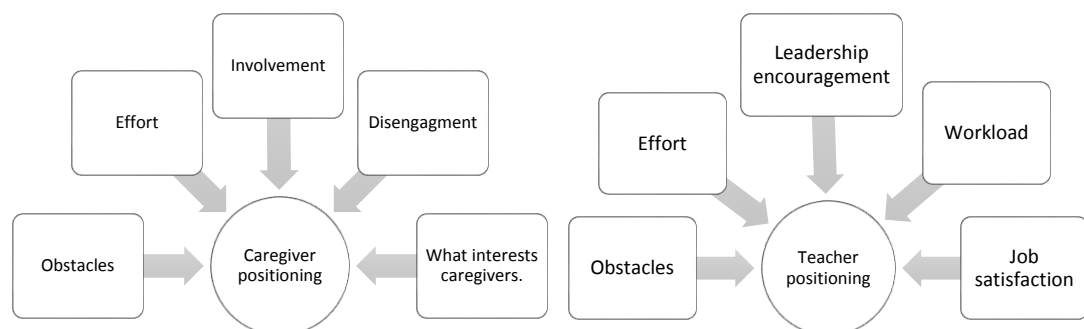


Figure 2: Caregiver's position and teacher's position

One of the biggest challenges that surfaced from all the participant's responses was how challenging it was to accomplish engagement with each other in the busyness of their lives. When teachers and caregivers are juggling working full-time and personal lives, it is often difficult to connect. The most appropriate time for teacher and caregivers to connect as identified by the participants is in the evenings, increasing the workload expectation of teachers. Teachers are already working evenings and weekends on other job requirements such as planning, marking and extra-curricular

activities. Many teachers are left exasperated about the workload. The southern teacher explains how it makes some teachers feel:

"... Is it worth it for me to be putting so much effort into this job? Sometimes it's just 24/7, it's so time consuming. I'm struggling to find extra time". (Southern teacher)

The benefits of making this personalised contact, however, not only develops the relationship between the teacher and caregiver but improves the understanding of both parties' standpoint of the subject being discussed. Communicating through email or text about some issues can provide unnecessary concern for the caregiver:

"I don't like to leave messages, I find it difficult, particularly if I've got an issue that I want to discuss, the last thing I want to do is to put some concern to somebody when I can't follow through the whole conversation and leave them with sitting without knowing what the full conversation is..." (Northern teacher)

Both senior leaders agree that individual contact benefits the teachers, caregivers, and students, but are fearful of making it compulsory because of the possible detrimental effect this might have on some teachers' well-being in relation to stress or life/work balance as explained by the southern senior leader.

"... there's the time to be able to do that as well, but that's what we have tried to encourage, and we've haven't forced it or pushed but it might be something we need to build more capacity in". (Southern school leader)

Caregivers divulge inconsistent views on individualised teacher/caregiver communication in their responses. The southern caregiver would prefer more frequent feedback on how his children are doing especially if he can do something to support his child's progress:

"... I know how busy teachers are, it's not just from 8 or 9 'til 3... we would prefer a lot more feedback, rather than waiting 'til those parent conferences when the events have already transposed." (Southern caregiver)

Alternatively, not contacting students' caregivers about individual matters, can lead to assumptions being made by the caregivers.

"I think sometimes when parents are busy working they know teacher hasn't rung, there's no issue..." (Southern teacher)

The northern caregiver admits that some caregivers do not respond enough, leaving teachers and sometimes students unsupported in solving the issues and in time discouraging further efforts of contact.

"I don't think they're not trying, I don't think they're getting enough response, yea, I'm not quite sure what you can do, I think it's from the parents' end..." (Northern caregiver)

The southern teacher explained that collecting caregiver voice to find a solution can be similarly blocked by the same behaviour.

With educational language, technology and pedagogy styles changing, some caregivers are finding themselves in a disadvantaged position with understanding what is happening in the school, how to contact relevant people, even how to engage with their children's school work. Educational language or jargon changes and the complexities of the NCEA qualification's structure causes a few issues for teachers, but for caregivers and community who are not exposed daily to the words and the organisation it is difficult to understand.

"... there is a lot of engagement with the community with particularly NCEA and understanding NCEA and we still find, and I still find a lot of students struggle with the concept of NCEA and how it works... and I think the parents, and often the community and the wider community, businesses and employers etc, struggle a little bit with understanding it". (Northern teacher)

Communicating with the school is quite diverse now, with phone calls, texting, and email. Confident users of today's communication choice find this much more helpful, but for some caregivers it leads to confusion on who and how to contact the relevant person.

"It's two to three things, yea you know we're not familiar with it, and I think it's something the school could do about um engaging with parents and showing how it works, I mean most of the parents we're all now... we're all the dinosaurs you know..." (Southern caregiver)

Student's work is taught and stored increasingly on computers in school or on online platforms making regular caregiver access to it problematic. The southern caregiver questions how he can support his child if he cannot see the work. Asking the student is dependent on the student's cooperation which may or may not happen. He explains that it is not as easy as it used to be when you could look at the student's books in their bags.

"So online platforms are a good idea, but I think how we do share it or how does that get shared between the staff to the parents, so we can be more supportive at home, so they (the children) say it's all google classroom and we've done it, so as parents we don't get to see that directly, so that's one thing I find, we've found." (Southern caregiver)

One of the most difficult obstacles to overcome is keeping connections up to date. If caregivers move homes or change emails or telephone numbers and do not inform the school, the communication and engagement break down. The teachers and senior leaders recognise this as another administrative task that is time-consuming that can easily be avoided if caregivers remember to let the school know.

Caregiver's disinterested attitudes towards school is another obstacle that is difficult to overcome.

"... and sometimes barriers might just be in relation to attitude towards education, the value that's put on(sic) education perhaps, that can be difficult". (Northern teacher)

The southern teacher offers advice that as professionals we must always listen to feedback and criticism for clues of what the community thinks we are doing well in and

4.3.3 ways we can improve. Staying passive to public perceptions could prove to be detrimental to some school's success.

Whānau classes

The final category for building relationships was the development of Whānau classes. As intended by the name, these classes provide a family or parent relationship between the teacher and the students as well as a bridge between the teacher and each student's family. This initiative also supports caregivers who are used to the primary school system of having a single teacher to deal with.

“Yea from primary, to intermediate, to high school, the number of teachers just increases hugely, so I’ve found that um... making the point that they can contact me, and I will then be the conduit for them to talk to, so if it’s something that needs to be a dean issue, then I can contact the dean and if the dean needs to contact them then that’s fine, or then I can direct them to the dean, or I can direct them to... So, they’ve just got one person to contact and 9 times out of 10 I can help them and solve the issues anyway...” (Northern teacher)

Whānau teachers do not teach their whānau students any curriculum subjects, they oversee their progress and their welfare in the school, they are a point of contact for and to caregivers and they conduct the three-way conferences with the student and the caregiver. School leader and teacher participants in both schools explain the benefits of this arrangement, that relationships are more easily formed between the teachers and the caregivers and interactions, in time become more personable. Furthermore, caregivers gain a more accessible and knowledgeable contact person who shares a familiarity with their child.

Whānau classes act as a solution to many of the concerns raised by the teacher and caregiver positioning categories. From the teachers’ perspective this means they have a much more manageable group of caregivers to engage with, around 20 rather than all the students in their teaching classes, which can be up to 150, and any of the caregivers’ queries that they cannot solve, they can direct to the right person.

“... we really encourage that our whānau teachers are our first point of call with problems and things and the majority of whānau teachers have bought into that. There’s still some work to do with individuals but most of the time, it’s way ahead of what it was...” (Northern school leader)

The benefits of having a familiar contact in the school, supports developing a friendly and approachable culture for caregivers who may have had negative experiences during their own schooling, or who may feel inadequate when dealing with teachers.

4.4 Collaboration

Collaboration is the final theme to have emerged from the data and includes categories of teamwork, support, connection, and three-way conferences. The participants’ experiences and perceptions that fall into this theme, describe events that are a

culmination of effective relationship building and communication that exists within each school. Caregivers, teachers, and school leaders explained their experiences of relationships between the caregiver and the teacher, the benefits for improving relationships between the teacher and the caregiver and the academic benefits.

The three-way relationship that both schools talk about are between the whānau teacher, the caregiver, and the student. This relationship starts when the student begins high school and continues throughout until the child leaves or graduates. The intention of this relationship is to have caregivers and teachers support the student collaboratively throughout the high school years.

“The three-way relationship is a powerful thing, the teacher, the student, (the caregiver) there’s no-way they can hide anything from that... yea.” (Northern school leader)

If a student is achieving well in school the success can be easily shared between the teacher and caregiver:

“... contact from home is hugely important and the most positive reinforcement we can give. I can see that being a lift, because in terms of motivation, seeking pleasure is a much better motivation than avoiding pain, and motivation is, “your teacher said your work is wonderful, well done”, that’s the pleasure...” (Northern teacher)

The three-way conferences are an initiative that was developed by the Starpath Project, (Univeristy of Auckland, 2018). The idea is that the caregiver and student meet with a single teacher, the whānau teacher, and discuss the student’s school report and progress to date. The two schools had distinct levels of success engaging caregivers with this conference styled meeting. The northern school met with some resistance initially, but after two years the initiative gained huge caregiver support.

“... so, both of my boys have been through this school, so I’ve seen it from a parental point of view, as well as a teacher’s point of view,... I was very reluctant to engage with that because I felt we should be looking at more subject based. When I started to look at it from a whānau teacher’s point of view I found, to talk as a third party to look at the report as a document of guidance, it was really good,... as a whānau teacher... you can look at it and pull the parallels across from each of the subjects and identify areas and goal setting and how we might look at the holistic education of the student, and how we might adapt what they are doing in order to move forward, in a more constructive way”. (Northern teacher)

The northern caregiver corroborates the northern teacher’s support. She explained that the subject teachers had all conveyed enough information about her son’s progress that the whānau teacher, who runs the conference, was able to discuss it with her proficiently.

For a teacher, having a more manageable number of caregivers to communicate with during the three-way conferences supports teachers’ workload challenges and after a student’s first year, the engaged caregivers have learnt the school’s system, lessening the workload on teachers further.

“... with the thee-way conferencing we start off now with an email and then we follow up if they haven’t made anything, so reducing the teacher work load and that, because the majority of parents know what this is about now, the year 10, the vast majority have been through it once and then they get a follow up phone call if that needed. And, so that makes it a bit more manageable for the staff, otherwise it’s a fair bit of work, at night on their phone numbers... yea”. (Northern school leader)

The northern school leader explains that offering the opportunity for caregivers to have an extended amount of time with their child’s whānau teacher, means that many issues, queries, or concerns can be discussed and helps alleviate any irritations caregivers may have. The northern caregiver adds further support, explaining that caregivers who choose not to participate cannot complain that they do not have the opportunity to voice their frustrations, nor can they complain if they do not take the opportunity to attend.

For the southern school, the community have not been as enthused by the initiative, although the school still runs it, to help build the relationship between the teacher and the caregiver.

“... for the first set (three-way conference), no we don’t get a lot of parents, the second set (subject teacher conference) we get a lot more. Parents are in that mindset that when they come to school they want to see that subject teacher, they don’t want to see the whānau teacher, what does the whānau teacher know, they have got that, it might be our job to actually train them up... our whānau teachers are really important dadada but they don’t, they still want to see the subject teacher”. (Southern school leader)

Although the schools’ community differs in their engagement with three-way conferences, all the participants from both schools agree that a relationship between the teacher, caregiver, and student, whether it is the whānau teacher or the subject teacher, makes a positive difference to the students’ progress and achievement outcomes.

“At the end of the day it makes a huge difference when parents are on board and I do believe it’s a three-way partnership, it’s not just teacher and student, you can get to a certain point with that, but you won’t get 100% success unless you’ve got that third link person there as well...” (Southern teacher)

The northern teacher explains how the communication with effort from teachers and encouragement from school leaders has snowballed revealing how the relationships between the teachers and caregivers are improving.

“Yea in terms of engagement from our community from a teacher/parent point of view that has increased an awful lot... so the contact we are making with parents is a lot more personal like email and phone calls and we are encouraged to do that a lot more now than we used to be, in the past”. (Northern teacher)

“... parents are coming in all the time, people are having good conversations with parents on the phone, a lot of phoning going on and because you’ve got an aspect of relationship with someone inside the school, you’ve physically met them, the phone call becomes much easier, it’s not cold calling, it’s me again...” (Northern school leader)

According to the southern teacher, the school's positive focus during the meetings has the students genuinely enjoying the caregivers meeting with their teachers and seeing what they have accomplished. This evidence is repeated in the northern school:

"... there's a lot of anecdotal feedback about how brilliant this is, and how much they like it because they know where their boy is, they've got him tied down. He's not wiggling out of things, and proud he's supported, with his education and there's anecdotal evidence about that, um so that's going well". (Northern school leader)

The northern caregiver explains that caregivers can talk to someone familiar and ask questions about how things are going, or to share more sensitive material that might affect the child's attention. The southern teacher concluded that not only will a student grow and progress, but so will the community "...its gonna come from us working together, as a partnership, not separately...".

Discussion

Chapter 5

I chose the participant schools because they were perceived to be successfully engaging with building relationships with their caregivers. I wanted to see what the schools were doing to achieve engagement, what it looked like and whether it improved student's academic achievement. After collating and organising the data from the interviews, four main themes emerged: culture of care, communication, building relationships and collaboration. Reflecting on the experiences of visiting the schools and meeting and interviewing the participants, it was clear that both schools and participants presented an ethos of caring and this culture had infiltrated many of the school's systems and procedures as well as spontaneous occasions. This overarching culture of care was embedded in the data of the other three themes. Two of those themes, communication and building relationships provided the foundation for the evidence in the collaboration theme. Below is a model to illustrate my findings, how they interrelate and how the caregiver, teacher and student working relationship is placed in the overlapping spheres of the collaboration section.



Figure 3: Model that shows how working relationships can be achieved based on the research findings

This chapter will discuss the four themes from my findings in relation to my literature review and my research questions.

5.1 Culture of care

The experiences of visiting the schools and speaking with the participants impressed upon me that care and caring were central to the decisions that the school made and how the participants felt about each other and the students. Both school leaders showed consideration for their staff when they spoke; they appreciated their work load and the challenges they faced in their role, they divulged a consciousness of not wanting to overload them, they spoke about ensuring the staff were supported and had the right tools to work successfully. The southern school leader demonstrated empathetic reflection during the interview to one of my questions regarding training staff in effective communication skills. He agreed that would be an effective idea, that staff would benefit from learning how to develop their communication skills to deal with more challenging interactions. Noddings (1996) states that working in an environment of receptivity promotes a receptive capacity in others. Having a working environment where school leaders show care for the teachers and the teachers show care for the school leaders cultivates an environment that is supportive, transparent and collaborative. This care lens was also utilised in the schools' conversations with their communities helping the school leaders and teachers realise the rationale of the caregivers' experience constituting towards a motivational shift (Noddings, 2013) both with teachers, school leaders and caregivers. Through feeling that one is being heard and seeing action taken in response to the conversation has shifted the schools' and the communities' perceptions of one another.

5.2 The Leadership role

In this section I will discuss what the school leaders from both schools have done to encourage home/ school working relationships to support academic achievement and compare it to the literature review. As discussed in the literature review, durable home/ school relationships can be created when teachers and caregivers understand and support the reasons behind them (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012). Essentially, this is important and can be applied to improving other school practices to further improve caregiver and teacher engagement and understanding. The school leaders in these two schools demonstrated what they had to do before they could start making positive changes that benefited the students and their families. Both schools researched their

communities and learnt about what had happened in their schools and communities in the past; they listened to what members of their communities were saying, what the caregivers were saying and considered these in relation to their policies, procedures and organisation. Barr and Saltmarsh's (2014) study showed that the caregivers' belief of a school's success in establishing good teacher-caregiver working relationships and a welcoming feel was reliant on the leadership engaging with the caregivers. Being solution focused encourages changes to be made that are positive for the school and the student achievement and aspirations and encourages staff to take the initiative more in trying out their own ideas. The southern leader discovered that his school's Māori population had endured negative schooling experiences and some placed little value on education as a result. Changing this belief became one of the school's priorities which they are accomplishing through providing more cultural relative school structures, curriculum and communication. The northern school suffered from similar perceptions from their Māori community. Povey et al. (2016) realised parent groups have a considerable influence on relaying what the community is feeling and have relevant ideas to what can help the schools. The northern school's Māori caregiver group exemplified this with their input into the creation of the junior NCEA Te Reo Māori class for Māori speaking junior students. The group was also responsible for organising a year ten trip to university to show the students what they could aspire to. This is an example of an effective and constructive caregiver involvement that the literature identifies as lacking in many high schools (Auerbach, 2012; Boonk et al., 2018). Through scrutinising themselves and their community both schools discovered barriers that were discouraging caregiver support and student achievement. As identified in the literature review, school leaders are the key to identifying and minimising barriers for caregivers, students and teachers (Leithwood et al., 2004). The participant schools had similarities and differences in their communities. Identifying differing needs means the schools need to be intuitive over how to engage with those differences. Furthermore, the school's research findings should not be isolated to a few senior leaders, but should include the whole staff, and even the caregivers and community. If all those involved understand why the decisions to change an approach is being made, and have an opportunity to challenge and discuss the ideas, then support for the change will be more cohesive. With teachers understanding the reasons behind changes and caregivers

feeling heard, caregiver and teacher relationships can then be built on a shared knowledge. Comparison of using transparent leadership to achieve buy-in from teachers and caregivers, as achieved in the findings, with other studies confirms a successful strategy (Bempechat & Shernoff, 2012). Furthermore, this study demonstrates the literature's findings that school leaders need to either run the idea or engage with it to achieve staff backing. Both school leaders not only led the initiative but also had their own whānau class where they too practiced building relationship with caregivers. The northern leader stressed that maintaining this belief and support in a school's practice is complex with staff turnover, and that new staff members must have professional development in inductions to build understanding and maintain consistency. Building a foundation of care through connecting with community and demonstrating their voice is valued can start a change of attitude within the community. To strengthen it, effective teacher/caregiver relationships need to be developed.

5.3 Building relationships

All the participants believed that their community's perception of their school was currently good. These findings were due to what they had experienced and observed with regards to the efforts the schools had made to make changes that engaged the local community. School leaders, teachers and former research recognised that caregivers' perceptions of education and the school arose from personal experiences. The literature I studied explained that academic achievement improves when caregivers feel welcome and trust the teachers. This indicates that caregivers who have a positive perception of the school will engage more with the school, value education and therefore encourage their child to work. The work both schools have done in improving their communities' perceptions included improving their care for the students. This has taken the form of improving the well-being of the students and through learning about the Māori communities and iwis in their communities incorporating their knowledge of Māori ways into their school activities and lessons. Being inclusive of the local community's knowledge and values reflects the findings of Moll et al. (1992). However, there is evidence in the findings that some teachers and some caregivers are unwilling to engage with each other. Are these assumptions made by the participants because of misunderstanding? The findings in the literature review advise a variety of ideas that

can overcome some of these assumptions. Primarily listening to the caregivers, sympathising and then building solutions together and hence engaging Noddings' (1996) receptivity is seen as a powerful tool. However, this is heavily reliant on teachers' skills in this technique, time and space and of course, making contact with the caregiver. Seginer's (2006) research collated ideas that the most beneficial caregiver/teacher relationships relied on relational trust that focused on goal setting and a positive approach and sharing of ideas. If exercised well, both parties could start to diminish any negative assumptions they have of one another. Additionally, having support from the school leaders in encouraging these connections will, according to the literature, influence teachers' engagement and raise confidence and improve caregiver engagement. Nevertheless, there is likely to be a small percentage of caregivers and teachers in every school that are fixed in their opinion.

Froiland and Davidson (2014) and Jeynes (2018) are great advocates of caregiver engagement, high expectations, and shared support with teachers improving academic achievement. The northern caregiver spoke about how she was able to support and encourage her son's academic achievement better because of the contact she had with his teacher and their shared expectation for his achievement. The northern caregiver and teacher, both spoke of the benefits of having conversations with each other's counterpart for solving any issues that might be halting the student's progress but also in educating caregivers and students about potential future pathways. The northern caregiver's and school leader's experiences illustrated how conversations between the teacher and the caregiver can resolve issues around behaviour, equipment, health quickly. These findings reveal examples of how academic progress can be supported both directly and indirectly. They also support the literatures finding that high expectations from both angles benefit academic achievement. The southern school leader talks about the different attitudes teenagers have through their adolescent years. Year 9 and 10 tend to be the most problematic with higher emotionally charged attitudes. This is a time when students might not want their caregivers to engage with their school or their learning, but it is also a time when the students are at their most vulnerable and most challenging. Each stage of development during adolescents and each students' individual characteristics can influence their engagement and their achievement. The findings in the literature review suggest students would benefit from

having other adults or mentors that can support the students' decision making (Eccles & Harold, 1993). Froiland and Davison (2014) suggest these individual characteristics may need different approaches to caregiver and teacher engagement.

One unconsidered finding that the southern caregiver raised was that with the educational structure, curriculum, technology, and strategies changing, many caregivers and community representatives are being left behind. Some of these items could be explained through information evenings, newsletters and even the three-way conferences, however, some are more complex and would need consideration of how to best inform the caregivers. One must also consider that teachers would receive professional training with any new ideas and they work with them daily, an advantage the caregiver will not have. With all the complications of communicating and engaging with caregivers, how can they be kept up to date with these advances? This could offer a further possibility for study.

Both schools have developed whānau classes which act as a conduit for caregivers and whānau teachers to connect and build a collaborative relationship around the well-being and achievement of each student. This reflects a suggestion Eccles & Harold (1993) had to assign an advisor to every family and child in high school who can keep families informed of all the school's necessary information. Students work with more teachers in high school than in intermediate and primary, so making it more difficult for the caregivers to form meaningful working relationships with all their child's teachers. Through introducing a scheme where caregivers can connect to a single teacher throughout their child's high school education the development of a productive relationship is facilitated. This has the potential to diminish some of the barriers attributed to the negative perceptions of teachers founded in previous studies. Furthermore, having a single point of contact to engage with offers a solution to the southern caregiver's frustration of not knowing who he and his wife should contact and how. Having a partner on the inside, the whānau teacher, whom one trusts and who can oversee the child, makes the care, support and guidance more personal and specific to their needs and goals. The northern caregiver felt the talks she had with her child's teachers, both during the three-way conferences and the informal contacts, were useful and timely in helping to support and guide her child. As mentioned in the literature

review, not only are the teacher and the caregiver the two adults with the most interest in the student's achievement, but their unified support also influences the student's motivation and improves their achievement (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Froiland & Davison, 2014).

5.4 The role of Communication

Communication was an important but sometimes problematic theme to emerge from the participants' interviews. The amount of information schools must communicate to caregivers to keep them informed is a critical challenge. Both schools use a wide range of communication channels to communicate with whole communities, groups, and individuals. Prior studies and the research findings agree on the most used and useful communication channels (Povey, et al., 2016). For whole communities and general information, posted and emailed newsletters and social media are the most effective, for targeted groups, like a class, then emails and for individual contacts. Teachers, and caregivers favour phone calls but will also use email and text. In respect of the third research question, the findings in the literature and this study agree that communication can be a barrier or an enabler to building relationships. Effective relationships rely on effective communication so building relationships between teachers and caregivers will need a communication that suits both parties. Several studies reveal that communication with caregivers lessens in high school compared to primary and intermediate schools (Eccles & Harold, 1993; Mutch & Collins, 2012; Povey, et al., 2016). The reasons found were the increase in the number of teachers the students had and the less personable and friendly the teachers were. This suggests that school leaders should invest in improving their connections between caregivers and teacher. The whānau teacher in the northern school was to be the main contact person for the caregiver but what I realised was effectiveness relied on the teachers' and caregivers' efforts. The northern teacher and caregiver both recognised and appreciated the worth of this communication and the support that it offered the students' academic achievement and well-being but elaborated that both parties need to work at it. Social context specifically, work and family commitments, financial circumstances, energy, and time created obstacles. The northern caregiver, with full-time work, family and church commitments finds that due to the busyness of her life

she will sometimes not respond to communications. Through recognising this as a common occurrence may help alleviate some teachers' and caregivers' frustrations and assumptions of uncaring.

One of the most influential components in attaining good quality communication between teacher's and caregivers lies in the teachers' ability. Povey et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis revealed that caregivers expect the contact from school's to be negative. This is due to historic practice where phoning home was about bad news. The two participant schools have provided training for teachers on how to run a good interview with a caregiver for the three-way conferences. School leaders also encourage teachers to contact caregivers and build relationships. However, several of the participants agreed that some teachers needed training on how to improve their communication and how to build these relationships. Several studies have identified some reasons for teacher's avoidance of the task including lack of confidence, time restrictions, the number of caregivers to contact, and workload. Seginer's (2006) research found that many teachers lack the experience or knowledge of how to be effective communicators and school support is essential to improve this. This study raises the implication that teachers need support and guidance on how to achieve this task effectively. This is a critical issue for future research.

5.5 Collaborating to achieve working relationships

The two schools in this study have made positive changes to their school culture to improve their communities' perception, caregiver engagement and student achievement. This chapter so far has discussed how the participants and the literature inform and clarify why and how to create an environment that is conducive to supporting working relationships. Both schools have introduced a system that supports the idea of teacher/caregiver working relationships, but with differing outcomes. They have introduced a whānau teacher role which is similar to that of a tutor teacher, to oversee the students' attendance and pastoral matters, but also includes the extra responsibility of arranging appointments for and running the three-way conference. The three-way conference was introduced to the schools through a research project they were involved in (University of Auckland, 2018). It was partly designed to improve on the traditional teacher/parent meeting, changing from the teacher reporting to the

caregiver about their child's progress, to one of discussion and goal setting with the caregiver and students. This arrangement offers the opportunity for caregivers and teachers to work together in supporting and guiding the student's achievement progress. Evidence in the literature proves that high expectations are important in motivating the students and assisting the achievement of independent learning. The caregivers high expectations for their child are the most influential on their academic achievement and future aspirations (Clinton & Hattie, 2013) which endorses the need for teachers to listen to caregivers. Aligning these expectations with the teachers' is essential to moving the students' achievement forward in a single direction (Rubie-Davies et al., 2010). Training in this aspect of the discussion is beneficial for teachers who may not have the skill base, the confidence or the belief in the benefits of this type of dialogue. The teaching staff participants have experienced similar attitudes as these amongst some of their colleagues. They themselves, and many of their colleagues, are seeing the benefits of having the manageable task of meeting with fewer caregivers, and having a lengthier time to discuss the students academic progress. The two teachers have also observed that, for some, this relationship has continued outside of the meeting with some teachers and caregivers having regular contact regarding student progress, and support. Although not formally encouraged, for fear of overloading some teachers, both school leaders endorse these actions.

The response to the three-way conferences, although initially experiencing a similar resistance in both schools from caregivers and teachers, has proven more successful in the northern school. The southern school experienced a dilemma. Through seeking feedback, caregivers voiced their dislike of the scheme, and so through listening to them decided to offer one of both types of meeting, with the subject teacher/ caregiver conference still achieving a much higher response. This made other barriers identified by previous caregiver feedback, specifically time implications and discussion depth, more difficult to address. The school leader admitted that maybe the caregivers needed more education in the reasons for the change. Robinson (2018) addresses the disruptions that change can inflict on the the individual teacher, school leader and school as a whole and explains that although change is important for progress, how it is approached needs to be more carefully thought through to avoid ongoing disruptions from change failures. As the research already states, one solution does not fit all

contexts. Further caregiver consultations that focus on the reasons for the change could open up more solution focused discussions that suit all. Persevering with developing good teacher/caregiver relationship benefits the school and the community. (Povey et al. (2016) found that schools in Australia with good teacher and caregiver relationships, had a more responsive community and a positive school climate so creating a circulating support culture: a school that is welcoming and offers opportunities for caregivers to engage, caregivers will then engage, creating a positive school environment that supports the welcoming and engagement of more caregivers. The school leaders agreed that principals needed to lead or engage with this initiative to ensure they are effective and deemed significant by the staff. Bull et al. (2008) state that “building successful partnerships takes time and commitment” (p. 62), a sentiment shared by the northern school leader. In my literature review, I found that some studies could not agree on the types of caregiver support that supported the students’ academic progress. Both schools were single minded in their beliefs that conversations with caregivers regarding their children’s achievement should focus on taking a positive stance, praising their achievements and efforts and focusing on how to achieve aspirations. This reflects Boonk et al.’s (2018) meta-findings of the most effective strategies caregivers can use: discussing aspirations with the child, encouraging high expectations to be met, placing value in education, supporting the student’s academic progress with a positive stance, and having an ongoing dialogue about all of these. There was some difference in the participants’ belief about whether a working relationship raised students’ academic achievement. All the participants agreed that for individual students, the working relationship between a caregiver and a teacher did help improve the child’s academic achievement, but at a school wide perspective there was a difference of opinion, with some participants believing that there was much more to consider than home/school relationships alone and finding a definitive link would be unlikely.

5.6 What are school leaders doing and what could they be doing?

I decided to incorporate these two research questions as the two participant schools were modelling some different strategies and I think any schools reading this could benefit from any of those listed below. One idea that Bull et al. (2008) revealed was teacher/caregiver partnerships should be present in the school’s strategic plan, they

should be well resourced, and they should be regularly reviewed. The importance of this relationship between the caregiver and teacher is crucial for improving caregiver understanding and engagement with their child's learning.

Both schools embedded a culture of care into the organisation and I think this advice is invaluable to all schools, for primarily we are working with children and they deserve to learn and develop in an environment of care.

Building a culture of care will take time and patience to achieve and resilience is crucial to its successful attainment. Processes and procedures will need to be addressed, staff will need to be trained, school leaders will need to engage and model the behaviour to name a few things that need to be considered to achieve this culture. School leaders will need to organise research and planning to demonstrate they are invested. The hope is that the culture of care will become the natural order of the organisation and will build an environment conducive to supporting everyone in providing the best opportunities of each student's achievement.

Below is a list of strategies that the schools invested time and energy into and have been discussed throughout this study.

- Share any findings from school research, reviews and surveys with the teachers and caregivers.
- Talk and listen to caregivers regularly. Talk and listen to teachers regularly.
- School leaders should engage, model and be knowledgeable about relationship building.
- Maintain the culture the school has developed through educating new teachers and new caregivers about what has gone before.
- Develop a culture of care that fits your community's needs
- Be solution focused and believe all challenges can be overcome with the right solution.
- Be positive, set goals and share ideas.
- Regularly encourage conversations between teachers and caregivers.
- Solving emotional and behavioural issues supports academic achievement.

- Recognise that caregiver and communities will not understand the changes made in education unless the information is made accessible and clear.
- Have a single point of contact for every caregiver (like the whānau teacher used in the schools studied) who have the responsibility of building a positive relationship with their caregivers (approximately 20) informed about their child, the school and anything else that is relevant.
- Have all teachers make a group email list for all their classes to keep caregivers up to date with what students are learning and doing in their classes.
- Create a welcoming environment.
- Have high expectations and share high expectations.

Conclusion

Chapter 6

The purpose of this study was to identify how a school leader could develop working relationships between teachers and caregivers that promoted successful academic achievement amongst the students. Understanding how two schools had achieved this was the focus of my research. I interviewed a school leader, teacher and caregiver from each school who had engaged with the practice and asked them to share their experiences of teacher/caregiver relationships, barriers and enablers to achieving these relationships and what they felt the leadership role is in this context. Four overlapping themes emerged from the data analysis: Culture of care, building relationships, communication, and collaboration. The overriding theme, culture of care was a constant in the successful attributes of the other three themes. The participants spoke extensively of barriers in connection with communication and building relationships and how they had succeeded in developing more effective working relationships between caregivers and teachers collaborating both consciously and unconsciously.

Building relationships with a school's community starts with providing a welcoming environment and staff attitude that is appropriate to the cultural capital of the community. The community will gain a sense that the school cares and understands them and their children and will make engagement with the school and teachers more inviting. Showing care for the children's welfare and mental state and sharing this with caregivers will work towards overriding caregivers' negative perceptions raised by the literature review. Establishing this culture of care for the student and the community will lay the foundations for establishing relationships of trust between caregivers and teachers. Peoples' perceptions can be deeply ingrained and changing these takes differing and sometimes more personalised processes, time and patience. Evidence shows that conversations between teachers and caregivers can overcome many of the barriers identified in the findings through cutting out the potential problematic middle-men: inadequate communication, assumptions, and missing information. Achieving a working relationship that shares information, concerns, strategies and ideas and focuses on positivity and care will develop a united and individualised support structure. Both schools have engaged with using a whānau teacher as the teacher who has the

main relationship with the students' caregivers with differing success. This suggests that the idea has potential but the schools may need to consider what needs to happen to make them more successful through consulting with the teachers and caregivers further and ensuring that they understand the purpose of the relationship.

The findings of this study show that communication between the school and the home can be complex and can produce unforeseen and difficult to identify barriers. Keeping communication vehicles that share whole school information recognisable to generational changes: post, email, facebook is a positive practice made by both schools. Sharing more challenging or complex information that involve changes in education, the organisational structure, qualifications and pathways and school strategies may need more individualised clarification. Furthermore, sharing information regarding the students' welfare, progress and attitude also has its challenges. A whānau teacher could be an appropriate medium for these types of communication. However the findings suggest that teachers need guidance, support and training in communication skills to improve their delivery and to give them the tools to deal with more challenging personalities.

The whānau teachers' roles in both schools focus on the three-way conferences. The schools' expectations is that the communication between the caregiver and whānau teacher revolve around these conferences. The whānau teacher concept offers an option on how to engage caregivers into working relationships, but at this time both schools do not expect their whānau teachers to further the relationships outside of the three-way conferences. Some teachers have engaged further with more regular contact and have noticed the benefits of speedier solutions, but these come with added effort. Both schools offer three-way conferences between whānau teachers and subject-teacher/caregiver meetings. Both schools have high engagement from their caregivers, one school's caregivers favours the three-way conference and the other school's caregivers favour the subject-teacher/ caregiver meeting. This difference offers an avenue for further investigation. Should caregivers rely on a single teacher contact with whom to build a working relationship? Should time be spent on improving engagement to three-way conferences? Is there room for developing more than one working relationship between caregivers and their child's teachers? How can multiple working

relationships be structured to disable barriers identified in the literature? No matter what, the participants and the literature agree students benefit from working relationships.

School leaders should play a transformational role in changing the culture of a school. When asked what a leadership's role is, Obama (2018) clarified that it is to "shape the culture, shape the attitude, shape the aspirations". Schools need to understand their community and use their community to improve engagement between their teachers, caregivers and students. Schools need to be welcoming. Leaders need to address embedded biases, beliefs, behaviours, processes, and procedures that inhibit a welcoming environment and engagement. High school students need support in their academic achievement. Teachers need training to support and improve their communication. Caregivers need information to better support their child's achievement and future aspirations. Schools that promote a culture of care throughout their organisation develop better relationships between school leaders, staff, students and caregivers.

6.1 Limitations of this research

The literature review does not look at the influence of a teenager's peer group, student competency, socio-economic status or ethnicity. Boonk et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis identifies that students ethnicity or socio-economic status can affect achievement, however, they also revealed that these deficiencies were negated when caregivers valued education, shared high expectations with their child or were highly educated themselves. As two of these factors could be identified as a barrier and can be changed with improved teacher/ caregiver relationships, I did not find it essential to include them in any depth in the literature review. However, the literature I read paid little attention to the influences of a child's peer group. This suggests a possible avenue that may need to be investigated in line with a child's individual characteristics as a possible contributing or distracting factor in academic achievement.

The study focused on teachers and caregivers who were engaged and supported the process of building teacher/ caregiver relationships. Their perceptions of why caregivers found it difficult to engage with schools may not have covered the perceptions of the

most disengaged part of the community. As mentioned in my introduction this study was not investigating extreme challenges as these would be better addressed through a focused investigation.

This study could be improved with more visits to the schools to provide more time to observe the schools in action. Evidence was reliant on stories from a small pool of participants. Conducting single interviews allowed for individual perceptions to be collected and interpreted and compared to one another to gain understanding. Having a small group of participants made it easier to align some of the shared experiences and perceptions of some of the stories told. The number of participants also allowed clearer memories of the interviews and the characteristics of the participants. Delving deeper into other methods such as focus groups or observations of teacher/ caregiver meetings could enrich the understanding and knowledge gained. It would be interesting to extend this research and draw in the experiences and perceptions of a larger number of people; the whole leadership team, staff and a more diverse population of the caregivers would improve validation. A larger participant pool could provide more evidence to create a richer interpretation. Being able to observe the teacher/ caregiver relationship in action would also add to this study.

This study does not afford the time or dissertation length to document an extensive, more robust collection of data from multiple human perspectives as required by a phenomenological approach. Collecting, collating and analysing qualitative data is an extensive process. Collecting more individual experiences, making observations of the teacher/ caregiver relationships and conducting focus group interviews could have increased the rigour and validity of the findings and could have deepened the understanding of the school's phenomena. However, the relationship between the researcher and each participant and the qualities identified may become less definable with a larger group of participants. It would be interesting to see the similarities and differences a more extensive study could reveal.

The school leaders of both schools knew the identity of the participants which could have influenced the participants' responses. The plan had been to select teachers and caregivers who volunteered themselves directly to me from pool of potential candidates to help protect their anonymity, however this proved to be too problematic

for the schools to organise within the time available. All participants had volunteered but were known to the school leader and vice versa. The issue was discussed with all the participants and they all confirmed they were happy to continue. One of the criteria for selecting the caregivers was that they were engaged with teacher/ caregiver relationships and they could share their experiences and opinions of the process. A limitation might be that some of the participants responses may been guarded due to being known to other's participants from their school.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

Several ideas have emerged from this study that are worth considering for further research. Firstly, there appears to be a question about whether or not working relationships can improve a students' academic achievement. This question lies amongst different research studies and the participants views. Some school leaders, teachers and caregivers from both sources fully support that a student's academic achievement improves as a result of effective working relationships as they have witnessed this through individual cases and so believe it translates to whole school achievement improvement. However, this belief is negated by their counterparts who believe that the improvement of whole school academic achievement is more complex and reliant on many other factors. Boonk et al.'s (2018) meta-analysis illustrates this inconsistency identifying literature that's states caregiver involvement can be beneficial or detrimental to achievement and literature that states it has no effect. Further study could focus on clarifying the connections.

My literature review suggests two further option for further research, due to the low number of articles available. One would be to explore what the right kind of caregiver involvement is to support students' academic achievement. This study indicates that working relationships that are centred on care and collaboration between the caregiver and the teacher work however further studies are needed to see if this idea works with different school and community contexts. The other option would be a study in how barriers identified through modern living that impedes caregiver involvement can be alleviated or dismissed altogether. There are connections here with much bigger issues such as societal structures and expectations that are challenging balanced living, and mental health issues and identify the need for national even international re-thinking.

Teachers' ability to interact with caregivers surfaced several times in both the literature and this research study. In relation to developing effective working relationships in the context of this study, future research on this topic would be critical. This study exposes the breadth of scenarios that teachers could engage with caregivers in regarding their child. What are the communication issues that teachers have? How can teachers improve their communication skills to build relationship with caregivers? Is it practical to train teachers in better communication and listening skills to engage better with the diverse needs of caregivers including personality, cultural values, and contexts? Will training teachers in better communication skills encourage their participation in developing relationships?

Education, as everything, evolves over time and one of the hurdles for caregivers is their understanding of the differences between their school years and their children's. These advancements are evident in today's qualifications, educational language, courses offered and for some, curriculum structures. Bringing caregivers up to date with educational developments is complex. How do we keep caregivers' knowledge of the education system up to date? How will the information be communicated? Some caregivers may not know what future pathways are available to their children. The opportunities today are far more diverse than during their youth. Raising caregivers' awareness may help raise their aspirations and expectations for their children.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Ethics Approval




AUTECH Secretariat

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12 March 2018

Ruth Boyask
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Dear Ruth

Re Ethics Application: **18/89 A leadership challenge: The role of school leaders in establishing home/school relationships that support the achievement of high school students**

Thank you for providing evidence as requested, which satisfies the points raised by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTECH).

Your ethics application has been approved for three years until 21 March 2021.

Standard Conditions of Approval

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

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTECH grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. You are reminded that it is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

For any enquiries, please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz

Yours sincerely,



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

Cc: k.robson@jchs.school.nz

Appendix B: Indicative interview questions



Interview Questions for Senior Leaders

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. Its purpose is to understand your ideas, experiences, perceptions and opinions of working relationships between caregivers and teachers to benefit students' achievement. On conclusion of this session you can request the evidence recorded and check and change any information you contributed as you see fit. You will have signed an informed and voluntary consent form before doing this interview that also states that you agree to be audibly recorded for collecting accurate evidence. Please note that when I use the term 'working relationships' I mean how teachers and caregivers collaborate together to improve students' academic achievement.

1. How do you think the community perceives the school? In general, and in relation to engaging with the community. Explain. Has this changed? What do you think schools can do to improve this?
2. Is there any PD involved in improving engagement of the community and teacher /parent interactions?
3. What opportunities does the school offer for caregivers to see what's going on in it with the students during the year?
4. How is this promoted?
5. Who organise this?
6. How about academically? What opportunities are there for caregivers to learn about and discuss how their children are progressing academically? Who organises this?
7. Are there any other opportunities for the caregivers and teachers to discuss the students' progress? (Year group, individual class, individual, gender, cultural)
8. Is there anything else that school leaders do or could do to assist caregivers engagement further?
9. What ways do teachers and caregivers contact each other usually? Are there any different ways you would like to see them contact or communicate with each other?
10. Are there any barriers that have hindered building working relationships or engagement? (teachers? caregivers? Other?)
11. What leadership practices do you believe can help to overcome these barriers and challenges?
12. Are there any barriers that couldn't be overcome? Why?
13. Is there any evidence that these initiatives are improving working relationships between schools and home? Do you think students' academic achievement improves with those parents who have a working relationships/dialogue with their child's teachers?
14. What kind of input do you think that a parent can give to the school/ a teacher or their child that best supports the child's academic achievement? Are caregivers asked for their advice on how to help their children learn?
15. Is there anything else that the school's leadership is doing or could be doing to improve to improve working relationships between teachers and caregivers to help improve academic achievement?

Interview Questions (Teachers)

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. Its purpose is to understand your experiences, perceptions and opinions of working relationships between caregivers and teachers to benefit students' achievement. On conclusion of this session you can request the evidence recorded and check and change any information you contributed as you see fit. You will have signed an informed and voluntary consent form before doing this interview that also states that you agree to be audibly recorded for collecting accurate evidence. Please note that when I use the term 'working relationships' I mean how teachers and caregivers collaborate together to improve students' academic achievement.

1. How do you think the community perceives the school? In general, and in relation to engaging with the community. Explain. Has it changed? What do you think schools can do to improve this?
2. Is there any PD involved in improving engagement of the community and teacher /parent interactions?
3. What opportunities does the school offer for parents/caregivers to see events that are going on in it and do see what their children do during the year?
4. How is this promoted?
5. Who organise this?
6. How about academically? What opportunities are there for caregivers to learn about and discuss how their children are progressing academically? Who organises this?
7. Are there any other opportunities for the caregivers and teachers to discuss the students' progress? (Year group, individual class, individual, gender, cultural?). Please explain.
8. Is there anything else that the school leaders do to assist caregivers engagement further?
9. How often are you in contact with your students' parents and what ways do you contact them? Are there any other ways you would like to contact or communicate with your students' caregivers?
10. What are the barriers that prevent caregivers communicating with you or the school? Or that prevent you communicating with the caregivers?
11. Are there any school initiatives that help to overcome these barriers?
12. Are there any barriers that can't be overcome?
13. Is there any evidence that these initiatives are improving working relationships between schools and home? Do you think students' academic achievement improves with those parents who have a working relationships/dialogue with their child's teachers?
14. What kind of input do you think that a parent can give to the school/ a teacher or their child that best supports the child's academic achievement? Are caregivers asked for their advice on how to help their children learn?
15. Is there anything else that the school could do to improve to improve working relationships between teachers and caregivers to help improve academic achievement?



Interview Questions (Caregivers)

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. Its purpose is to understand your experiences, perceptions and opinions of working relationships between caregivers and teachers to benefit students' achievement. On conclusion of this session you can request the evidence recorded and check and change any information you contributed as you see fit. You will have signed an informed and voluntary consent form before doing this interview that also states that you agree to be audibly recorded for collecting accurate evidence. Please note that when I use the term 'working relationships' I mean how teachers and caregivers collaborate together to improve students' academic achievement.

1. How do you think the community perceives the school? In general, and in relation to engaging with the community. Please explain. What do you think schools can do to improve this?
2. Do you think teachers would benefit with some training on how to talk to parents and caregivers?
3. What opportunities does the school offer for you to see events that are going on in it and do see what your child is doing during the year?
4. How is this promoted? Posters, radio, Facebook? Are there any other ways?
5. How about academically? What opportunities are there for you to learn about and discuss with teachers how your child is progressing academically?
6. Are you aware of any other opportunities for you and your child's teachers to discuss their academic progress? (Year group, individual class, individual, gender, cultural?). Please explain.
7. Is there anything else that the school does to assist parents engagement further?
8. How often are you in contact with your child's teachers and what ways do you contact them? Are there any other ways you would like to contact or communicate with your child's teachers?
9. What are the barriers that prevent you from communicating or visiting with a teacher or the school? And what are the barriers that can prevent a teacher from communicating with you?
10. Are you aware of any school initiatives that help to overcome these barriers?
11. Are there any barriers that cannot be overcome?
12. Is there any evidence that the school has improved their relationship with parents and the community? Do you think your child's academic achievement has/ can improve if you are able to talk/ communicate with your child's teacher?
13. What kind of support you think caregivers can give the school, the teacher or the child that best supports academic achieving? Are you asked/ or do you want to be asked for your advice on how to help your child learn?
14. Is there anything else that the school could do to improve to improve working relationships between teachers and caregivers to help improve academic achievement?

Interview Questions for Senior Leaders

Thank you for agreeing to be a part of this study. Its purpose is to understand your ideas, experiences, perceptions and opinions of working relationships between caregivers and teachers to benefit students' achievement. On conclusion of this session you can request the evidence recorded and check and change any information you contributed as you see fit. You will have signed an informed and voluntary consent form before doing this interview that also states that you agree to be audibly recorded for collecting accurate evidence. Please note that when I use the term 'working relationships' I mean how teachers and caregivers collaborate together to improve students' academic achievement.

1. How do you think the community perceives the school? In general, and in relation to engaging with the community. Explain. Has this changed? What do you think schools can do to improve this?
2. Is there any PD involved in improving engagement of the community and teacher /parent interactions?
3. What opportunities does the school offer for caregivers to see what's going on in it with the students during the year?
4. How is this promoted?
5. Who organise this?
6. How about academically? What opportunities are there for caregivers to learn about and discuss how their children are progressing academically? Who organises this?
7. Are there any other opportunities for the caregivers and teachers to discuss the students' progress? (Year group, individual class, individual, gender, cultural)
8. Is there anything else that school leaders do or could do to assist caregivers engagement further?
9. What ways do teachers and caregivers contact each other usually? Are there any different ways you would like to see them contact or communicate with each other?
10. Are there any barriers that have hindered building working relationships or engagement? (teachers? caregivers? Other?)
11. What leadership practices do you believe can help to overcome these barriers and challenges?
12. Are there any barriers that couldn't be overcome? Why?
13. Is there any evidence that these initiatives are improving working relationships between schools and home? Do you think students' academic achievement improves with those parents who have a working relationships/dialogue with their child's teachers?
14. What kind of input do you think that a parent can give to the school/ a teacher or their child that best supports the child's academic achievement? Are caregivers asked for their advice on how to help their children learn?
15. Is there anything else that the school's leadership is doing or could be doing to improve to improve working relationships between teachers and caregivers to help improve academic achievement?

Appendix C: Participant information sheets




Participant Information Sheet

For the Principal/ senior leader of the school

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1st May 2018

Project Title

A leadership challenge: the role of school leaders in establishing home/school relationships that support the achievement of high school students.

An Invitation

Hello, my name is Karina Robson and I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Educational Leadership, supervised by Dr Ruth Boyask. I am also a high school teacher and a Head of Faculty. For the research element of this degree I am very much interested in how educational leaders perceive and support working relationships between home and school in relation to raising high school students' academic achievement. I have two requests. Firstly, can I use your school as part of my research? Secondly, would you be willing to participate in an interview? If you give me access to your school but do not wish to participate yourself in an interview, could you recommend a senior leader in your team who fits the selection criteria outlined in the next paragraph and in the section headed 'How was I identified...?'.

For this research, I am looking to collect the experiences and ideas of three people from your school. The first being a senior leader who has had a critical involvement in developing staff engagement in building working relationships with their students' caregivers and in providing opportunities for caregivers to engage positively and proactively with the school, (this could be you or another member of your team). I would also like to interview a teacher and a caregiver who have had success in building positive and proactive working relationships.

I would very much like your school to be one of the schools that I use for my research as I have read and heard about some exciting results that your school has had in building better relationships, engagement and improving academic outcomes. Would you be willing to help me?

What is the purpose of this research?

This investigation will explore how to build better working relationships between teachers and caregivers and whether they would create a more engaged community and better achievement outcomes for students as a result. These findings will be used to critically inform and propose ideas for leadership practices that will work towards a school-wide system that promotes home/school working relationships. I hope to present the findings to my own school, to publish my work in an educational publication and make it available as a Research Briefing.

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

Your school has been identified as having strength in this field. You have been identified as playing a key role as an educational leader in developing, promoting and maintaining your schools' processes and systems in building effective working relationships with your students' families. I

would like someone in your school who will not be connected to this research, to recommend a pool of teachers and a pool of caregivers to whom I can gauge interest in participating in this study. The nominated person will have the knowledge of teachers and parents who fulfil the selection criteria. This nominated person will identify a pool of potential teachers and a pool of potential caregivers. The nominated person will be asked to not give these potential participant identities to anybody else, including yourself. The nominated person will then contact each selected person and give them a copy of the relevant information sheet, asking them to read it and contact me directly if they are interested. Potential teacher participants will have been successful in engaging with caregivers and achieving good responses and potential caregivers will have worked with their child's teachers to improve their child's achievement.

What will happen in this research?

On consenting, we will meet at a mutually arranged location for an interview. This will take approximately one hour. I will ask you a series of questions relating to your opinions and experiences of developing your staff's working relationships with your school's families. I will make an audio recording of the interview. I will also interview one teacher and one caregiver from your school.

What are the discomforts and risks and how will they be alleviated?

It is unlikely that there will be any risks to you. All interactions will be friendly, well managed and will demonstrate care and respect to you and your school's beliefs and values. You may withdraw any information you have offered at any stage. You will be given a copy of the transcript of the interview for your confirmation. You may withdraw or add any information as you see fit. If you feel pressured or uncomfortable in any way or by anyone, please make me aware so that I can help alleviate these discomforts. I would like to assure you that this research project will neither advantage or disadvantage you, your students, your school or the other participants involved in the study. As the principal/senior leader your identity is more difficult to keep confidential within your own school and community and you need to be aware that it may be possible for the other participants in your school to be able to identify you. If this makes you uncomfortable, then you may decide to not participate.

What are the benefits?

This is an opportunity to celebrate your success within your role as a school leader in successfully implementing strategies that improved home school communications, supported students' academic achievement and having your actions and success recognised through this research.

Completing this research successfully means I will complete a Master of Educational Leadership. I hope to develop skills in other senior leaders and teachers to implement better communications between schools and student's homes.

How will my privacy be protected?

All attempts to minimise identifying you and your school will be made through the careful use of language that is not personally identifiable. The decile of the school might be used if it is relevant to your responses. Karina Robson, Dr Ruth Boyask, my academic supervisor and a transcriber will all sign a confidentiality agreement before having access to your data. Please be aware that as the

principal/senior leader your identity is more difficult to keep confidential within your own school and community, however, I will endeavour to achieve this.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

You will need to provide one to two hours of your time to this research which will include an initial meeting to discuss the research and an interview of approximately 1 and half hours.

A second interview of between one to two hours may be needed if more questions and information arise from the first interview.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me. My contact details are I would like to talk to you to discuss the contents of this information sheet and answer any questions that you may have before you agree to participate. Should you want to proceed, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to me within one week. Participants will be selected on a 'first come first served' basis. Your consent form will be stored in a secure storage facility at AUT. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice). You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. You are able to withdraw your contributions up to two months before the research projects completion date. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a summary of the findings of this research on its completion. This will be sent to you by email or post.

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor,

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH.....

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

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

Researcher Contact Details:

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Project Supervisor Contact Details:

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22 March 2018,

AUTECH Reference number 18/89



Participant Information Sheet

For the teacher

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1st May 2018

Project Title

A leadership challenge: the role of school leaders in establishing home/school relationships that support the achievement of high school students.

An Invitation

Hello, my name is Karina Robson and I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Educational Leadership, supervised by Dr Ruth Boyask. I am also a high school teacher and a Head of Faculty. For the research element of this degree I am very much interested in how educational leaders perceive and support working relationships between home and school in relation to raising high school students' academic achievement. When I talk about working relationships, I am talking about how teachers and caregivers work together to improve a student's academic achievement. I am looking to collect the experiences and ideas of a senior leader, a teacher and a caregiver who have all had success in building positive and proactive relationships.

I would very much like your school to be one of the schools that I use for my research as I have read and heard about some exciting results happening there. Would you be willing to help me as one of the teacher participants?

What is the purpose of this research?

This investigation will explore how to build better working relationships between teachers and caregivers and whether they would create better achievement outcomes for students as a result. These findings will be used to propose ideas for a school-wide system that promotes home/school working relationships. I hope to present the findings to my own school, to publish my work in an educational publication and make it available as a Research Briefing at AUT.

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

You have been identified as being a member of the staff who has been successful in engaging with caregivers and achieving good responses. The Principal was asked to nominate a member of the school's staff who will not be involved in the research but will have the knowledge of teachers who fulfil the selection criteria explained in the first sentence. This nominated person identified a pool of potential teachers. They will have contacted you and given you an information sheet (this sheet) to explain the research and you would have been asked to contact me directly if you are interested. Nobody else will know that you have been approached for this project and I will not know your contact details unless you contact me yourself and give them to me. The nominated person will be asked to not give your identity to anybody else. If you are interested on being my teacher participant, please contact me directly (not through the nominated person who first contacted you). Participants will be selected on a first come first serve basis. There will be one parent, one

teacher and one senior leader selected from your school, all of whom will not know each other's identities.

What will happen in this research?

First, we will meet and talk about what is involved in this research and give you an opportunity to ask any questions. If you agree, we will meet at a mutually arranged location for an interview. This will take approximately one hour. I will ask you a series of questions relating to your opinions and experiences of working with caregivers to support and improve your students' achievement and how your school has supported this strategy. I will make an audio recording of the interview. I will also interview one senior leader and one caregiver from your school.

What are the discomforts and risks and how will they be alleviated?

It is unlikely that there will be any risks to you. All interactions will be friendly, well managed and will demonstrate care and respect to you and your school's beliefs and values. You may withdraw any information you have offered at any stage. You will be given a copy of the transcript of the interview for your confirmation. You may withdraw or add any information as you see fit. If you wish you could bring a friend. I would like to assure you that this research project will neither advantage or disadvantage you, your students, your school or the other participants involved in the study. If you feel pressured or uncomfortable in any way or by anyone, please make me aware so that I can help alleviate these discomforts. You need to be aware that it may be possible for the other participants in your school to be able to identify you. If this makes you uncomfortable, then you may decide to not participate.

What are the benefits?

This is an opportunity to celebrate your success within your role as a teacher in successfully supporting students' academic achievement and to have the knowledge that your actions and success will be recognised through this research.

Completing this research successfully means I will complete a Master of Educational Leadership. I hope to develop skills in senior leaders and teachers to implement better communications between schools and students' homes.

How will my privacy be protected?

All attempts to minimise identifying you and your school will be made through the careful use of language that is not personally identifiable. The decile of the school might be used if it is relevant to your responses. No identifiable information will be given to third parties. Karina Robson (me), Dr Ruth Boyask, my academic supervisor and a transcriber will all sign a confidentiality agreement before having access to your data.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

You will need to provide one to two hours of your time to this research which will include an initial meeting to discuss the research and an interview of approximately one hour.

A second interview of between one to two hours may be needed if more questions and information arise from the first interview.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me. My contact details are I would like to talk to you to discuss the contents of this information sheet and answer any questions that you may have before you agree to participate. Should you want to proceed, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to me within one week. Participants will be selected on a 'first come first served' basis. Your consent form will be stored in a secure storage facility at AUT. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice). You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. You are able to withdraw your contributions up to two months before the research projects completion date. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

You will receive a summary of the findings of this research on its completion. This will be sent to you by email or post.

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor,

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH,|

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

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

Researcher Contact Details:

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Project Supervisor Contact Details:

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Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22 March 2018,

AUTECH Reference number 18/89



Participant Information Sheet

For the caregiver

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1st May 2018

Project Title

A leadership challenge: the role of school leaders in establishing home/school relationships that support the achievement of high school students.

An Invitation

Hello, my name is Karina Robson and I am currently on study leave to complete a Master of Educational Leadership, supervised by Dr Ruth Boyask. I am also a high school teacher and a Head of Faculty. For the research element of this degree I am very much interested in how educational leaders perceive and support working relationships between home and school in relation to raising high school students' academic achievement. When I talk about working relationships, I am talking about how teachers and caregivers work together to improve student academic achievement. I am looking to collect the experiences and ideas of a senior leader, a teacher and a caregiver who have all had success in building positive and proactive relationships.

I would very much like your child's school to be one of the schools that I use for my research as I have read and heard about some exciting results happening there. Would you be willing to help me and be one of the participants?

What is the purpose of this research?

This investigation will explore how to build better working relationships between teachers and caregivers and whether they would create better achievement outcomes for students as a result. These findings will be used to propose ideas for a school-wide system that promotes home/school working relationships. I hope to present the findings to my own school, to publish my work in an educational magazine and make it available as a Research Briefing at AUT.

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

You have been identified as being a caregiver who has worked with your child's teachers to improve your child's achievement. The Principal was asked to nominate a member of the school's staff who will not be involved in the research but will have the knowledge of parents who fulfil the selection criteria explained in the first sentence. This nominated person has identified a pool of potential caregivers. They will have contacted you and given you an information sheet (this sheet) to explain the research and you would have been asked to contact me directly if you are interested. Nobody else will know that you have been approached for this project and I will not know your contact details unless you contact me yourself and give them to me. The nominated person will be asked to not give your identity to anybody else. If you are interested on being my caregiver participant, please contact me directly (not through the nominated person who first contacted you).

Participants will be selected on a first come first serve basis. There will be one parent, one teacher and one senior leader selected from your school, all of whom will not know each other's identities.

What will happen in this research?

First, we will meet and talk about what is involved in this research and give you an opportunity to ask any questions. If you agree, we will meet at a mutually arranged location for an interview. This will take approximately one hour. I will ask you a series of questions relating to your opinions and experiences of working with the school to support and improve your child's achievement. I will make an audio recording of the interview. I will also interview one senior leader and one teacher from your school.

What are the discomforts and risks and how will they be alleviated?

It is unlikely that there will be any risks to you. All interactions will be friendly and will demonstrate care and respect to you, your child and your school's beliefs and values. You may withdraw any information you have offered at any stage. If you wish you could bring a friend. You will be given a copy of the transcript of the interview for your confirmation. You may withdraw or add any information as you see fit. I would like to assure you that this research project will neither advantage or disadvantage you, your child, your child's school or the other participants involved in the study. If you feel pressured or uncomfortable in any way or by anyone, please make me aware so that I can help alleviate these discomforts. You need to be aware that it may be possible for the other participants in your school to be able to identify you. If this makes you uncomfortable, then you may decide to not participate.

What are the benefits?

This is an opportunity to celebrate your success within your role as a caregiver in successfully supporting your child's academic achievement and have the knowledge that your actions and success will be recognised through this research.

Completing this research successfully means I will complete a Master of Educational Leadership. I hope to develop skills in senior leaders and teachers to implement better communications between schools and students' homes.

How will my privacy be protected?

All attempts to minimise identifying you and your school will be made through the careful use of language that is not personally identifiable. The decile of the school might be used if it is relevant to your responses. Karina Robson (me), Dr Ruth Boyask, my academic supervisor and a transcriber will all sign a confidentiality agreement before having access to your data.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

You will need to provide one to two hours of your time to this research which will include an initial meeting to discuss the research and an interview of approximately one hour.

A second interview of between one to two hours may be needed if more questions and information arise from the first interview.

▲ **What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?**

If you are interested in participating in this research, please contact me. My contact details are I would like to talk to you to discuss the contents of this information sheet and answer any questions that you may have before you agree to participate. Should you want to proceed, please complete the enclosed consent form and return it to me within one week. Participants will be selected on a 'first come first served' basis. 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. You are able to withdraw your contributions up to two months before the research projects completion date. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

▲ **Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?**

You will receive a summary of the findings of this research on its completion. This will be sent to you by email or post.

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

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor,

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTECH, [AUTECH](#)

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

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

Researcher Contact Details:

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Project Supervisor Contact Details:


.....

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22 March 2018,

AUTECH Reference number 18/89

Appendix D: Consent form




TE WĀNANGA ARONUI
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

Consent Form

Project title: *A leadership challenge: the role of school leaders in establishing home/school relationships that support the achievement of high school students.*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Ruth Boyask*

Researcher: *Karina Robson*

- ☐ I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 1st May 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-recording and transcribed.
- ☐ I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- ☐ I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- ☐ I agree to take part in this research.
- ☐ I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes ☐ No ☐

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

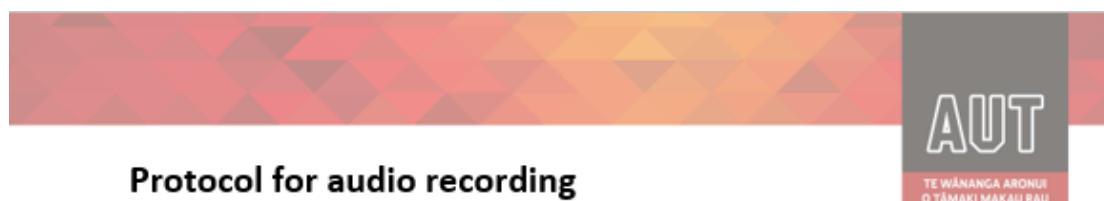
Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date :

**Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22 March 2018,
 AUTEC Reference number 18/89**

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

Appendix E: Protocol for audio recording



Protocol for audio recording

Project title: *A leadership challenge: the role of school leaders in establishing home/school relationships that support the achievement of high school students.*

Project Supervisor: *Ruth Boyask*

Researcher: *Karina Robson*

This research project will be based on the findings of six interviews with six participants. Each interview will be individually recorded. It is important to make an audio recording of each interview to ensure that the evidence collected is accurate. It is also important to record the interviews as the researcher will not be able to conduct the interview, ask questions and make notes on all the participants' responses. The information given in the interview will be easier to source through having a hard copy of it. The recording will capture the whole interview from the first question until the last. The recording will be kept confidential and will only be heard by the researcher, the project supervisor and a transcriber. This information will be used to inform the research project. Once the recording has been transcribed it will be held in a secured digital storage facility in AUT's Culture and Society Faculty and it will be deleted after 6 years. Neither your name nor any other identifying information will be associated with the audio recording or the transcript. The transcribed copy will be held in a secure storage facility in AUT's Culture and Society faculty when it is not being used by the researcher. The transcribed copy will be used for the purpose of the research project after which it too will be held in a secured storage facility in AUT's Culture and Society Faculty and be destroyed after 6 years.

I _____ have read and understood the protocol for making an audio recording of my interview with the researcher Karina Robson. Through signing the consent form, I will give permission for an audio recording of my interview to take place

Participant's _____ signature:|

Participant's name: _____

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

Date :

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 22 March 2018,

AUTEC Reference number 18/89

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

Appendix F: Letter requesting access



.....
Principal
..... High School
.....
.....

1st May 2018

Dear

I am hoping you can help me. I have had your school recommended to me by and (from Team Solutions, University of Auckland). My name is and I am currently on study leave but usually work at James Cook High School in Manurewa. I am studying Master of Educational Leadership at Auckland University of Technology and I am looking for participants for my research project titled:

A leadership challenge: the role of school leaders in establishing home/ school relationships that support the achievement of high school students.

For this study, I am looking to interview three people from your school, one senior leader (either yourself or another member of your team), a teacher and a caregiver/ parent. I would like to run these interviews during this month. If you are willing to help me in my study could you please read the Principal Information Sheet for further information. I will send a hard copy through the post.

I have attached five documents:

1. Principals Information Sheet
2. Teachers Information Sheet
3. Caregivers Information Sheet
4. Consent Form
5. Audio Recording Protocol

Kind regards

.....
Mobile

Appendix G: Codebook of Findings

THEMES	Categories	Nodes	Sub-nodes
Building relationships	Practicalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • busy lives • everyone's different • good intentions • remote access • time consuming • work and school activity clashes 	
	solution focused	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broadening horizons • changing culture • exploring ideas • links between relationships and results • Maintaining progress • making links with community • Wise Words • enabling caregivers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • breaking down barriers • dialogue • easily access • keeping caregivers up to speed • notification
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inquiry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • current research • identifying and investigating student achievement concerns • Listening to parents • monitoring and tracking
	understanding Caregivers worldview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caregiver confusion • caregiver effort • Caregiver groups • caregiver involvement • challenging caregivers • disengaged caregivers • what interests caregivers 	
	understanding teacher's worldview	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • leadership encouragement • professional development • teacher confidence • teacher effort • teacher workload expectations • work satisfaction 	
	whanau classes		
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • respectful relationships • support and connection • Teamwork • Three Way Conferences 		
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connection challenges • Improving teacher communication • informing caregivers • leadership communication • channels of communication 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • digital media • group communication • written word v face to face • individualised communications • whole community communications 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • mail • social media • word of mouth
Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Empathy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caring for caregivers • caring for teachers • caring for school leaders • caring for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • academic achievement • care • emotional and physical • futures • support success
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • high expectations • leadership support • making opportunities • Perceptions 		